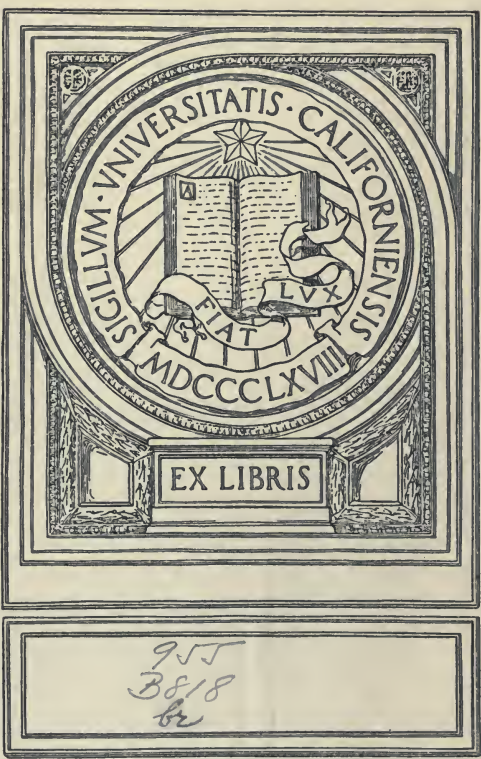


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Broken Wedding Ring

A NOVEL

BY
BERTHA M. CLAY

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Miss Charlotte M. Beane

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"THE SHADOW OF A SIN," "WIFE IN NAME ONLY," "THE DUKE'S SECRET,"
"A TRUE MAGDALEN," "DORA THORNE," ETC., ETC.

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A BROKEN WEDDING-RING.

CHAPTER I.

THE walls of the pretty country town of Harbury, in Kent, were all placarded with the name of Martin Ray—Martin Ray, the Radical, the Reformer; “the Voice of the People”; as he liked best to call himself; the philanthropist, the hater of queen and aristocracy, the teacher of treason; the man who worked for, yet lived upon the people; the man who was half genius, half madman, half poet, full of great thoughts all distorted, full of grand ideas all wrong; a man whose lips had been touched by the divine fire of eloquence, who could stir the hearts of the people as the wind stirs the leaves; a man who had magnificent conceptions of what the world might be made, yet failed utterly in making them practical; a man over whom a wise government hesitates, hardly knowing whether to crush him or to take him by the hand and make a friend of him. More than one prime minister had knitted his brows over the name of Martin Ray; more than one popular outburst had followed the fire of this man’s words. He was earnest and sincere. He hated everything that appertained to royalty; against the queen as a woman he said never a word—against her as the head of the State he uttered thunders of wrath. The aristocracy he hated with

honest hatred. He would have taken the broad acres of duke and earl and shared them among the laboring poor. He protested that the monopoly of wealth by a few was a gross injustice to the many; he swore that he would give his life to undo the wrong; at the same time, he was content to live himself upon the subscriptions of the people whom he misled and excited to sedition.

He could be tracked easily as the flaming fire that lays bare the prairie. Wherever he went he was followed by loud murmurs of popular discontent, and then came riot and imprisonment. In quiet hamlets, in sleepy villages, in peaceful towns, in factories, workshops, and garrets, his words fell, and set fire to those who listened.

At Harbury there had been a trial for bribery at the elections. "There is sure to be a flaw in the armor there," thought Martin Ray; "it is the very place for a paying lecture by the 'working-man's friend.'" So the walls of the old town were placarded with the name of Martin Ray, the famous Radical, and the people thirsted to see the new champion of popular rights. Harbury had always been a quiet Conservative town, the inhabitants of which had rarely troubled themselves with politics, save at election times; but now among the poor and the artisan class a new light was spreading. They were no longer to be repressed and contemned; every man was to have his due; there should be none very rich, none very poor. And the man who was to help in the accomplishment of all this was coming—"the Voice of the People," Martin Ray. No wonder that the old walls were placarded, and that every gate and door bore his name.

The largest placard of all was that opposite the house of Amos Hatton, who lived in Castle Street, Harbury, the last descendant of what had once been a wealthy and powerful family. For generations they had faded and decayed; they had no longer houses or lands, nor even posi-

tion; and Amos Hatton had been compelled to apply himself to one of the professions. He was a solicitor, with a small but paying practice; and, being a staunch Conservative, the name of Martin Ray in large letters opposite to his door displeased him greatly.

When he came down to breakfast on this fine May morning, there the words were, looking him defiantly in the face, while his pretty daughter Doris was gazing at them intently. She turned when he entered.

“Papa,” she asked, “what is a Radical?”

The old lawyer’s face flushed hotly.

“I will not answer you until I feel calmer; to say the least of it, it is most atrocious to place that name there.”

The girl looked at it with softened eyes.

“Martin Ray,” she said—“it is not a bad name, papa.”

“It is not the name, but the man,” rejoined the lawyer. “The fellow is capable of anything; and unfortunately he is a fine orator, they say.”

“I should like to hear him,” said Doris.

“Hear him! Do you want your ears to burn, Doris, through listening to such doctrines as his? Take my word for it, the man who does not believe in and serve his queen fails to serve his Maker.”

Doris made no answer, but in her heart she said that such a sweeping condemnation was unfair—that many men to whom the word “royalty,” even, was an abomination tried their best to lead a pure life.

“I do not see what politics have to do with religion,” said Doris dreamily.

“When a man is true in one thing, he is likely to be true in all,” declared the lawyer; “and if he is false in one, he is apt to be false in all. Give me my hat, Doris; I will have that poster down.”

His daughter smiled.

"You can tear down the bill, papa, but you cannot remove the man," she said.

"Unfortunately, no; if I could, I would have him locked up."

"I should like to hear him," said Doris. "I have never heard a really eloquent speaker. May I go to the lecture?"

"I shall be ashamed if you do," replied the lawyer.

But Doris laughed.

"Not quite that. Sir John Darke is going, with his wife and daughters. I should like to go also."

"Well, you can go, Doris—that is, if your cousin will accompany you. Just once will not matter, and it will prove to you what nonsense such men talk. You will certainly hear a fine orator. I have heard that Martin Ray's words fall like flame and set his hearers' hearts on fire. Go, but do not mention the man's name to me again."

Mr. Hatton finished his tea and went off to the office, where, in the intricacies of "*Luvson v. Gother*," he forgot all about Martin Ray; nor did he dream that a tragedy had begun that day.

Harbury was a quiet town, with very few amusements, and such a thing as a great political lecture, no matter on what side, was not to be neglected.

Doris Hatton was well pleased to go. She had all her life heard her father speak of Radicals as of a class of beings quite different from other men. Here was a chance of seeing the enemy. Partly because she had nothing else to do, partly because fate or destiny led her, Doris Hatton went to the lecture.

Looking over the sea of faces, changing, brightening, or darkening under the fire or scorn of his words, Martin Ray saw one that lived in his heart for evermore—a pale, refined, pretty face, with great earnest eyes and a tender mouth, the face of a girl who must be a hero-worshipper by

nature. The expression of it was rapt and attentive ; the eyes never left his ; the face paled, the lips quivered, the eyes brightened, and the face flushed as he changed his theme. It was like playing on some grand harp ; touch what chords he would, the response was certain. After awhile the girl's face held him captive—he found himself speaking to it, thinking of it, watching it as it changed and paled. It was no longer himself and his audience, but himself and this girl. He was explaining to her his doctrine ; imbuing her mind with his ideas.

Martin Ray surpassed himself this evening ; the young face inspired him ; and, although among his listeners were many who dissented from him, who believed him to be almost criminally wrong, no one could help admiring the earnest discourse of “the Voice of the People.” Those who disagreed with him regretted that so much talent should be abused ; those who believed in him gave him an ovation, and feasted him royally in the old town of Harbury.

All night Martin Ray dreamed of one face, one pair of eyes ; and, when morning dawned, he felt that the common lot of humanity was his at last—he loved the fair unknown girl with a love that naught could change.

He found out who she was ; she was Doris Hatton, the only daughter of the stanch old solicitor, who would be his greatest political enemy. He tried to get an introduction at the house, but failed completely. Amos Hatton would not receive him. Still Martin Ray could not tear himself from the girl ; and he found means to meet her and to tell her how well he loved her.

Doris Hatton was always inclined to take a romantic view of matters, and she made of the man a perfect hero. All the ideas and theories of her life were upset. She believed this man, with his dark eyes and fervid thoughts, to be a prophet among the people. At his bidding, down

went the altars of her youth ; loyalty, obedience, reverence for superiors—all vanished, and before her spread the wide plain of universal equality. She loved Martin Ray with perfect love, such as he could have won from no other creature living. There was a long struggle in her heart between allegiance to her father and this swift, sweet, new-born love ; but, as this new teacher told her, the old landmarks were swept away, they existed no longer—no father had a right to interfere with the marriage of his children.

Through the sweet month of May, while the hawthorn bloomed on the hedges and the clover grew, he contrived to see her every evening. He found that Harbury was a good school. He wrote to the committee of which he was the head, and said that he should remain there while he founded a society, and taught the people what were workmen's rights and wrongs. He labored honestly enough, and in the intervals of work he secretly wooed Doris—Doris, who wondered how this man, so gifted, so different from other men, came to love her—Doris, who believed in his dreams and his visions, and who foresaw a time when all men would be equal, when poverty and toil would be done away with, and universal peace, charity, harmony, and comfort reign. Martin Ray, her hero, was to bring about this. She did not know then that Martin Ray lived in luxury on the money that should have fed the children of the poor with bread. She had to learn the hardest of all lessons—the difference between precept and practice.

CHAPTER II.

AMOS HATTON stormed and raved when he received a letter from Martin Ray, asking for his daughter's hand. Nothing could exceed his wrath and indignation.

"You have good blood in your veins," he cried to the trembling girl. "You have ancestors who fought and died—died, mind you—for king and country, and you ask me if you may marry the man who has boasted that, if no one else were found willing, he himself would behead every sovereign reigning. He said that in his last lecture at Manchester. I read the words, and wondered at the patience of his listeners; and you, my gentle, well-born, well-bred Doris, you could marry him!"

"I love him—I cannot help it, papa. You misjudge him," she answered, despairingly. "I must love him; no one understands him but me."

"Must love him!" repeated Amos Hatton. "Why, child, if you could but see, it is he, and such as he, who are the greatest enemies of the people."

"You do not know him!" she exclaimed. "He is a hero!"

"Hero! Nonsense, Doris; heroes do not live on the earnings of the people. Heroes do and dare; this man incites others to deeds he dares not do himself. I should not object to see a cart-load of such heroes sent off to Van Diemen's Land."

"You are unjust, papa," she cried. "I cannot help it; I love him. Oh, if you could but see how it is! He wants me to be his wife and his helpmate. I am to assist him in his work. O, papa, do you not see how grand is the mission he offers me? I am to be to the women of England what he is to the men."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Amos Hatton. "I would rather, dearly as I love you, see you in your grave. I would rather," he added passionately, "far rather see you dead than the wife of Martin Ray.

"And I," she replied, raising her pale, fair face to him, "would rather die than forsake him or give him up!"

"You must choose between us, Doris," said her father, trying to speak calmly. "If you marry him, I will never look upon your face again, I will never speak to you or hear your voice; you will be no child of mine; I will cast you off from me."

She uttered a low cry of pain and despair.

"I wonder," she said "if ever a girl had to choose between her father and her lover before?"

"Yes," he replied; "hundreds. As a rule, they choose the lover; but you ought to be an exception Doris—you ought not to be of the common run of girls. I expect more from you. I will not take your answer yet; you must think it over. It is not for a few days or months that you have to decide, but for life, Doris. My dear, try to disabuse yourself of the notion that Martin Ray is a hero. He is nothing of the kind. He is a paltry, miserable schemer, who lives upon the hard earnings of the people he misleads."

"You cannot understand his aims, papa!" she cried despairingly.

"Nor do I wish to understand them. For the matter of that, you do not, Doris; neither does he himself. I could tell you what his aims are far better than he could. Think well, Doris, before you decide. Your brother, Arthur, if I judge him rightly, will agree with me. You will give us both up for a stranger, a Radical, a demagogue! Bah! I have no patience to speak of it!"

This conversation took place on a bright June morning. The lawyer had written a brief, contemptuous reply

to Martin Ray's letter requesting his daughter's hand, and then sent for Doris to his study. He had fancied it would be easy to influence her. He believed that he had only to refuse, and she would forget all about the proposal. He had found that he was mistaken. The new love was stronger than the old; hero-worship had a greater charm than mere obedience.

Amos Hatton gave his daughter a few days to decide upon her fate in life. She took the decision into her own hands, and married Martin Ray—but not with her father's consent or blessing. She stole from the house one sunny morning never to enter it again. She kissed her father on the evening before, and never saw his face or heard his voice again. She married the man whom she believed to be a hero, and reaped her reward.

There was some little surprise and consternation in Harbury when it was known that Doris Hatton had married the young demagogue, whose appearance had created a social whirlwind.

“What could she see in him, a pretty, sensible girl like Doris?” people asked each other.

Few understood the attraction that such a man would have for a romantic, sentimental girl. Doris thought no lot in the world one-half so brilliant as hers.

Amos Hatton was a heart-broken man. He had but two children, and he had loved them with the deepest possible love. His son Arthur, a handsome, spirited boy, eight years older than his sister, had chosen the army for a profession; and quite early in his career he had received an excellent military appointment in India, where he was rapidly accumulating fame and fortune. Doris, his fair daughter, was the very pride of his heart. For her the old lawyer had worked and toiled, only to see himself forsaken for a man whom he hated and despised. His heart was bitter, and his wrath was great. He wrote to his son

in India, telling him what had happened, and bidding him to drive all memory of his sister from him for ever. Then Amos Hatton made another will, in which he left all his property to his son; and when he spoke of Doris it was as of one dead. Everything that had ever belonged to her—piano, books, pictures, clothes, ornaments—was sent after her. In the lawyer's pleasant, old-fashioned house in Harbury not a trace was left of the daughter once so beloved. He faded quickly after that.

* * * * *

The three years that followed his marriage were perhaps the most brilliant of Martin Ray's life. The worship and adoration of his young wife stimulated him. He positively began to believe himself what she imagined him to be. He began to think of himself as a true philanthropist, one born to help the people—as half prophet, half martyr—as the man chosen by all England to represent the wants, the wrongs, and the wishes of the working-classes. He began to imagine that the divine mantle of genius had fallen on him, that he was chosen by Providence to be a leader among men, and he was stimulated to greater, grander action. His name became almost a power in the land.

It broke the old lawyer's heart every time he opened a newspaper to read such words as "Riot in Liverpool," "Seditious Movement in Manchester," "Growth of Disloyalty among the Lower classes." "Disaffection at Hull;" then at times he would see a paragraph calling attention to Martin Ray—to his fiery eloquence, to his wonderful influence over the masses. The old lawyer would clench his hands as he read. This stirrer-up of sedition, this man who was like a firebrand, who moved as a scorching flame over the fair, green, loyal land, this man who openly preached rebellion, spoliation, and treason—this man had taken his bright young daughter from him, and left him in

anguish and sorrow. He said nothing; but slowly and surely it broke his heart.

One morning when he opened his newspaper he saw a long account of a grand political meeting in London, and the event of the day was the speech of Martin Ray. No one had heard its equal for burning eloquence, for Utopian ideas, for schemes and plans which were utterly unfeasible. It was a speech that made a loyal man long to see the one who gave utterance to it punished for it. Amos Hatton read it. Bitterness, anger, and regret filled his heart; he suffered terribly. His emotion brought on a fit, and when his clerk went into the office he found him with his head on the table. The doctor who was hastily summoned said that he had been dead for an hour.

He was generally regretted, and many people wondered if the hapless daughter would attend her father's funeral. She did not. Martin Ray would not allow it.

"He discarded you in life," he said, "you shall not return to him in death."

The news of his decease was sent to India, where his son Arthur grieved heartily for him. According to his will, everything that he possessed—house, furniture, pictures, plate, business, railway-shares mining shares—was sold, and the money was sent to his son.

Arthur took it, and doubled it in a few years. He thought of his little sister Doris with something like remorse, but made up his mind that when he returned to England he would seek her out, and at least share the money with her.

So Amos Hatton was buried and in due time forgotten. Doris mourned long and deeply for him. The time of her disenchantment had not yet arrived. She still believed in her husband as a great hero and an excellent man. None of her illusions had been dispelled, and her happiness had been crowned by the birth of two little daughters—beauti-

ful children, the eldest of whom she had named Leah, and the second Hettie. She was wonderfully happy, this sweet, gentle Doris, who thought no husband and no children equal to her own. Cut off from all her former associations and friends, thrown entirely on her husband for society, no wonder that her life narrowed and her world became centered in him.

It did not take her many years to find out that her idol was of clay, to discover that he was no prophet, no martyr, that he cared little for the consequences of his seditious language and the fire he put into the hearts of the people, provided only that he made money and lived in comfort, that his eloquence was a great natural gift which he would just as cheerfully have turned to any other purpose, that, stripped of all the ideal qualities she had ascribed to him, he was simply a shrewd man of powerful intellect, rather more egotistical and more selfish than most of his fellows.

Some wives live and die without either seeing their husband's faults or discerning their weaknesses. It was not so with Doris. The fact that she had been once blinded seemed to make her more clear-sighted afterward. The time came when she stood appalled at what she had done—when the clap-trap sentiments that she had once thought so heroic and grand appeared to her in their true light. The knowledge brought on a severe illness, and she died, leaving her two little daughters, Leah and Hettie. But, before she died, she wrote a letter to her far-off brother, who had never seen her since she was a child, owing to him that her marriage had been a fatal mistake, and praying him to take charge of her children—to save them, to rescue them, if he could, from a fatal and unwholesome atmosphere, and do the best he could for them.

He was Colonel Hatton when he received the letter. He placed it with his papers, intending to do what she asked, and in the whirl of his busy life forgot all about it.

CHAPTER III.

No two girls ever had a stranger education and a more unequal life than had Leah and Hettie Ray. Sometimes they found themselves in the midst of comfort and luxury, with apartments at the West-end and at the seaside, ponies to ride, servants to wait upon them, the best of masters, for "accomplishments," and of governesses for ordinary teaching, the prettiest dresses, the daintiest food. Then would come poverty, squalor, common lodging-houses, common clothing, the want of even the necessaries of life. There was one thing that amid all their ups and downs was never forgotten—study. No matter what happened, they always preserved their books and never missed their lessons. It was a strange life, most unsuited for young girls; but it was the only one they had ever known. During their mother's lifetime they had been more settled, they had lived longer in one place, they had been more uniformly comfortable; but now they never had a home for more than three months together.

Martin Ray was very kind, loving, and indulgent to them. He loved only three creatures during the whole course of his life—his wife and his children. He shared all he had with them. When strikes were plentiful, and the masses full of discontent; when the "workman's penny" rolled in; when men invited him to come and make their discontents greater and their misery more unendurable by depicting both in their blackest of colors—then he lived in luxury, and his daughters shared it with him. Those were the palmy days of West-end apartments and first-class music-masters. Then "the Voice of the

People" lectured in good broadcloth, wearing a gold watch and chain; and the patient, oppressed, toiling multitude gave their pence cheerfully, and never thought of the incongruity. When riot and anarchy reigned, when sullen hate grew into fierce vengeance, when man pursued master with dogged desire for ruin—then Martin Ray flourished, and his beautiful little daughters wore fine clothes and ate good food. But, when the loyal good sense of the people prevailed, when submission to lawful authority reigned, when the fire of discontent was extinguished—then doleful days set in for Martin. For, instead of paying the agitators who avoided all danger while they led others into it, the workmen kept their money.

Martin Ray was often at a loss to know where his dinner or his children's clothes were to come from. Yet, in spite of all drawbacks, the girls grew up beautiful and intelligent. Wherever Martin Ray went he took them with him; and they learned much that was useful, with much that was the reverse. They had no friends; it was impossible to form even acquaintances living as they did, alternately in luxury and poverty, in great cities and remote villages. The men with whom their father associated were almost unknown to them, and never brought wife or sister to see them. They were lonely and friendless. Then came a time of great trouble of which they fortunately knew but little. When Leah was eleven and Hettie ten, Martin Ray, rendered desperate by what seemed to him long-continued peace and order, made a speech which brought him under the iron grip of the law. He was tried, and sentenced to three years imprisonment; and, in spite of all that friends could do, of petitions, and of an agitation which spread all over the country, the sentence was carried out.

Martin Ray, who had not scrupled to use the most offensive language with regard to his sovereign, who had

not hesitated to incite the people to sedition and rebellion, found his punishment in the ignominy and solitude of a prison.

An old patron took pity on his youthful children. Sir John Falkner, a leading Radical, came to the rescue. He sent the children to a boarding-school kept by a poor relative of his own—a Miss Fairfax—who resided at Kew. He forbade any mention of their father's imprisonment; and the children were told that he was away from home, absent on special business, and would not return for a few years. They believed it implicitly. They had some kind of idea that their father was a great statesman, born to set the wrongs of the world right. If they had been told that he had gone to dethrone the Czar of all the Russias, they would have believed it just as implicitly.

They spent three years with Miss Fairfax—and very happy years they were.

“Let them learn everything.” Sir John had said. “The chances are that Martin Ray will never be out of mischief again, and they may have to work for their living. Make them clever and accomplished women.”

Sir John spared no expense, Miss Fairfax no pains; and the two sisters received an excellent education.

Martin Ray was released from prison when Leah was in her fifteenth year and Hettie still almost a child of fourteen. He was not grateful to Sir John. He had intended to educate the girls after his own fashion. Leah, who was gifted, clever, and brilliant, he had meant to bring out as a lecturer; a beautiful young woman lecturing on politics would be a novelty that would pay well. As for Hettie, there was plenty of time to think over what should be done with her.

Having plans of his own, he was hardly grateful to Sir John for having sent them to a school where they had received a solid, sensible education. He comforted himself

by the thought that it was not too late to undo the effects of it; he had time yet to form their minds as he would. He came out of prison homeless, friendless, almost penniless, but the first thing he did was to take his daughters from school. He had secured apartments for them and for himself in Camden Town, and there he intended to devote his time, first to making money, and then to the education of his daughters. They never heard of or suspected the secret of his imprisonment; he would rather have died than let them know it. He received their homage and worship much as he had received their mother's before them, as a right, as incense they ought to burn before him. When they talked, in their simple girlish fashion, of how great a statesman he was, of what great things he would do, he was flattered and pleased.

Many people looked coldly upon him now who had once seen noble qualities in him. The imprisonment had been against him. He was the more determined that his daughters at least should retain their veneration for him. People began to look upon him more as a popular agitator than as a guide or a leader. He was soured, imbibited, yet compelled by the force of the law to be more careful and reticent. He dared not again advocate the murder of a king; and the fierce sentiments he had been wont to express openly now seethed and gathered in his heart. Sul- len, bitter, vengeful rage had possession of him. How he longed to crush all those above him, the queen in whose name he had been arrested, the jury who had found him guilty, the judge who had sentenced him, the governor and chaplain of the jail where he had been imprisoned, every aristocrat who had read his trial and smiled at his sentence! How he hated them! How he clothed in words more fierce than fire his black, bitter thoughts, though he did not dare utter them, lest the law should seize him again and render him mute!

If he dared not speak in public, in private he atoned for it. When the little group of men met in the dingy parlor of the dingy house in Camden Town, what horrible treason was spoken, what vile, murderous plans were suggested! The very fact that he could carry none of them out embittered Martin Ray the more. He went into prison mistaken, yet earnest; he came out more fiend than man. Before that event there had been something human in his breast; nothing lived there now but a desire for revenge. He looked at the beautiful face of Leah, his daughter. If he could but educate her to his way of thinking, and send her out into the world like a firebrand—send her to preach equality and fraternity—men would listen to her, would follow her in crowds; she would soon make a name, have an influence. He remembered how many women had made themselves famous in the same fashion. He looked with complacency at her beauty. If those dark eyes of hers would flash fire, if that lovely mouth would give utterance to his teachings, men would hang on her words and believe them. His beautiful Leah should be a popular lecturer—not on women's rights, but on men's freedom. He had the best masters in elocution for her, he spent hours each day in teaching her.

The girl herself wondered at her own strange training. There were times when she half feared, half suspected that her father intended her for the stage, a profession for which she had no inclination. Although she had the most profound faith in him, it was strange that her taste, interests, inclinations, and ideas did not agree with his. The blood of the loyal old race of Hatton ran in her veins. She was a Hatton, without one of the characteristics which distinguished the Rays. While Martin Ray made a hero of Oliver Cromwell, and worshipped him as the saviour of his country, Leah hated the name, and loved the memory of the handsome, graceful, graceless Stuarts; while Mar

tin saw nothing but heroism in the Paris mob who dragged their beautiful queen to the scaffold, Leah loved and admired Marie Antoinette. So through all the pages of history; and yet he thought to make her a denouncer of royalty!

Leah Ray was just sixteen, and beautiful as the opening bud of a June rose; grace, dignity, and passion were marked in every line of her face. The brow was somewhat low and broad, full of ideality and thought; the eyes were dark, the eyebrows straight. It was a face perfect in shape and harmony, with a proud but sensitive mouth—a face difficult to read. The lightness and brightness of girlhood were not on it; it was slightly mystical and dreamy, and the lustrous eyes had a shadow in them.

The noble head, the graceful figure and its movements, the mass of dark waving hair, so fine and abundant, delighted Martin Ray. The more beautiful she was, the more sure was she to influence men. He never thought whether she would be willing to devote her young life to the propagation of his ideas, whether she would care to give up all the allurements and pleasures of the world to dedicate herself to the people. He had never thought that she would refuse the mission he had appointed for her. The man who preached liberty to the world never dreamed of giving it to his own daughter; he who openly taught rebellion against all authority never imagined that his daughter would disobey him.

CHAPTER IV.

MARTIN RAY was living in one of the crowded streets of Manchester. The north was better suited to him than the south, because the great centers of industry were there. For some few months he had been unfortunate. Heaven had blessed the bountiful land with a fair, warm summer; the harvest was plentiful, the fruit ripened in rich abundance; there was a general air of prosperity; no foreign war caused anxiety and agitation at home; orders from abroad had come in freely, and people were busy at work. There was no time for considering how the land and money of the rich were to be divided; men did not care to be drawn from their work by agitation of any kind; and Martin Ray had had fewer lectures to give. The contributions from different committees came in slowly. He was compelled to be content with writing pamphlets, which, before they were published, underwent so much revision as to make them pointless. He was all the more eager to bring Leah forward.

“The girl has genius—she has fire and power,” he said to himself. “My mantle must fall upon her. Men will listen to words from that beautiful mouth that they will not hear from mine.”

He had trained her splendidly. She was well-read and thoughtful. She was a girl of magnificent talent, full of energy and the restless fire that proclaims genius. He had never told her until now what his intentions were with regard to her; and on this day he had called her into the miserable little room he dignified by the name of study, to communicate his plans to her.

"You have grown very beautiful, Leah," he said, looking at her quite calmly—"very beautiful; and it is time you know for what purpose Heaven has sent you that same beauty."

The girl smiled and blushed. She did not remember that her father had ever used such words to her before.

Martin Ray went on,—

"You have a grand mission in life, Leah. You must not be as other girls; you must not think that dress, gayety, enjoyment, love, and marriage are the end and aim of your existence. You have a far more important future in store for you."

She looked up at him in wonder.

"I did not know that I had any mission, father," she said, quietly. "What is it?"

"The greatest, Leah, that ever fell to a woman. I have been preaching and teaching all my life. I have given up everything in this world for the cause of the people—all my hopes, my ambition. I have served them, lived for them, spent my life for them; and now, even as from the prophet of old, my mantle has fallen—and it has fallen upon you."

"I do not understand," she replied. "What am I to do?"

"I will tell you," he said. "You must take my place. I can preach and teach no longer; you must do it for me. You are young and beautiful; you have great talent; you have a clear, vibrating, sweet voice that will make its way to the very hearts of men; you have the fire that belongs to genius; you have a brilliant imagination—indeed, I may say that you have every requirement; and a lady orator will be a novelty such as is not seen every day."

"What do you want me to be, father?" she asked slowly.

"A teacher of the people," he replied, grandiloquently.

“How can I teach when I know nothing?” she asked.

“You have plenty of knowledge, and when it fails I will supply what you may need,” he said. “I want you to set forth my doctrines, Leah, to spread my teachings. I want you to interpret my thoughts and ideas to the world. They will live after me, and I shall be famous after I am dead.”

“But, father,” she remarked, gravely, “you have spent your life, you say, in making known your belief; and if you, so wise, so learned, so good, so earnest, have not succeeded, what can I do? A girl, young, and untrained, ignorant——”

He interrupted her eagerly.

“I have succeeded in a measure,” he said. “But one life is not long enough for the work. You must carry it on for me. The grace and beauty of the woman-teacher will do more even than the fame and skill of the man. Leah, try to appreciate, to understand, the grandeur of the mission I give to you. If I had called you here this morning, and had told you that all the nations of the earth had united in asking you to be their queen, you would be dazed and bewildered with delight—you would not know how to wear such a crown. But the mission I have given you makes you a greater and grander woman than the sovereignty of the whole earth could.”

“In what way?” she asked.

“You have to teach the people—the great masses who are struggling on to freedom and liberty.”

“How shall I, a girl, teach the people?” she asked, gently, “I should think that white-haired men would have little patience with anything that I could say.”

“If you have been taught what to say, they will believe it,” said Martin Ray. “You will not appear before them as a simple, ignorant, untrained girl—in that case I grant you would be little worthy of credence—you will

come before the world as the one woman in it chosen by Heaven to teach the people the blessings of equality and liberty."

"But Heaven has not chosen me," she rejoined.

"It has—through me; and you must hear the voice of Heaven through mine. You must stand before the world a woman trained to teach, a woman whose beauty and grace have been especially given to her to influence the hearts of men; a woman who deliberately gives her life to the well-being of others—a woman clad in ethereal armor, delicate of tint, full of poetry and eloquence, the embodiment of the Spirit of Liberty."

A light shone on the girl's face.

"And do you think I could do all this, father?"

"Think! I am sure of it! Did not Joan of Arc, a girl feeble and frail as you, lead vast bodies of troops on to victory?"

"Heaven called her," said the girl, reverently.

"Heaven calls you," he declared solemnly. "A girl saved the French crown; a girl-queen saved Hungary from destruction in the olden days; Judith saved her country; Queen Esther her nation. It seems to me that from time to time women are raised up to save a great people from destruction. You, my daughter, are one of these."

She grew pale, and trembled under the weight of his words. He took her hands in his, and looked at them lovingly. If he were a false pretender himself, he did not mean her to be one, and he knew that nothing succeeds like truth and earnestness.

"These are little hands," he said, "to hold the great, beating, bleeding heart of the people—little hands to plead and implore, to raise and to beat down. But you must do it, Leah. I see the grand spirit of noble women sweeping over you. Be a modern Judith, and slay the monster Royalty."

She shrunk back, pale and trembling, at these words.

"I can slay nothing," she said.

But he did not seem to hear her. He was looking at her, trying to weigh the effect of her graceful young loveliness on the hearts of men.

"Leah," he said slowly, "you will do better than I have done. You will make a fortune."

A flame, almost of fire, spread over her beautiful face.

"Make a what, father—a fortune? I thought you gave up everything to the people you taught—not took from them."

"Certainly," he answered hastily. "But there must be funds provided for the organization of such a grand movement as ours. Nothing in this very prosaic world can be done without money, Leah. One way of raising money is by giving these lectures. They serve two purposes—they find the means to enable us to carry on the war, and they teach the people."

The girl's face fell and the light died out of it.

"I would rather earn money in some other way," she said.

He interrupted her eagerly,—

"The earning of money is the least part of it, Leah; do you not see? It is true we must have money, but the teaching of the people is the principal thing."

"Tell me what they want to be taught," she requested.

"To hate, first of all, all existing institutions. They must be taught to hate imperialism, royalty, the aristocracy, and the gentry. They must be taught to hate the Sovereign, the Legislature—government in every shape and form, except such as may be in their own hands. They must be taught that the goods of this fair world were never meant to be in the hands of a few. They must be taught that it is a monstrous injustice that one man should own fertile lands, waving woods, broad, deep streams, mines of untold

wealth underground, while another dies from want of bread. They must be taught, Leah, that no man has a right to make slaves—to torture, to kill, to bind the necks of thousands of his fellow men under an intolerable yoke. The earth was made for man—not for kings.”

“ But,” she said, slowly, “ men must be ruled, must be governed. It seems to me a little matter whether they are ruled by kings or by such as you. I know little, but I cannot help thinking that if all these barriers and inequalities were swept away by a mighty wave of revolution, the self-same barriers would naturally arise again. All men cannot be equal—industry must outstrip idleness, genius must succeed better than folly, wisdom reign over ignorance. If you could make the minds, hearts, characters, and consciences of men equal, then there might be some hope of equality in circumstances.”

He looked at her angrily.

“ Do you know,” he cried, “ that those are the very arguments of my enemies? Who has taught them to you?”

“ No one,” she replied. “ No one has ever spoken to me of such things. I only say what I think.”

“ Then you must speak in that fashion no more, Leah. You must strangle your own ideas. I tell you that they are all wrong. You must apply yourself diligently to study what I may call my side, the people’s side, of the question. A woman like you, young and beautiful, ought to sway the masses; you must give your life to it, and discard all weaknes, all nonsense, about—the other side.”

She looked up at him thoughtfully. She had much to say: she did not in her own simple, girlish mind agree with one word of his argument. Why should she stand up to tell the people not to love their queen? Only last week every bell in the city had chimed in honor of the queen’s birthday, and, listening to them, her eyes had

grown dim with tears. Who could say one word against the royal and noble lady whose crown was the purity of her life? How often had her own heart beaten when she heard the loyal voices of the multitude cry, "God save the Queen!" And she was to teach men to hate this noble lady worthy of all love.

As she stood silent, Martin Ray watching every change in her face, she recalled to mind what she had heard of two lectures given lately. One was to a large audience in a crowded city—a lecture on Republicanism—when the lecturer spoke in such terms of the queen and the royal family that honest men were angered. When he had concluded in a fiery outburst of eloquence, amidst a breathless silence one man stood up and cried out. "God save the Queen!" Instantly the cry was caught up by hundreds of voices; a reaction set in, where treason and disloyalty had reigned triumphant, loyalty conquered. "God save the Queen!" resounded through the vast building and through the streets of the great city. The other lecture that crossed her mind was one given in a pretty quiet midland town—given by a lady who was an atheist, and whose mission it was to preach against the Great Creator who had given her life. She used the most brilliant and specious arguments; she brought forward some ideas that appeared irrefutable; she concluded her lecture in a deep, dread silence. The hearts of those who had listened were heavy and sad. Suddenly in their midst rose up an old white-haired man. He stood bare-headed, with his face slightly raised. "I believe in God, the Mighty, the Merciful," he said. And those who were present went home that night with firmer faith and clearer hope. She thought of these two events, and her face was full of doubt.

"I have no more time just now," said Martin Ray. "There is a meeting of the delegates at three, and I must

be present. I will find leisure to teach you, Leah ; and believe me, a grand mission lies before you."

But on the face of the girl there was no light of enthusiasm—nothing but the shadow of doubt and of fear.

CHAPTER V.

A GLOOMY house in a gloomy street, quite unfitted for the habitation of two beautiful and brilliant girls. Every one who knows Manchester knows Great Divan street. It is thoroughly respectable, quiet, and dull. "The Voice of the People" made his abode here, partly because the house suited his means, and partly because it was near the chief places where his business lay. The residence he had chosen was certainly the dullest in the street. The rooms were small and dark; there was not even a glimpse of green at the back; and in the front was a row of houses on which the sun seldom shone. Martin Ray did not suffer much, as he was generally from home; but to his daughters it was untold misery. They knew and understood little of their father's politics; they thought he was a great thinker of very unequal fortune. They had enjoyed many of the luxuries of life—now they had to bear privations; but that time would pass, and brighter days dawn. There was little furniture in the house. Martin Ray's study and bedroom were the two most luxurious apartments. There was a piano in the little parlor—Martin never allowed his daughters to be without that—and here, at the close of a bright May day, the two girls sat quite alone.

There was not much sunlight in the room, but what little there was showed the faded carpet, the shabby furniture, and the beautiful faces of the girls. Leah, whom her father in his selfishness had designed for so grand a mission, whose life was to be sacrificed to him, was just sixteen; Hettie, one year younger. Yet there was the

greatest difference between them. Leah was beautiful, graceful in the very springtide of life, with the promise of a magnificent womanhood. Hettie, though only one year younger, seemed still a child. She was tall, slight, and unformed. Her face was beautiful, too, and gave promise of even greater loveliness; but, although like in feature, it differed greatly in expression from that of Leah. Hettie had hair of pale bright gold, that was like an aureole round her head; she had eyes blue as heaven, large, bright, and lustrous, with hidden depths seen by no one yet. The chief expression of Leah's face was of pride; it did not lack beauty, but it certainly lacked tenderness; while the chief loveliness of Hettie's face lay in its softness.

The one year made a wonderful difference between these two girls. No one would have treated Leah as a child or Hettie as a woman. The two sisters had the deepest love for each other. They had preserved two traditions in their lives untouched; one was loving, sorrowful memory of their mother—the other, belief in their father. Of late this latter trait was just a little less observable. On one or two occasions their faith had been somewhat tried; but they had been loyal—they had said no word to each other.

On this May evening they had been trying to amuse themselves. The house was dull, but they could not leave it; the lovely sunshine lay all around, but they could not go out to see it. They had been singing, but their fresh young voices had died away, and over them crept the weariness of restless discontent.

“O, Leah, how dull this it!” cried Hettie, at last. “My father said yesterday that we ought to be proud to be the daughters of a patriot. If all patriots' daughters are dull as we are, I am sorry for them.”

Leah went to her, and threw her arms round her sister's neck; she laid her dark head against the golden one, and

the two young faces close together formed a pretty picture.

"It is dull, Hettie," she said, "but I am not dull. I am trembling with excitement. I could not decide whether I should tell you or not. They say you are only a child, Hettie, but in your sweet, gentle fashion, you are more of a woman than I am."

Hettie laughed.

"Why do you say that, Leah?"

"It is quite true. You are not so impulsive as I am, Hettie; you are not so proud. I am proud, and I lack that gentle consideration for others which you never lose. You are wiser and more thoughtful than I am."

"I am not so beautiful or so noble, Leah," she cried. "What is it you have been thinking about telling me?"

"All that my father said to me. I am so miserable about it. Hettie, when I look into my own heart, I am not quite sure if I believe all that he teaches;" and the two sisters exchanged a fearful, timid glance. It was high treason, indeed, not to believe in him.

Hettie made no answer; she did not know or understand exactly what her father did teach. Leah went on,—

"God made the world, and He must have framed the laws for it. It seems hard to believe that it has gone wrong all the time, until our father began to set it right."

"It does seem strange," agreed Hettie.

"And now," continued Leah, "he says that I must learn to take his place. I am such a young girl, and I know so little. He has frightened me. He wants me to be a modern Judith, he says; he wants me to stand apart from the world of women. He wants to teach me to lecture—think of it, Hettie, to lecture. It seems to me that I know less than the birds of the air. I wish," she added, with a deep sigh, "that I had the freedom of a bird. I should fly away, Hettie."

"Papa wants you to lecture, Leah," said Hettie—

“what a strange thing! But there are woman doctors preachers, and lecturers these days.”

“But I am only a girl of sixteen!” exclaimed Leah.

“He will not want you to begin yet; he means far on in the future, when you grow old and wise Leah.”

“No; he means now, at once, in a year’s time, while I am young, and, Hettie, he says I must give my life to it—my whole life,” and the beautiful face dropped wearily on the loving one beneath.

The blue eyes opened widely, appalled at this idea.

“What would you like best to do with your life Leah?” asked Hettie. “Tell me; I should like to know.”

“I should like,” said the girl, with a gleam of passion in her dark eyes, “first of all, to love some one with all my heart—some one, of course, who would love me. I wish for many things, but love is first, greatest, and best. Then I should like to be rich—to have a beautiful country-house, with roses growing all around it! I love roses so much. I should like beautiful dresses, jewels, horses and servants——”

“Just in fact, what other girls desire,” interrupted Hettie. “You are like all the rest; you do not want a mission.”

“No, I do not, indeed. I think I should dislike what my father calls a mission. I do not understand him; why do he and all his friends hate rich and noble people so much?”

“Perhaps,” replied Hettie, wisely, “because they have neither rank nor money themselves;” and then she looked somewhat shocked at her own words and hastened to cover them. “Even, if we cannot understand what my father teaches, we know it must be right, Leah. There must be reasons, and good ones, too, for his hatred.”

“But why should he want a republic instead of our present constitution?” asked Leah. “Why should he

want to take all the large estates from the men who own them, and divide them among others? Poor as our furniture is, would he like to divide that among men poorer than himself? I know he would not."

"He is a patriot, Leah," urged the younger sister, to whom Leah's remarks sounded like treason.

"Yes, I know the dictionary says that a patriot is a man who loves and serves his country. But one who loves his country would surely never care to see it destroyed by civil war; and what but civil war would ensue if they tried to put aside our present form of government and set up a republic? My instincts are all against it, Hettie."

"My father must know best," said the younger girl. "Perhaps kings and queens and rich people do great wrongs of which we know nothing; and, if that be the case, my father is right to preach against them. He must be right," she added, after musing for some short time, "he is so wise and good."

Tears stood in Leah's dark eyes.

"I know what he wants, Hettie," she said; "he wants a daughter like one of those girls of whom you read in novels—'an inspired sibyl.' Now I do not feel at all like a sibyl. I cannot understand talking of people in the mass," she continued; "to me the people are all individuals, and each one can best teach and train himself. My father says that he has given his life to the people. Who are they? What have they done for him? He says I must give my life to them. What are they to me—the people? Why should not I have my life to do as I like with, Hettie? What are the people to me?"

"You would like to love some one very much," said Hettie, "and to marry—to be rich and fashionable—would you not, Leah?"

The beautiful face brightened.

"Yes, that I should. That is a mission far more to

my taste than the one my father gives me. I wonder," she continued thoughtfully, "if it is possible to be born with what my father calls conservative instincts. If so, I have them. All my ideas and instincts and feelings are opposed to my father's. I have never said that much, before, Hettie, and I am half frightened at saying it now. If I am to have a mission at all, or to learn to lecture, it will not be as he says, but quite in another fashion. Supposing that I were old enough and wise enough to teach others, I would teach them, while they resented tyranny, to love peace, order, content; to learn obedience to proper authority, not rebellion and discontent. What would my father say to that, Hettie?"

The blue eyes sought the dark ones.

"Why, Leah," cried the child, "how is it that life has suddenly changed into a wonderful puzzle? I never thought of these things before."

"Nor did I," said Leah. "But it seems to me that for the future I shall think of nothing else."

The sun set and the moon rose over two bewildered heads that turned restlessly even in sleep,

CHAPTER VI.

EVEN when Leah Ray was not under the spell of her father's teaching she had the same shrinking, the same feeling of horror that a sensitive child has of the darkness. Her father and his friends spoke of history ; they talked of the rights of the people ; they approved of secret societies ; they saw nothing wrong in Fenianism, in Nihilism, or any other "ism" which displaced authority and gave power into the hands of the mob. Martin Ray had spoken of his plans to his confederates. They all agreed with him. It was a novelty to have a beautiful young girl to lecture for them, one on whose lips the very honey of eloquence lingered. She was brought into her father's study where several of his most intimate friends assembled. It was a trying ordeal for so young a girl ; one less sensible would have been flattered into compliance with their wishes. Leah shuddered with dread. They were grim-looking men, with determined faces ; in many instances with them "history" meant murder, and the "rights of the people" assassination. She could not understand half that passed. Her father's friends flattered her, and told her that she would have greater and wider influence than a queen, and that she would live in the hearts and memories of the people forever. But she was frightened. She had heard strange doctrines and strange words.

More than one man cried "Hush !" when he saw the girl's pale face ; but Martin Ray said that no one need fear his daughter—she was one of them, and would be stanch until death. So they spoke freely before her, and she, pale, proud, and reserved, wondered that they did not

see the difference between what she was and what they wanted.

There was no nobility in their aims, no loftiness of purpose. The girl's heart grew sick and faint as she listened, but her pale proud face gave no indication of her thoughts.

"I may soon die," said Martin Ray, as he laid his hand upon his daughter's beautiful head, "and I have spent my life for the people; but my spirit will live in this girl, who has received my doctrines from my own lips, and who will add the splendor of her own genius to my experience. I may live however, to see my daughter the people's idol—the people's queen."

They asked Leah to give them a specimen of her powers. She turned to her father, with an appealing look which he understood. It would have been easier for her to die than to speak before those stern, cold men.

"Not yet," said Martin Ray, looking proudly at his daughter. "Considering the magnitude of the interests that will be committed to her charge, it is only right that you should hear her before she makes her first appearance in public. But she has much to learn before then. She is not ready yet."

Leah Ray had plenty of spirit—she inherited it from the Hattons; but with all her courage, she dared not tell her father what was in her heart. She had been indifferent at first as to what she had to do; now she hated and loathed it.

When, after midnight, her father gave her permission to leave the conclave, she went to Hettie to seek comfort and consolation.

"I can never attempt it, my darling!" she sobbed. "O, Hettie! what must I do? I hate it all so. What shall I do? My father will be so angry when I tell him."

Her sister looked at her in helpless compassion.

"It seems almost a pity that you are so beautiful and so gifted, Leah," said Hettie.

Leah stood by the window, her face raised to the sky, where the golden stars were shining.

"Do you remember Hettie," she said, "how the three Hebrews prayed in the fiery furnace. I am in a furnace of fire now. I stand between my own hatred of what my father wants me to do and my father's anger if I do not do it. Who will deliver me from it? Who will take pity on me? I am so helpless. I have no friend. O, Hettie, Hettie! I feel I must pray to Heaven to save me from this furnace of fire!"

"My darling Leah, do not cry," returned Hettie. "If you tell our father that you do not like the plans that he has laid down for you, he will not force you to follow them."

But Leah had had a revelation of her father's character that evening which had opened her eyes. She knew that he would not spare her—that he would force her to comply with his wishes; and, if she refused, she had a dim idea that he would make her suffer.

"I wish mamma had lived, Hettie," she said; "she would have taken care of us. She would never have allowed father to force me to do anything against my will. We should have been like other girls then, which we are not now."

"Still, Leah, we are the daughters of a patriot," remarked loyal Hettie; and Leah turned away with a hopeless sickness at her heart.

No sleep came to her that night. She hated the men whom she had seen, and who persisted in flattering and praising her. She detested their opinions and political feelings; she loathed the idea of having to meet them again and again. If some one would but rescue her! If some-

thing would only happen to save her from the terrible future that her father had mapped out for her !”

She looked the next morning from the window of her bedroom. There were people hurrying to and fro ; the tall chimneys were smoking, showing that work was going on ; there was the distant murmur and roar of the city ; she saw men and women with eager faces, who were evidently bent on business. “ The people ! ” And what had she to do with them ? She did not even belong to them. What had she in common with those tired-looking, dirty, poorly-dressed men and women who crowded the streets ? Nothing. Why then give her life to them or for them ? She must tell her father that all his plans for her were more than vain. He would be at home in the afternoon ; Hettie would be present, and then she could speak to him plainly on the subject.

The afternoon was close, heavy, and dull. Out of doors the atmosphere was oppressive—in the house there was warmth without brightness ; and Leah Ray, with a dull pain at her heart, stood awaiting her father’s return—waiting to tell him that she never could and never would become what he wished her to be.

“ He will be terribly angry,” she said to Hettie ; “ but I had better die at once than live on in agony, as I should do, Hettie, were I to accede to his plans. While I talk to him, pray that I may be delivered from this furnace of fire.”

It was late when Martin Ray returned. He was not in the most amiable of moods ; something had gone wrong among the delegates, and he was ruffled and angered.

“ Give me my dinner,” he said, brusquely ; and the two girls hastened to serve him. “ Mind,” he added, half fiercely, to his eldest daughter—“ mind that you study well to-day. I must give you a lesson this evening ; last night you did not seem so willing as I should like to have seen

you. Understand that there is to be no shirking; you must do what I wish."

"Leah," said Hettie, trembling, "do not speak to him to-night—he is angry, you see; wait until to-morrow."

"No; I could not rest another hour," her sister replied.

She might not be a modern Judith, but she was resolute, firm and determined.

"The Voice of the People" had dined well; he had taken up the only consolation that never failed him—his newspaper; and Leah, looking paler and more determined than she had ever looked before, went up to him.

At that very moment a carriage rolled up the street and stopped at their door; then came a loud peal at the bell, which the little drudge of the house, with a very black face and hands, hastened to answer. They heard a loud, peremptory voice asking if Martin Ray was at home, and the girl's answer, "Yes."

"Give him this," said the same voice, "and tell him that I am waiting—waiting, you understand."

"Who can this be?" observed Martin with a wondering look at his daughters. The little maid solved the mystery by appearing with a card.

"He says he's waiting," she half whispered, with a nod of her head towards the door.

Martin Ray took up the card and read: "General Sir Arthur Hatton, K. C. B."

"Sir Arthur Hatton?" he murmured. "I know no such name. Hatton?" Then memory suddenly awakened. Was not Doris Hatton the name of the only woman he had ever loved, and who had died because he was not what she believed him to be? Sir Arthur Hatton? It must be some relative of hers, and of the proud father who had died without forgiving his only daughter for marrying him. Then he remembered that his wife had spoken more than once of a soldier-brother away in India. "Ask the gentle-

man to walk in," he said to the servant; and the next minute General Sir Arthur Hatton was ushered in.

At sight of the two beautiful faces he uncovered his head and bowed low.

"Are you Martin Ray, demagogue and agitator?" he asked.

"I am Martin Ray," replied the master of the house.

"I am General Hatton, the brother of the unfortunate lady whom you stole from her home."

"What is your business with me?" asked Martin Ray.

"I want the satisfaction, first of all, of speaking my mind to you; and, secondly, I wish to know what has become of my sister's children."

Hatred flamed in both faces as the two men looked at each other; hatred flashed from their eyes.

"I have not asked you to my house," said Martin Ray; "nor do I wish to see you here. State your business quickly, and begone."

CHAPTER VII.

It was an impressive scene. The fine, tall figure of the officer was drawn to its full height, his face was expressive of intense scorn. Martin Ray seemed to shrink into insignificance before him, and yet he faced him with a desperate kind of courage. The two girls had drawn close together, as though seeking protection from each other. The wan sunlight lay in yellow bars along the floor.

"I have not come hither," said General Hatton, "to bandy words with you—to seek a quarrel with you. You are one with whom no gentleman could quarrel. I have a message from the dead, and I wish to deliver it. Show me my sister's children."

"They are here," said Martin Ray, not without a certain amount of dignity—"the good children of a good mother."

General Hatton waved his hand with a gesture of scorn. No word about his dead sister could he tolerate from the lips of the man whom he thought utterly vile and base.

He went to the girls, who stood, with fear on their faces, hand in hand. The composed, well-bred manner, the low bow, and the courteous bearing were something novel to them. He looked into each sweet shrinking face.

"My sister's children," he said, "have you any word of welcome for me? I bring a message from your mother."

Leah freed her hand from her sister's clasp and held it out to him. He drew her to him and kissed the pale young face. She found that he was trembling with agitation and emotion. Then he took Hettie in his arms and kissed her also.

"I was quite a young man," he said. "when I left home, and your mother was much younger than I. She was my beloved sister, playmate, and treasure. It was a great grief to me to be obliged to part from her when I went abroad. I remember her face, and in yours I see some trace of it. What word of welcome have you for me?"

Impulsive Leah threw her arms around him and raised her face to his.

"Welcome home, uncle," she said.

"What is your name, dear child?" he asked.

"Leah," she replied.

"Leah! It is a beautiful, sorrowful name. Why did your mother give it to you? Did she foresee a shadow in your life? You look like Leah; no other name would suit you. And your age?"

"I shall soon be seventeen," she replied with unconscious pride in her voice.

"And you?" he continued, turning to the younger sister.

"I am Hettie," she said, "and I am nearly sixteen."

"Heaven bless you, my dear! You have a sweet face of your own. Your mother bade me—here is the letter—you can read it—she bade me, when I returned home, seek you, find you, and save you."

"Save us!" cried Leah. "From what?"

"She must have known what she was writing," replied the general. "She was sweet-tempered, and never complained, but she died young, and of no complaint to which men could give a name. She was not happy, and she asked me to save you."

Martin Ray stepped forward.

"I will not allow you to speak in that fashion," he said. "Their mother loved me, and they love me; you will never set my children against me"

"I have no wish to do so," said the general coldly.

“Knowing your true character, as I suspect my sister knew it before her death, I can imagine you to be quite unfit to have the charge of young girls; therefore I bring their mother’s message to them, and they can make their choice.

“Why am I unfit?” cried Martin Ray, his face white with rage “in what way?”

“I judge you from your public character. You are without honor, honesty, and loyalty. You are the very ringleader of sedition; treason is a natural atmosphere to you. You live on the hard earnings of the people whom you mislead. You spread disaffection, rebellion, ruin, misery, and death wherever you go.”

A low cry came from Leah’s lips. It seemed to her that these words of her uncle’s gave life to a horrible spectre that had always haunted her.

“If,” continued the soldier, “you were honest, I should have some respect for you. But you are an impostor. You, and such as you, live on the hard-earned pence of the men you deceive. If you gave to the people, instead of taking from them, one might have some little faith in you.”

“I have given my life to the cause I have at heart,” rejoined Martin Ray.

“The cause of anarchy and rebellion—the cause of revolution, which you would spread like a firebrand all over the land. How many men’s lives have you to answer for, Martin Ray? You have kept yourself safe; but how many men have you slain by your teaching? You have found men vain and weak, ready to listen to anything which appeared to lighten their burdens; and what have you taught? Did you ever teach a man to be patient, to rest content with the condition in which Heaven had placed him, to work soberly, honestly, and justly? No. You taught him to long for his neighbor’s property, to rebel against rightful authority, to look with envious eyes on all

those above him, to brood in sullen anger until murder ran riot in his heart. Those are your doctrines."

"Whatever they are, I believe in them," said Martin Ray.

"Many young men owe their ruin and death to you," continued the general. "You have urged them to rebel; you have seen them suffer loss, seen them condemned to prison, to exile; yet you have never paused, nor taken pity, nor spared."

"I have done my duty," declared Martin Ray.

"You are not a fit person to have charge of girls like these. You would sell them heart and soul to further your cause," and Leah shrunk at the words, a sudden pain piercing her heart. "You value their youth, their fresh, sweet grace and beauty, only so far as they will help you and lure men to your belief whom you cannot teach yourself. I declare to Heaven," he continued, passionately, "that I am relieved and grateful to find them as they are! I should not have been surprised had I discovered that you had, even young as they are, tried to make platform orators of them."

The random shot went home to the very heart of Martin Ray, and blanched Leah's face with a great fear. This was indeed the furnace of fire from which she had longed to be free.

"My children are my own," said Martin—"to do as I will with."

"They are not all your own," rejoined General Hatton. "A dead hand is stretched out from their mother's grave to save them. They belong to her, dead though she may be, as much as they belong to you. They have no business with you; you are no fitting guardian for them. Those two girls have good blood in their veins. Their ancestors were loyal; they gave their lives for the safety and well-being of the throne that you are trying to overthrow; they

lived and died in the service of the royal race that you would destroy." His anger seemed to increase as he went on. "I," he continued, "make no boast. I have served my country and my queen as an honest soldier and a loyal man. What could I have but loathing and contempt for one who is the greatest traitor and the worst foe to the royal house that I serve? Light and darkness, day and night should meet and embrace, rather than that I should tolerate you."

"I do not want your toleration," said Martin Ray; "indeed, I have not desired the honor of this visit at all."

"I should not have paid it, but that my sister asked me to save her children. She was dying when she wrote the words, and she knew best from what I had to save them."

"There is one thing you must allow me to say; you have not been in any great hurry to fulfil your sister's wishes. She has been dead some years; it must therefore be rather late to save my children, as you choose to express it."

A deep flush covered the soldier's face.

"It is true," he said, "that I have been neglectful in this matter; I reproach myself bitterly for it. When that letter came, I ought to have started for England at once; but I did not, and other interests drove the subject from my mind. I will make all the amends I can. Armed with my sister's authority, I am here by her wish to save her children from the fate that living with you, an agitator and impostor, must of necessity bring upon them."

"My children are my own," repeated Martin Ray, with difficulty repressing his passion, "and I shall keep them."

"You are unfitted for the charge. Heavens knows how they have fared hitherto; but you could never teach them to be honorable, industrious or honest. You are a disloyal subject—you have spent some of the best years of

your life in prison ; what can you have to do with the training of innocent young girls ? ”

A cry from Leah interrupted him.

“ Is it true, father ? ” she said. “ Have you been in prison ? ”—while Hettie went up to him silently, and placed her hand in his.

In the midst of his shame and exposure one at least of Martin’s daughters was faithful to him.

“ Is it true ? ” repeated Leah, in a voice of anguish that smote both men with regret.

“ I was a political prisoner, Leah,” he replied ; “ and that is a very different matter from being a common felon. Kings have been political prisoners before now. I am not ashamed of it ”—yet his eyes drooped before the wistful imploring gaze of his best-loved child. “ I am not ashamed of it, Leah,” he repeated.

“ How is it that we did not know ? ” she asked. “ Why did you never tell us ? ”

“ There was no need to throw the shadow of a prison across the brightness of your lives,” he replied ; and he noticed—he could not help it—that, while one daughter drew closer to him and kissed his hand, the other seemed to shrink further from him. The fatal word “ prison ” had shocked and terrified her.

“ I am sorry I said that,” interposed the general, hastily. “ I did not know that your imprisonment had been kept secret from your children, or I would not have mentioned it. Your conduct was commendable, Martin Ray. I would withdraw my words if I could. I never anticipated that I should have to express regret to you ; but as there is every ground for it, I do so now willingly.”

“ I care little for it,” said Martin Ray ; but he winced as he saw the strange, wistful pain on Leah’s face. “ They were kept in ignorance at the time, but in a few years, when they had become old enough to know and understand

what political persecution means, I should, perhaps, have told them."

"I can only repeat that I am sorry; I had not meant to betray any secret," said the general, stiffly. "Let me say what I have to say. Children, listen to me, and, as you listen, make your choice. Remember this, that I come to you as a messenger from the dead."

Looking into the brave, kindly face, Leah wondered to herself if the answer to her many prayers was come—if he had been sent to save her from a life she had dreaded.

"I come," said the general, proudly, "to make a proposition; how it will be received I know not. I make it in my dead sister's name. I abhor and detest the principles and teachings of Martin Ray; I hold them in such supreme contempt that I can never after this day have any communication whatever with him. I would rather cut off my right hand than let it touch his. But his children are the children of my dead sister, and I am here to make them an offer. I am a rich man; I have been married, and my wife, in dying, left me a large fortune; besides which, all that I have undertaken has prospered. I have no children, no relatives save my two nieces, and consequently no one to succeed to my wealth. I shall never marry again; and I propose, in accordance with my sister's wishes, to adopt Leah and Hettie, and treat them as daughters of my own. I will educate them, find a proper chaperone for them, introduce them to their proper sphere, and I will divide my money equally between them."

There was dead silence in the room. Martin Ray grew pale. The girls looked startled and surprised. The silence was painful until the general broke it himself.

"I need hardly say what a different life this will be for them. With large fortunes, and the name of Hatton, they may aspire to any position, they may marry as they will. They will be equal to any ladies in the land. A brilliant

future lies before them—wealth, gayety, pleasure, all that is most bright and beautiful. But I will do this only on one condition; and it is to this condition that I beg you to give your best attention. I can hold no communication with Martin Ray. A soldier of the queen and a preacher of sedition cannot join hands. If I adopt these children and make them my own, they must give up for ever all communication with the man who is their father; they must give up his name and take mine; they must cease to hold any intercourse with him, unless he is ill or dying. I can accept no half measures—it must be all or nothing.”

“It is inhuman,” cried Martin Ray.

“It is natural,” said the general. “Loyalty and treason can never go hand in hand. Give my sister’s children to me, and I will make them my own; but I will never share the charge of them with you.”

There was silence again, during which one could hear the labored breathing of Martin Ray.

“That is like an aristocrat,” he said. “Remorselessly you ride roughshod over the feelings of those whom you choose to consider as beneath you. Why should you seek to take my children from me? Why should you offer to bribe them with money and pleasure? Do you call that honorable? An aristocrat’s notion of honor—the bribing of children to leave their father! Their mother, sweet soul, loved me until she died; they will do the same. Offer what you will, my children will not desert me. I dare you—I defy you! Double the gold that you offer and a name twice as noble as the one you bear will not take them from me.”

“They shall speak for themselves,” returned the general. “It is a decision for life, not for a short time only. The fairest way is to leave it to them to make their choice.”

“I am not afraid,” said Martin Ray; but he wondered

at the strange look on Leah's face. "I appeal to my children; they have loved, obeyed, honored me; will they forsake me now for a stranger who confesses that he detests me?"

"I make no appeal," put in the general; "I leave it to them. If they will come to me, they shall be as children of my own; but they must give up all claim to you. I own that it is a momentous choice, and one most difficult to make."

Again the painful silence fell over them, unbroken this time by any sound. The girls stood with white faces, looking from one man to the other.

"My children," said Martin Ray, "I leave it to you."

He turned away his head, too proud at that moment to let the expression of his face be seen.

"And I," said General Hatton, looking at each of his nieces, "leave it to you also. My dead sister's children, do as you will; but do not forget your mother's words."

With a cry, the girls clasped their arms around each other. In that moment they felt quite alone in the world. How were they to make such a choice? To Leah's mind recurred the memory of her fervent prayers for some one who would deliver her from her "furnace of fire." She looked into the blue eyes of her sister.

"It is what I prayed for," she whispered.

Then slowly, as the waters of a great sea divide, the two girls separated, sadly, mournfully, looking back with lingering regret, yet never faltering; and Leah, the child whom Martin Ray had loved, of whom he had been so unutterably proud, whom he had hoped to see his political successor, beautiful dark-eyed Leah, went to her uncle and aid her hand upon his.

"I prayed to Heaven for deliverance," she said, "and you have brought it. I accept your offer."

With a bitter cry, Martin Ray turned to her. There was dignity in the sorrow of his voice and face.

“You make your choice—deliberately and—wilfully, Leah?”

“I make it of my own free will, father. I would have chosen death rather than the life you mapped out for me.”

Loving arms were placed around his neck; a loving, beautiful face was laid against his.

“I will never leave you, father,” said Hettie. “I will give my life to you.”

So for some minutes they stood—the general with his arm thrown round Leah, as though from that moment he would shield her from all harm, and from every one; Hettie clasping her father’s neck, her face wet with tears.

“I accept your offer, uncle,” said Leah, in a calm, clear voice; “and I shall always believe that Heaven sent you to me.”

“I will never leave you, father!” cried Hettie. “My love shall make up to you for the loss of Leah’s!”

“I do not say that I shall cease to love my father—you have no right to imply such a thing, Hettie—but I cannot refuse to take advantage of my uncle’s kindness!”

“I will never leave you, father darling!” cried the younger girl. “The more they say against you, the more I will love you. I do not believe any of the accusations against you, and I love you with all my heart.” It was beautiful to see the light in her face, the love in her eyes, the childish passion of wounded pride with which she clung to him, the tenderness with which the little white hand stroked and caressed him. “I would not leave you, dear,” she repeated, “if he would make me queen of the whole world. I believe all that you believe. I will never be false to you. Nothing shall ever take me from you.”

He was a politician—he had never considered himself a religious man—indeed his ideas on religion were worse

and lower than his ideas on politics; yet he bowed his face on the golden head for some few minutes, and words not often on his lips came from them. Then he turned to the other two.

“You hear,” he said; “there is one faithful to me. You may take the other. I—I give her to you!”

“I could never lead the life you want me to lead, father—never,” remarked Leah; “and how would you have borne with me had I refused? Do not think that my heart is not rent.”

“You need say no more!” cried Martin Ray. “Have we not heard how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child? I have no son, and I rested my pride, my hopes, my ambition on you; and you have heartlessly deserted me for a stranger who despises me.”

“I cannot believe as you believe, father, or think as you think. We must have parted sooner or later; I could not have borne my lot, now that I am beginning to understand you.”

Hettie’s arms clasped him even more tightly.

“Never mind, father. I will make it all up to you. I will die to save you from pain. She will tire soon, and come back to you.”

“Never!” he cried, his face aflame with anger. “Stand away from me, Hettie! Let me see the child so ready to leave me and give up the love of years at the bidding of a stranger!”

Hettie drew back, and at that moment she knew in her heart that his best and dearest love had been given to the daughter who had deserted him.

“Let me look at her!” he cried. “She has deserted me and gone over to my enemies!”

“I have simply given up a life which has never been tolerable to me, and which grows more unbearable every

day. I shall love you always, father ; but I shall never share your principles."

His face paled with anger.

"You speak bravely enough now that you know your words give me no concern. I am justly punished, for in my blindness I confess that I loved you best. You must forgive me, Hettie. I shall love but one daughter now."

"I have nothing to forgive ; it was natural that you should love Leah best. Do not be angry with her. She told me she did not care about the life you wanted her to lead. Leah loves everything beautiful, and she wants to be loved. She does not care for lectures and politics."

The simple words almost made the general smile ; but there was no smile on the lips of Martin Ray, as he turned to his elder child.

"Look at me," he said, "and tell me to my face that you are going to leave me."

"It is the life I leave, not you," she replied.

"Listen to me, Leah. If you leave me now, you shall never, so help me Heaven, look upon my face again ! You shall go from my house, my heart, my life, never to re-enter them. You shall cease even to be known by my name ; and your sister shall never see or speak to you again. Do you understand all that you are giving up ?"

She was pale as a white lily.

"I can bear my coming life better than the other, father. I could never follow the career that you have traced for me. It is better that I should go."

"Oh, Leah, you must not leave him ! You cannot desert me ! I shall die if you go from me and leave me here alone !"

"Come with me, Hettie ; if it is no life for me, it is none for you. Come with me."

"No ; I will never leave my father unless I die !"

sobbed the girl. "How can you act so, Leah? Your own father!"

"You forget," interrupted Leah, "that it is mother who has sent for me."

"Her heart is hardened!" cried Martin Ray. "Say no more to her, Hettie. She can leave us both without tears. We must learn to live without her. She is a thankless child, and you are a loving one. Come to my heart, Hettie; your home shall be there."

But as her golden head lay upon his breast, amid her sobs and tears, she heard the name of Leah as often as she heard her own.

"There is no need to prolong this painful scene," said General Hatton, after a short silence. "My dear Leah, for the trust and confidence you have shown me I thank you. You shall see that it is well placed. I take you from what I believe to be most unworthy hands, and adopt you as my own daughter. I would take your sister, but she declines to come. If in the future she should change her mind, I shall none the less be still her friend."

"I thank you," said a gentle voice, full of tears; "but I shall never leave my father. It does not matter who he is, or what any one thinks of him, he is my father, and I will be faithful to him."

"I say nothing but this," replied the general; "If ever you want a friend come to me."

"She will never want one while I live!" cried Martin Ray. "Oh, Leah, child of my heart, how little did I dream that you would become one of those against whom I have preached and taught my life long! That I should have a daughter among the wealthy and the aristocracy of the land is to me a shame and disgrace. There is yet time to make your final decision, Leah. I will believe that you were over-tempted by the man who has bribed you; I will believe that you repent of your momentary desertion; I

will believe anything and everything if you will only come back to me, Leah, child of my heart !”

General Hatton stood by and said nothing. He would not influence the girl ; her heart should decide. He could not help thinking what a beautiful picture of pathetic determination she made, standing with her eyes wistfully seeking her father’s face, her hands clasped.

“ I could never be what you want me to be, father,” she said ; “ and you would dislike me, hate me, when I refused. It is better that I should accept my uncle’s offer.”

“ You refuse then, decidedly, once and forever, Leah, to carry out my wishes ? ”

“ I do refuse,” she replied, calmly. “ I could not act as you wish. I do not believe in that which you would have me teach.”

“ Say no more,” he cried, holding up his hand as though he would ward off a blow—“ no more ! I have heard from your own lips your decision. You choose to make your home with this stranger—for stranger he is, no matter how closely he may be related to you—you would rather live with him than with me ? ”

“ It is not my fault,” she said humbly. “ You would have made my life intolerable to me.”

“ You renounce me—give me up entirely for him ? ” continued Martin. “ You cast me out of your life, and choose to cling to him ? Do not be afraid to speak out plainly.”

“ I am not afraid,” she replied, calmly. “ I do prefer to go to my mother’s brother.”

“ Well and good,” said Martin Ray, with a white face—“ well and good. You have made your choice ; you must abide by it. Nothing can ever alter it in this world. Some fathers would have cursed you. I will not ; but I tell you, as much in sorrow as in anger, that punishment

will fall upon you. I may not have been perhaps the best of fathers, but I am your father, and to give up my love and protection for that of another is, I say, a sin that cries to Heaven for vengeance. You hear me, Leah? I say it to warn you. The time will come when, with unutterable regret, you will remember this hour and this deed. The time will come when the anger of Heaven will fall upon you—when, in your turn, your heart will be torn with anguish, and you will say to yourself: ‘This is the punishment that my father prophesied for me.’ I do not curse you, Leah; I leave you to the Power that never fails to punish or reward.”

“Do not be so angry with her, father,” said a loving voice; and again Hettie’s arms clung to him tenderly.

The general, seeing that Leah had hardly strength to stand, drew her nearer to him.

“There is one thing I must do before you go,” said Martin Ray. “I will not say that I have studied my Bible much; but I have made a family register of it.”

He unclasped Hettie’s arms, and placed her in a chair, then he went to the bookshelf, took from it a large Bible, opened it, and laid it upon the table before the general. There was about his action that dignity that comes from great sorrow.

“Look!” he said, pointing with his finger. “There is the entry of my marriage with Doris Hatton. Here is the birth of my first and best-beloved child Leah, more than sixteen years ago. Here is the birth of Hettie, fifteen years ago. Now see. My eldest child is dead to me; she died to-day. I have but one daughter living.”

He took a pen and dipped it in ink, and through the name of Leah Ray he drew a thick black line with steady fingers. He wrote opposite to it, “Dead to me.” Then he closed the book, and replaced it on the shelf.

“There is no more to be either said or done,” he con-

tinued. "You have taken my child from me, General Hatton. She goes readily—let her go. I do not mean to complain; but, when she passes over the threshold of the house, she passes over my heart."

General Hatton bent down, and looked into the beautiful face so white and still.

"Leah," he said, gently, "I would not over-persuade you—and the choice is for life. Will you take time to think over it?"

"No," she answered, faintly. "I could not live the life that is proposed for me. I hate it. I prayed to Heaven to send me deliverance. I cannot refuse it now that it has come."

"You need not do so," said the general. "I wish your sister would come too."

But Hettie clung to her father.

After a few moments Martin raised his hands.

"I am no prophet," he said; "but I believe in the natural order and the natural fitness of things. I predict that over the head of the child who has forsaken me dark clouds will gather; I predict for her a sad life in the midst of wealth, luxury, and gayety. For the daughter whose faithful heart and tender love are my consolation I predict happiness in life and in death. May Heaven confirm what I say!"

"We will have a proper understanding," said Sir Arthur Hatton. "I am not unreasonable, though I frankly confess I dislike everything about you—your name, your character, your life, and its aims. I am implacable in my resentment against you for having stolen my sister and blighted her life, and I will never willingly hold any communication with you—never. You and I will be strangers; your children will be strangers, if one goes with me and one remains with you—strangers always. I shall require that they neither write nor speak to each other, except if

is a case of life and death. But, if you are ill or dying, and send for Leah, she shall come. If Hettie be dying, or ill, and send for her, she shall come."

"Neither in life nor in death shall we meet again," declared Martin Ray. "We shall live our lives; they will be far apart from hers. To me she no longer exists. I have touched her hand, kissed her face, spoken to her for the last time. She lies in her coffin now to me, and I draw the sheet over her face—she is dead! Oh, Hettie, with your mother's eyes, comfort me!"

Leah raised her white face to Sir Arthur's.

"This is dreadful," she said; "it is killing me. But I cannot follow out my father's wishes. Take me away."

Then the two sisters looked at each other. In each face was an unspoken longing.

"No," said Martha Ray, sternly, "you shall not touch her, Hettie! She has cast us off; let her go her own way."

"Just once," pleaded Hettie. "Let me kiss her once, father. We are own sisters, you know; we have loved each other so dearly. Oh, Leah, stay with us, darling; do not go!"

"No, not once or ever!" cried Martin Ray, raising his hand. "You shall not kiss her! You shall not even say good-by to her! Let her leave us in silence—the silence of death."

And Hettie, whose loving heart was almost broken, fell upon her knees, hiding her face in her hands, and sobbing with bitter tears and cries. She dared not raise her head to take a last look at the face she loved so well.

The general drew Leah near to the door.

"Good-by, father," she said. "I am not cold, unloving, or heartless; but I could not lead the life you selected for me. I would rather have died. I will come back if you want me or send for me."

She moved towards him, as though she would fain have kissed his hands or his face ; but he turned from her with a gesture of angry contempt.

“ Good-by, Hettie,” she said, in a broken voice. “ Nothing can part us for long ; nothing can change our affection for each other ; time, patience, and love will bring us together again. If you want me, send, and I will come.”

It was a pitiful scene—one girl kneeling in wild distress on the ground, the other pale, trembling, half hesitating, moving slowly to the door.

Suddenly Leah threw up her arms with a bitter cry.

“ It is worse than death ! ” she said. “ O uncle ! help me ! ”

“ I will do all I can to make you happy, Leah,” he replied.

He did not know how to comfort her. It was he who, in seeking to rescue her from a life she hated, had brought these troubles upon her. Nature was more kind ; for, when Sir Arthur beckoned his man-servant to help him, Leah had lost all consciousness, and so left her father’s house, almost as he had said in the stillness of death.

CHAPTER VIII.

"SHE is gone," said Martin Ray, hoarsely, as the sound of the carriage-wheels reached them. "She is gone, Hettie, from our home and life forever. She is dead to us."

And the man whose ends and aims in life were all selfish, who would have trampled over hundreds of human beings to attain the object he sought, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed aloud:

The sobs aroused Hettie, who in her whole life never remembered to have seen her father weep—startled her into forgetting her own grief, for a time, to console him.

She went to him, and knelt down by his side.

"I will love you doubly, dearest," she said, "to make up for it. I will be two daughters in one to you."

He stood up, gray, worn, and haggard, a prematurely old man.

"You are the best of daughters, Hettie," he said, slowly; "but she—well, you see, she was more than a daughter to me. I wanted to live again in her. You are all that is sweet, kind, and gentle; but she had fire and passion, she had power and eloquence, she would have been a light in the darkness. I shall never be the same man again, Hettie. I did not know that I could be so human. I did not know that I was capable of valuing so highly the love of a slip of a girl. I think better of myself for my own grief, Hettie."

She whispered to him, after the manner of loving daughters, that he was perfect, that no man could be better; and unconsciously the gentle flattery soothed him.

"How strange," said Hettie, "for all this to occur in

one day! This morning how little we knew of what was about to happen! This morning I hardly remembered that mamma had a brother. She talked to us about him sometimes, but I had nearly forgotten him. Now—”

“Ah, now,” sighed Martin Ray, spreading out his hands in speechless distress—“now all is changed!”

Hettie looked up at him with wistful eyes.

“Father,” she asked, gently, “was my mother really an aristocrat?”

“Good Heaven, no, Hettie! Certainly not. She was a lady; she came from a very ancient and honorable family.”

“That is something to be proud of, is it not?” she asked, innocently.

And Martin Ray glared at her with angry eyes. He could not say “No,” and he would not say “Yes.” It seemed to him that these children of his, so long docile and blind in their belief, were suddenly rising up against him.

“Why do you hate my mother’s brother, father? Why could you not be friends with him?” she persisted. “It would have been so pleasant to have an uncle. Why could you not be friends?”

“Why were not Napoleon and Wellington friends?” he asked pompously. “Why are the hare and the hounds, the dove and the hawk, not friends? We are enemies naturally, as are they.”

“It seems so strange,” said the girl, who was still a child. “How angry his face was, and how stern his voice! He thought you had been cruel to my mother. Why did you not tell him it was not so?”

Martin Ray paced up and down the little room; the sickly yellow light from the setting sun still lay upon the floor—the door through which his daughter had passed out for evermore was still open. Hot anger was rising in his

heart. Up to the present he had been mastered and distressed by surprise and pain; now the wonder was past, the pain deepened, and he grew wrathful. What right had this man, his dead wife's brother, to come and take his child from him? If it had been Hettie, it would have been more bearable—for he was by no means averse to money—but Leah, bright, beautiful, proud Leah, who was to have crowned the name of Ray with fame—it was worse than parting with his life's blood to lose her. Angry passion surged in his heart against the man who had taken her. He could not endure the simple, innocent prattle of the child who had been faithful to him. He turned to her with a darkening face that almost frightened her.

"Hettie," he said, "you are too young to know all that a vow imports; but you understand its solemnity?"

With beautiful wondering eyes she answered "Yes."

"You must register a vow to me," he said. "I will not hear that man's name again. I forbid you to mention it. Swear to me that neither his name nor that of the girl he has taken with him shall ever pass your lips. Swear it, Hettie."

Pale and trembling, the girl looked at him.

"I am afraid," she said. "I have never sworn in all my life. Let me promise that I will do as you wish, father; that will meet the case as well. I shall keep my word."

"No, you must swear it, Hettie. For the rest of my life I shall trust no one—neither man, woman, nor child; every promise made to me shall be bound by an oath. You need not tremble, child; many persons take oaths."

"But if I break it."

"That is the very thing," he said. "You hesitate, Hettie, not because you are afraid of an oath, but because in your heart you intend to keep up a correspondence with Leah. If you do so, you will never more be child of mine. If ever I find that by word or deed you have in any way

sought her or held any communication with her, that moment we part, and the curse of an unhappy, disappointed father will rest upon you until you die."

"Oh, not that! Do not say that!" cried Hettie.

"Then swear what I wish you to swear, and bear in mind always the punishment that will follow if you do not keep your oath. Swear to me that the names of the two in question shall never pass your lips, and that, in no circumstances will you ever hold any communication with either by word, deed, sign, or letter."

She was a timid, frightened, loving child, and she swore as he bade her; then he was content.

"I am going out, Hettie," he said. "While I am away see that everything belonging to my dead daughter is sent from the house. You can give them away, burn, or destroy them; but they must not be here when I return. After that, our new life will begin."

He went away, and Hettie was left to her sorrowful task—to look at the bookshelves and take from them every book bearing the beloved name, to go to the room where only on the previous night they had talked, and wondered, and slept, and remove from it everything that belonged to Leah—to take from the drawers all her neat pretty dresses, to collect all her laces and ribbons, every little ornament, and pack them together. What tears she shed! What anguish of heart, what sorrow, what unutterable pain she felt! She cried until she became ill and faint.

At last her task was accomplished, and she had everything securely packed in one large trunk; then came the difficulty—what was she to do with it? She remembered that not far away a girl lived who had been an invalid for many years, and who would doubtless be delighted with the contents. To her Hettie sent the trunk, saying that her sister had departed from home, and had left these things to be given away. And, thus, when Martin Ray returned,

and looked inquiringly at Hettie, asking if his commands had been obeyed, she was able to answer "Yes."

Then they began the new life ; but oh, the blank, awful horror of it—the gloom, the chill that came over them ! Martin Ray sat moodily smoking his pipe, while Hettie tried to interest herself in her domestic duties. There was no Leah. Ten times an hour Martin Ray turned to look for the beautiful face he had loved so well ; then, with a muttered oath, he told himself that she was dead. Twenty times in an hour Hettie turned with an involuntary cry for Leah, forgetting for one happy moment what had happened, and then she would recall it with something like despair.

It was a chill, terrible blank, of which neither spoke, although their hearts were filled with the sense of it. The tea-table, with two solitary cups ; the piano, where the beautiful, passionate face would be seen no more—everything spoke of her. Then at night came the friends and comrades of Martin Ray, eager to see and hear more of the beautiful girl introduced to them on the preceding evening as one of the brightest coming lights. Few words were spoken between them ; but they all understood in what manner Martin Ray had lost his daughter. There was little outward display of sympathy among these men ; but in each heart hatred of "the aristocrats" burned on that evening hotter than ever.

Martin Ray had learned his lesson. He would not have Hettie present at these meetings, as Leah had been. He told her to take her book and go to her room, and the poor child obeyed. There and then, for the first time, she seemed to realize what had befallen her. The room frightened her by its dreary, cheerless aspect ; she had not known before how much of its cheerfulness and brightness was owing to Leah. With passionate love and bitter tears she kissed the pillow on which Leah's head had rested.

She could understand how Leah was willing to leave her father, but not how she could leave her.

"I could not have left Leah," she said to herself. "If the choice had lain between death and leaving Leah, I would have died."

She wondered how she should live through all her life without her sister. She grew ill and faint when she thought of the oath she had taken. Even if she met her the next day, she could not speak of her; she had gone out of her life forever; and, as she thought of this, no foreshadowing came to her of the time when she and her sister would cross each other's path in the strangest of fashions. No sleep came to the unhappy child that night. If for a few moments she forgot herself, she woke with a cry for Leah on her lips.

Martin Ray did not remain long in that house. He said nothing, but the chill and desolation of the rooms once brightened by his daughter's beautiful presence were too much for him; he could not endure the place. She had gone from his life altogether, but he found to his surprise that he could not root her from his heart and thoughts, as he had intended to do. Just then his career was almost ended in Manchester. He had lectured and taught; he had been the cause of several disturbances, he had longed that the Government would prosecute him and make a martyr of him, but the Government had declined so to dignify him. There was really a reason why he should seek "fresh fields and pastures new."

Hettie would of course go with him. When he spoke to her, he found that the idea of leaving Manchester was most pleasant to her. She did not think that anything in life could ever make her happy again, but it would be, at least, some little relief to be away from the place that was haunted by the memory of the sister she would in all probability never see again.

So Martin Ray left Manchester. He lived successively in Liverpool, in Sheffield, and in many of the large towns which are centres of manufacturing industry. There his fortunes wavered ; sometimes he was called Martin Ray the patriot, and at others he was sneered at as an agitator. So the years passed, and he saw the beautiful face of his child no more. And the sisters who had lived together, who had loved each other so well, who had never been parted for an hour, drifted further from each other every day, never to meet until the lines of their lives had crossed again, and the real tragedy of their womanhood had begun.

CHAPTER IX.

VERY few soldiers attain military honors so early as General Sir Arthur Hatton, K.C.B. One thing was certain, he was born a military genius, as some men are born poets and others painters. He had been a soldier in heart from his earliest childhood—from the day he first saw a Line regiment pass through the streets and heard the band playing “Rule, Britannia,” the sound of which raised a flame in his heart that was never extinguished.

“I shall be a soldier, father!” he cried out to Amos Hatton.

“You shall if you wish it,” replied the old lawyer. And from that day the lad’s vocation was considered a settled thing.

It was his sole delight. He went through the preliminaries with honor; he studied hard; it was prophesied of him, by those in authority, that he would prove to be a genius, an honor to the service; and the country, they told him, wanted such men.

He was little more than a boy when he obtained a commission in the army, and the young ensign started with every prospect in life bright before him.

Fortune smiled upon him. Before he had been very long in the service, his regiment, the Queen’s Own Rangers, was ordered to the Punjaub. He was appointed to some small military command, one that required tact, courage, and skill. In a few years he had made his name famous. When the Queen’s Own Rangers went home, he remained, and a post of greater importance was given to him. After a time he distinguished himself still further, and the Government was not slow to reward his services.

He was made a general after a brilliant action in which he had shown great personal valor and had saved the troops from a crushing disaster. There was not a man on the field who would not have risked his life for the brave commander who was no carpet knight; for he did not show others the way to victory, yet shirk all danger himself. His bronzed handsome face and tall figure were always seen in front, always in the midst of peril, always meeting death face to face. He was the type of officer whom men follow blindly even to certain destruction.

By his courage and gallantry he rendered a great service to the Viceroy of India, and in return he received the Order of the Star of India. The motto of the Order was one engraven on his heart—"Heaven's light our guide." Slowly but surely he mounted the ladder which leads to fame. He was made a baronet, and soon afterwards the Order of the Bath was given to him. He was a thorough soldier; he lived for his profession alone.

He had found time, in the midst of all his occupations, to marry—though General Sir Arthur Hatton never made much pretense of having married for love—a rich widow, Lady Bourgoyne, whose husband had been one of the wealthiest men in India, and had left the whole of his fortune to her. The fair widow herself had given the first sign of preference for Sir Arthur. She admired the gallant soldier, with his bronzed, handsome face and fine figure. She gave him to understand, in a royal kind of fashion, that she liked him.

Hitherto Sir Arthur had not given a thought to love or marriage. He looked upon matrimony as something not quite fitted for a soldier. He wondered a little when he heard of officers and privates marrying. He wondered yet a little more when he thought of all that the wives and mothers had to suffer.

He was amused, rather than otherwise, when Lady Bour

goyne commenced to woo him. When she first began to distinguish him by her attentions, he was timid and half shy, wholly amused, and quite ignorant of what to do or say. Lady Bourgoyne managed it all for him. Considering that she was at that time one of the most popular and wealthy women in the whole presidency, her admiration and evident liking for the general created no small sensation. She married him at last; for, oddly enough, in speaking of the wedding, no one ever remarked that the general had married Lady Bourgoyne.

They lived together happily for many years. Lady Hatton was one of the best and most submissive of wives. She simply adored her husband, and lived for his happiness. He seemed to be always more or less surprised at himself for having married. When Lady Hatton died, she left the whole of her enormous fortune to him. Sir Arthur missed his wife; he mourned for her with all sincerity; and he lived on without knowing that his heart was still sleeping, and had never awakened to the least knowledge of true love.

Before his marriage he had received the letter written by his sister, and it had touched him deeply. He had loved little Doris very dearly. She was but a child when he had left home, yet he retained the liveliest and most loving memory of her. He said to himself, when he read the letter, that he would most certainly attend to her wishes. But it was a difficult thing to do. He was thousands of miles from home, and his time was incessantly occupied. He delayed from day to day, not quite knowing what to do, until at last the letter was put away with other papers and forgotten. Then came the busiest part of his life; he married, lost his wife, doubled his fortune, and resolved upon returning to England. He resigned his command, gathered together his wealth, and, to the great regret of all who knew him, sailed for his native land. He had

spent the best part of his life in India, he had accumulated much treasure, and he determined that he would spend the few last years of his life in ease and enjoyment. Under the heat of the tropical sun, and amid the discomforts of a tropical clime, this had been his one idea, the one dream in which he had revelled—to return home, and in the heart of his native land, fairer to him than any other on which the sun shone, make for himself a perfect home.

Everything succeeded as he wished. The princely mansion and estate of Brentwood were in the market, and the general's solicitors declared that he could not do better than purchase them. He did so; the grand old house, with its magnificent grounds, its woods, and streams, became his, and he was proud of it. Brentwood stands in the beautifully-wooded and picturesque county of Warwickshire; the lovely Avon runs near it, great hills crowned with trees stretch out on either side. Brentwood Hall and Brentwood Park have been famous in picture and song for many generations. The general was pleased with his new designation—"Sir Arthur Hatton of Brentwood."

Many people wondered if he would marry again; but the general had no such intention. He knew nothing of house-furnishing or decoration; but he gave *carte-blanche* to Messrs. Carson and Son, the famous upholsterers, the result of which was that he had one of the most magnificently furnished houses in England. He had a correspondingly heavy bill to pay. He looked at it, sighed, wondered what his wife would have thought of it, drew a check for it, and forgot it. When the Hall was ready for occupation, he took up his residence there. All his papers were sent to him, and, looking over them one day, for the purpose of arranging them, he found his dead sister's letter that had been hidden away for so long. He re-read

it with a smothered cry of self-reproach. He had forgotten it all these years.

He determined to make amends at once. He loathed the name of Martin Ray. Amos Hatton had not spared his daughter's husband, and the strength of his hatred had been imparted to his son. Sir Arthur Hatton had the utmost contempt for one whom in his own mind he always called "the demagogue;" but he felt inclined to love and adopt his sister's children.

It was by no means a difficult matter to find out Martin Ray's address. The general had been struck at once with the proud, delicate beauty of Leah, and the promise of fair loveliness in Hettie. It was not strange, he reflected; for his sister had been beautiful. He saw at once that there was something wrong between Martin Ray and his eldest child. Her words puzzled him. "I have been praying," she said, "for some one to deliver me from this furnace of fire, and Heaven has sent you." His heart went out to the beautiful trembling girl who had come to him, and chosen life with him. She should be to him—so he swore—as his own daughter, his heiress, the great comfort of his life. He loved her, and was grateful to her. Yet he admired Hettie; the memory of her, as she stood with her arms clasped around her father's neck, her exquisite tenderness, her calm decision, were never forgotten by him. Both girls had noble natures; of that he felt sure. But, as he drove away from the house with his beautiful niece in his care, he asked himself which had the nobler nature of the two—Leah, whose whole soul had rebelled against the teaching, belief, the life of her father, who loathed the task he had wished her to perform, who had been thankful to escape, even at the risk of never seeing father or sister again; or Hettie, whose loyal, tender heart had clung more closely to the father whom Leah abandoned.

Which was the nobler of the two he could not decide.

He admired the beautiful, proud girl who would sooner sacrifice the loves of her life than become what her father wished to make her; he admired her rebellion against what she believed to be mean, false, and unholy. He admired the faithful love with which the younger girl clung to her father. He could not tell which he thought the nobler, which he admired the more? but one thing was certain—he loved Leah best. Leah had chosen him and the life he was ready to offer her; Hettie had refused both, therefore he would always love Leah best. Still his heart yearned over the girl who had her mother's blue eyes.

“I must be content,” he said to himself. “After all it is fair. I have one child, he has the other. Even Doris herself would scarcely have cared to see him deprived of both.”

CHAPTER X.

GENERAL SIR ARTHUR HATTON and his niece were soon settled in their new and magnificent home. To Leah it seemed as though she must be in the whirl of a dream. Her own story was to her very much like one of the fairy tales that had delighted her when she was a child. "I am a real Cinderella," she said to herself, with a smile. But in no way did she resemble that humble little maiden. She was proud by instinct and by nature. She was proud of her mother's name of Hatton, of the good old family from which her mother came, of the blood that ran in her veins from her mother's side. She was proud of being true to herself, of being loyal to what she believed to be right principles.

The compact made between her uncle and herself had not been broken. The name of Ray had been given up and she had adopted that of Hatton.

"We will have no false pretenses," the general had said. "You are my adopted daughter and heiress, but every one must know that you are my niece. I am in the place of your father; but while one lives who claims the title I should not like to usurp it. You are my niece, Leah Hatton; and, as we are discussing the subject for the last time, let me say that, should you ever wish to marry, I will myself tell to your future husband what I think he ought to know of your history. You must not do it yourself."

After that, not another word was spoken between them on the subject.

People were not curious. It was sufficient to know that Leah Hatton was the adopted daughter and heiress of General Sir Arthur Hatton, K. C. B., one of the wealthiest and most famous men in England,

Leah was troubled at first when she saw the magnificence of the home that was to be hers. She imparted her fears frankly enough to the general, but he smiled at them.

“My dear Leah,” he said, “no woman can be more than a lady—can be more than refined, well-bred, graceful and accomplished. You are all those. You will soon be accustomed to the new life; you will adapt yourself to it naturally. If there is any little deficiency in your knowledge of society matters, you will meet it by studying attentively the habits and manners of those about you.”

From the first moment she entered his house she was, he told her, entirely mistress of it—there was no appeal against her authority. Most girls of her age would have been too young for such a position; but Leah was older than her years. It was a marvellous change for her, from the small, gloomy house in a dull street to that grand old mansion, where everything bespoke the pride of wealth and luxury. Some young heads would have been turned by it. Hers was not. She fell into the position so naturally that no one would have dreamed that she had ever held any other. Miss Hatton of Brentwood was quite a different girl from Leah Ray.

Sir Arthur had behaved in the most munificent manner. He had taken Leah first to London. It was a novelty for him to have the charge of a young and beautiful girl.

“You must have everything perfect, my dear niece,” he said, “before you go to Brentwood. The eyes of servants are so quick to notice deficiencies. We must have a wardrobe, a case of jewels, and a lady’s-maid before we go home.”

Leah purchased just what she would, and Sir Arthur presented her with a superb suite of rubies.

“I have whole boxes of precious stones at Brentwood,”

he said ; “ and you must choose from them, Leah. Most of them were spoils, I believe, once in possession of Sir George Bourgoyne. My wife left them all to me.”

“ That has a magnificent sound, uncle,” she returned — “ ‘ whole boxes of precious stones.’ ”

“ My dear,” he said, simply, “ it is true. I could not enumerate the treasures that my wife possessed. I do not care about them myself. I dislike the sacking of cities, but Sir George did not. My wife had shawls worth any money, jewels of every kind, the finest satins, the rarest lace. She had embroidery and silk, ornaments of gold and of ivory, embroideries of silver and of gold. I have never known what to do with them, but now I give them all to you.”

“ To me ” she exclaimed — “ all those treasures to me ! Uncle, you must think over it ; perhaps you may want them some day. You might marry again.”

“ Never,” replied the general, calmly. “ I have the greatest respect and veneration for all women ; but I shall never marry again.” He was about to add that he had not intended to marry at all, but he stopped himself. “ They are all yours,” he repeated. “ They have not been unpacked even yet ; but when we reach Brentwood, they shall be put in your possession. India was a land of treasure, Leah.”

“ My life grows more like a fairy-tale every day,” she said to herself ; and from the depths of her heart came a great sigh that she could not share her treasures with Hettie.

Sir Arthur soon provided his beautiful young niece with a magnificent wardrobe ; no marriage *trousseau* prepared for a princess could have been more elaborate, more costly. A clever, bright Parisian maid was also found ; and Sir Arthur purchased for Leah one of the handsomest

hacks in London, engaging at the same time a staid and dapper groom.

When all was ready and provided, they went down together to take possession of Brentwood. It was a bright beautiful day, and the park looked lovely; the grand old hall, in the dazzling sunlight, was strikingly picturesque.

"Is this Brentwood, uncle?" asked Leah, her face growing pale with emotion as she gazed upon it.

"Yes, my dear; and it is a fitting home for the Hattons. It is mine now; it will be yours when I die."

"Mine!" she exclaimed; and a solemn sense of heavy responsibility came over her.

"Yes, yours, Leah; I have no relatives but you."

"It must be a fairy-tale," she said to herself; but her heart beat fast when her uncle led her into the magnificent abode that was to be her own in the years to come.

Though so grand and stately, there was something home-like about Brentwood. The rooms were all light and lofty, full of sunshine, and from most of them there was an uninterrupted view of the green undulating park; the corridors were long and spacious. In the whole mansion there was not one gloomy spot; the windows were large, the perfumed breeze from the gardens seemed to sweep through the place. It was very ancient—rich in grand oak carvings, priceless oak-panelled walls with every kind of pretty nook and corner. Just where one least expected it was some bright little room, some flowery corner, some deep bay-window overlooking beautiful scenery, some pretty quiet nook seemingly made for *tete-a-tetes*. There were a large picture-gallery and a fine ballroom.

"We shall be happy here, Leah," said the general; "we have everything to make us so."

And she smiled in the fulness of content. But when she had taken possession of the suite of rooms prepared for her, when the magnificent dresses had been put away

in the wardrobes made of cedar-wood, when the superb store of Indian treasures had all been examined, when she had grown accustomed to the luxury of a lady's maid and a groom, of horses and carriages, her heart turned with a great and wistful yearning to Hettie. She had loved her; and that love, checked by the rebellion against her fate, returned with double force now that her fear and dread were gone. To her proud, sensitive mind, it appeared a species of cowardice to leave her sister to a fate she could not bear herself. Yet Hettie had elected to be so left; she would not come away with her. Her remembrance of that loving sister was the only drawback to her perfect happiness.

She was alone in the cozy morning-room one morning when Sir Arthur came to seek her, his face full of delight.

"Leah," he cried, "can you guess what strange, good fortune has happened to me?"

She looked up at him with the brightest of smiles.

"How can I guess, uncle, when you have already all the good fortune in the world?"

"I have my share of it, Leah; that is quite certain. But this piece of good luck is something quite unlooked for and unexpected. You have heard me speak of a very dear friend I had many years ago—a young captain in our regiment—Harry Egremont?"

"Yes," replied Leah, who delighted in nothing so much as in listening to her uncle's stories of Indian life. "Yes, I remember the name."

"He was one of the finest fellows in the world," cried the general—"so simple, generous, brave, and noble! I have lost sight of him for many years. I hear that he has unexpectedly succeeded to a peerage. I find that he is Duke of Rosedene, and that he lives only seven miles from here. His estate and mine run parallel for miles and I am so delighted, Leah."

"So am I, for your sake," she said. "What is the place called?"

"Craig," he replied. "Do you remember a picture in the gallery of a grand old gray mansion standing in the midst of a magnificent woodland, with the sunset falling over it? That is Craig. The duke and duchess live there about three months in the year; they are generally in town for the season, and during the rest of the year they live at Dene Abbey, a beautiful place in Sussex."

"Then the duke is married?" said Leah.

"Yes; he married a fashionable beauty, and I hear that she is a very nice woman. I am glad for your sake; she will be such an excellent friend for you. They are at Craig. I shall go over to-morrow, and then you will see that all your difficulties will be ended."

On the morrow he carried out his resolve, and received a welcome that made his heart glad. The Duke of Rose-dene was delighted to see him; he overwhelmed him with the warmth of his greeting.

"To think," he cried "that I should have you for a neighbor! It is the greatest piece of good fortune that could have fallen to my lot."

Sir Arthur asked for the duchess, who received him with a pleasant, gracious manner that charmed him. To her, in his simple fashion, he opened his heart about his niece; he told her how beautiful she was, and that he had adopted her as his daughter and heiress. The duchess was too much of a woman of the world to express any surprise; but, remembering his vast wealth, she knew that his heiress would at once become a person of distinction.

"It is my niece," he said, "That I want to interest your grace in. As my old friend's wife, you will do me a kindness for his sake, I am sure."

"I will do it for your own," responded the duchess, kindly; her heart warmed to the brave soldier who thought

so little of himself and so much of others. "I will do all that you wish for your niece," she continued; "and, as a preliminary, I will drive over to see her to-morrow."

And, much delighted, the general took his leave.

CHAPTER XI.

THE Duchess of Rosedene was fastidious even to a fault. Public opinion was often led by her. If she approved of anything, it was sure to be perfection; if she disapproved, it was generally found that she was right. To know her was to have the right of *entree* into the most exclusive circles; not to know her was in itself a confession of inferiority. To be on her visiting-list, to attend her "at homes," to be asked to her balls—the best given in London—were honors for which every belle, every fashionable woman sighed. She was the only child and wealthy heiress of an earl, and her marriage with the Duke of Rosedene had been dictated by pure affection alone.

They were exceedingly happy; but there was one cause for disappointment—they had no children. This was the one cloud in their bright sky. At the duke's death his estate and titles must pass into strange hands. It was a grievous trouble to them. In order to forget it, the duke flung himself into the whirl of politics and the duchess into all the gayeties of the world. She was one of the most popular and most highly esteemed women in England. Her name figured everywhere—in lists of charities, in every work of benevolence. She was the patroness of innumerable bazars, fancy fairs, and other fashionable methods of doing good. To be chaperoned by the Duchess of Rosedene was a guarantee of success. But she

was fastidious, and not easily pleased. She had given a promise, charmed by the simple earnestness of the general; but she wondered if she had done a wise thing. With an anxious face she went to her husband.

"The Hattons are a good family, are they not?" she asked.

"One of the oldest and best in England," replied the duke. "Greatly fallen off, I believe; but one may still be proud of knowing them."

"I wish," said the duchess, "that I had seen the girl before I made the promise."

"I am quite sure you need not fear," rejoined the duke. "If she is like the rest of the Hattons, she will be all right."

But the duchess declared that she was a little nervous.

"I would do anything," she said, "for your friend. I like him immensely. But I have promised so much for the girl—to chaperon her, to present her; and, if she should not be just what I like, it will be awkward."

The duke assured her that she might rest content.

The next day she went over to Brentwood. Any fear she might have had was dissipated by the sight of the face and figure of Leah. Her manner was simply perfection. She showed no over delight, yet she was most attentive and polite to the duchess. She allowed her to see that she felt her visit to be a great honor, yet that, while she acknowledged it, she was in no way unduly elated over it. The duchess was charmed with her. She thought Leah one of the most beautiful and graceful girls she had ever seen. She was struck by her face. There was more than mere beauty; passion, poetry, and eloquence were in it. She marvelled at Leah's grace, her good breeding, her accomplishments, and her refined education. She felt there was none more fair, graceful, or better fitted to take a high position in society. "I shall be proud of her," thought

the duchess; "it will be difficult to surpass her." It was not often that her Grace of Rosedene deigned to chaperon any young lady; but when she did it was done effectually.

She watched Leah with keen eyes. Every gesture, every pose, every word pleased her. "She should marry well," thought the duchess. "There will not be another face like hers next season." Yet, beautiful as it was, there was something in its expression which the duchess did not quite understand—the dawn of restless passion, the longing that could never be gratified, the story that could never be told. "She is not like other girls," thought her grace; "what satisfies them will never content her. There is something like a longing for the infinite in those dark eyes of hers." And in that moment, seated in Sir Arthur's luxurious drawing-room, surrounded by everything most costly and lovely, looking into the fair, proud face of Leah Hatton, there came to the duchess a foreboding that made her grow faint and pale with fear.

They were delighted with each other. The duchess pressed Leah to go over to Craig on the following day.

"I am sorry," she remarked, "that we are not remaining longer in the neighborhood; but, go where we will, you must remember our compact. We are to be friends always. Do not forget that I am to be your 'social god-mother,' and that next season I am to present you. I predict for you a grand success."

The duchess added how delighted she would be if, in the winter months, Leah could join them in a trip she and her husband intended taking to Rome.

That same evening the duke, entering his wife's boudoir, found her standing against the window, looking thoughtfully out on the tall, spreading trees. She did not see him or hear him, and started violently when he laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"What are you thinking about, Muriel?" he asked.

"I do not often find you meditating."

She looked up at him gravely.

"I am thinking," she said, "about Leah Hatton's eyes."

"What is the matter with them?" he asked, laughing.

"I saw nothing wrong."

"There is nothing wrong," she replied. "They are the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen. Do you remember that superb heartsease of which Hawkins, the gardener, was so proud? It was not black, but rather a rich dark purple with a gleam of gold in it. Her eyes are of just such a color. I thought of the heartsease the moment I saw them. Yet it was not the color, rare and perfect though it be, that struck me the most; it was the expression. I am quite sure, Harry, that she will have no common fate."

"My dear Muriel," said the duke, "you are surely not growing romantic?"

"No, I am not; but there is something in the expression of the girl's eyes—a passionate longing; I wonder for what—whether for happiness, for wealth, for honors, or for love?"

"Do you not class happiness and love together?" asked the duke.

"Not in her case, I'm sure!" cried the duchess. "If ever that girl loves, it will be with her whole heart; and you know my belief on that point—any woman who loves with her whole heart suffers the direst pain with the most exquisite bliss. To be really comfortable in this life, there must be no grand passions."

"Perhaps you are right," replied the duke. "For steady wear in the long run, ours was the best kind of love, Muriel."

"I am sure of it," she answered. "A grand passion would have killed me."

"Yet you love me with all your heart, Muriel?"

"With all my heart," she replied. "There are women and women, loves and loves. That girl, depend upon it, Harry, has a power of loving to which I am thankful to say, most women are strangers."

"Yet her face is not at all expressive of tenderness," said the duke; "it tells rather of pride."

"It is proud, but there is concentration in it. She will love but few; and those few she will love well. I feel as though I had been looking at the picture of some beautiful queen of tragedy, some heroine of a grand poem; I cannot shake off the impression that her face has made upon me. But she is coming over to-morrow, and then I can study her at my ease."

The duke smiled to himself; it was some time since he had seen his stately wife so deeply impressed.

"Was her mother a lady?" asked the duchess, suddenly.

"Yes; her mother was Sir Arthur's sister. She married, I believe, beneath her."

"Then why is she called Hatton?" asked her grace.

"Because Sir Arthur has adopted her. It is perfectly natural that she should take his name." And the duchess never gave the subject a second thought.

Sir Arthur had been equally pleased. He had watched the duchess' face when she first saw Leah, and noted the flash of delighted admiration.

"Your niece is most charming," she had said to him in her gracious way. "Bring her over to Craig, to-morrow."

He congratulated Leah; and she smiled with wondering eyes. "It must be a fairy-tale, uncle," she said. "A few weeks since, Het——" She stopped abruptly, for she was on the point of pronouncing the name she had promised never to mention. The very effort to check herself blanched her face and lips. The general appeared

not to notice it. "But a few weeks since," she said, "I had but one pair of gloves—and they were so mended and darned that I was ashamed to wear them—and not five shillings of my own in the wide world. Now I am mistress of Brentwood, your adopted child and heiress; I have a fortune in the treasures you have given me; a duchess takes me by the hand and asks me to be her friend; I am promised all that this world can give me—the loveliest, brightest, happiest life. Now, is it not like a fairy-tale?"

"Yes," he replied, looking at her face.

He wondered if, in the dawn of that rich, passionate loveliness, there was the beginning of sorrow or of joy.

In the course of a few weeks, Leah was quite at home amidst the luxury and magnificence of Brentwood. As time passed on, the memories of the old painful life grew weak; the love of her fair young sister was the strongest passion that remained. She thought of her father with a dread that was strangely mingled with regret and love; but she thought of him as little as possible; her heart and her reason were at war with each other over him. She was grateful for her escape from what she termed "a furnace of fire."

She was warmly welcomed at Craig; the duchess even grew attached to her; and when, after a gay autumn and innumerable shooting-parties, the time for the projected tour to Rome came, she invited Leah to accompany her. At first the general was inclined to refuse. He had just learned, he said, that he could not live without her, and it was cruel to wish to take her away. But when the duchess showed him all the advantages to be gained, he yielded at once.

"You have asked me to complete your niece's education," she said; "in no way can it be done better than by taking her abroad. A few weeks with me in Paris and in

Rome will change her altogether ; she will be a different girl."

He fixed his eyes lovingly on Leah,

"Do you think it well to change her?" he asked, slowly. "She seems to me perfect."

"If you intend to make her a woman of the world, she must change in some respects," said the duchess, a little impatiently. "Leave her to me, Sir Arthur ; I will promise that you shall be satisfied with the result."

And after that Sir Arthur offered no further opposition.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Duchess of Rosedene was detained for a considerable time on the Continent by a severe illness of her husband, and in reply to her anxious entreaties the general allowed his beautiful niece to remain with her. Although his heart yearned for her, and his eyes longed once more to behold her, he knew that the care and training which the duchess could bestow were invaluable, and were such as he could not have found elsewhere. He was content to wait.

During Leah's absence he purchased a magnificent mansion in Belgravia, to which, in loving memory of his native town, he gave the name of Harbury House. The decorations were so magnificent, the furniture was so elegant and costly, that public attention was drawn to the house, and it soon became known that Sir Arthur had made this purchase for his adopted niece and heiress, who was now in Italy with the Duchess of Rosedene, and who was—so rumor said—as beautiful as a vision.

People looked forward with interest to the time when the brilliant young beauty should be presented and take her place among them. It was a pity, certain spinsters and widows declared, that with such vast wealth and so many places to keep up, Sir Arthur did not marry himself; his beautiful young niece would have some one to look after then. But the keen blue eyes of General Sir Arthur Hatton were never to look on any woman with love,

The duke's health having been quite restored, the duchess had arranged that the travelling party should return to London at once. It was then the very end of April, and the season had begun. A drawing-room had been held, at which some fair young faces had been seen; but she knew that none could have equalled that of Leah Hatton.

The duke had a grand old mansion named Park View close to Hyde Park, while the duchess had a villa which she preferred to any other resort; it was called the Reach. It was situated on the Thames, not far from Kew, and nothing delighted her grace more than to escape from the crowd and spend a few days on the banks of the river.

The duke and duchess went direct to Park View. Sir Arthur was invited to meet them, and from their house he was to take Leah home. He was impatient to see her. The duchess had told him that she had changed so completely he would hardly recognize her. He longed to see what change had been effected; to his way of thinking, she could not have grown more beautiful.

He stood in the drawing-room at Park View. At first he saw only the pictures, the gleam of white statues, the harmonious tints of thick, soft carpets, the brightness of innumerable flowers, the groups of sweet violets which perfumed the air; then, standing before him, the handsome, stately duchess, with white, jewelled hands held out in greeting to him; then, further away, near a slender, shapely palm, he discerned a figure and face so perfectly

beautiful that he looked in amazement. It was his niece Leah. The long absence had wonderfully improved her. He grew pale as he went up to her and kissed her in silence, for his emotion was too great for words.

The duchess had been right after all. Nothing but constant association with an accomplished and refined woman of the world could have given such high-bred ease and grace to her.

"My daughter and niece," he said, "you have been away little more than a year, yet there is a difference of many years in you."

"Are you satisfied?" asked the duchess, softly, some time afterward, when they found themselves alone.

"I should be most ungrateful were I anything else," he replied. "I can never thank you enough. I must confess myself overwhelmed with surprise."

"I do not feel much inclined to let my treasure pass out of my hands," said the duchess, with a smile. "If I intrust her to you, you must promise me that she shall not be seen until the day of the drawing-room. I want her to take the gay world by surprise. She will make a sensation such as we have not had for some time past. Do you not agree with me?"

"With every word," replied the general. "I feel myself almost in awe in the presence of such perfect and peerless loveliness."

"Mind," said the duchess, laughingly, "Leah must make the best match of the season. I shall not consider any one under an earl or duke presentable. She might have been a princess while we were in Rome, but she would not."

"I am glad of it," he declared. "There are no men like Englishmen. I hope she will marry—if she marries at all—some one who will be kind to her and make her happy."

It did not occur to him to add, "some one whom she loves." Love had never been a necessity of life with the old soldier.

Sir Arthur took his beautiful niece home that evening to Harbury House.

"Do you know why I gave this house the name of Harbury?" he said to her; and then he told her that it was in affectionate remembrance of the pretty town where his father had lived and died.

Magnificent as the house was, it was but a fitting shrine for the young beauty who had come to be mistress of it. When they stood in the drawing-room, Sir Arthur regarded his niece still more attentively.

"I should hardly have known you, Leah," he said, gently. "Among all the Hattons I do not think we have had one like you."

The exquisite face brightened.

"There are times, uncle," she said, "when I do not quite know myself—the change is so great to me."

"My dear Leah," he returned, in the earnest simple manner which always carried truth with it, "you were born for the station I hope to see you fill. It would have been ten thousand pities to—leave you where—you were."

That was the only allusion the general ever made to the past, and it seemed to be wrung from him by the surprise of her marvellous loveliness.

On that same night he showed Leah all over the magnificent mansion that he had made his own, with all its treasures of art and wealth.

"This will be yours when I die, Leah," he said; and he was proud to see that no flush of elation came to her face. "I wonder Leah," he said, suddenly, "if you could bear ill-fortune as well as you do prosperity?"

"I trust so," she answered; and the firm, steadfast expression on her face made him think that she could.

"I hope you will never be tried," he said.

They sat together for some time talking. He was charmed with Leah's manner, her bright, fascinating ways, her graceful, well-chosen words.

"You shall not leave me again, Leah," he said, "until you are married."

"I do not think I am one of the marrying kind," she replied, with a sweet, low laugh.

"Among the old Roman *noblesse* and gay Neapolitan princes was there not one you liked, Leah?"

"I liked them all in the same fashion," she replied "The Prince of San Sabino is, I should think, as handsome a man as could be seen in the world, with a most musical voice and most courtly manner. They call him the Roman Apollo."

"And even this Apollo did not interest you, Leah?" he said.

"No; so, dearest uncle, if we are to live together until I am married, I do not see any chance of our parting just yet."

"That's right," he said. "I could hardly bear to lose you at present, Leah. Let me see—how old are you now?"

"I am in my nineteenth year," she replied.

"And when is the drawing-room to be held?"

"Next Tuesday."

"And from that day a new life will unfold to you, I suppose. I wish you success; I could not wish it more earnestly were you my own daughter."

When, after a few days of anxious preparation, Leah stood before him dressed for her presentation, he owned himself perfectly well pleased. The duchess, whose taste was irreproachable, had chosen her court dress; and the general had presented her with a suite of diamonds—stone that shone and scintillated with every movement—diamonds that made many envious.

“Are you quite satisfied with me, uncle?” she asked, with a smile that deepened her bright loveliness.

“Quite,” he answered. “I always thought the fashion of wearing fathers awkward until now.”

The duchess called for her, and they drove away to the Palace together. The day was fine, the crowd great. Many of the royal family were present. There were *debutantes* from many of the noblest families in the land; but Leah outshone them all as a planet outshines the stars.

She never forgot the moment when she stood first in the presence of the gracious lady who rules the vast empire over which the sun never sets. Looking up with half-frightened eyes, she saw before her a noble, kindly face, with a pleasant smile, she saw the gleam of jewelled orders. A kindly voice was speaking to her. The niece of so brave and worthy a soldier as Sir Arthur Hatton could not but be welcomed by the sovereign whom he had so faithfully served. Looking at the royal lady, so true a woman, and so true a Queen, Leah bethought her of who she herself really was—the daughter of the man who used all his eloquence, and every other gift of Heaven to him, in his endeavors to hurl his sovereign from her throne, to turn the hearts of her people from her; and, as she bent low before the Queen, her eyes were dim with tears. True loyalty rose in her heart, and she thanked Heaven once more that she had been saved from what seemed to her worse than “a furnace of fire.” She could never have spoken against the Queen, or led the hearts of her people from her. She smiled to herself a half sad smile. It seemed so strange that she, who was once destined to be a lecturer against royalty, should now be presented to her Majesty.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM the day of her presentation a new life began for Leah. Hitherto she had seen but little of the world. In Rome and in Naples the Duchess had taken her out but little. She wanted her to take the London world captive by her fresh and undimmed beauty; she did so. On the day of the drawing-room little else was discussed but the loveliness, the rich dress, the costly jewels, the vast wealth of Miss Hatton. People even went into raptures over her name, and said that no other would have suited her dark passionate beauty.

In a few days "the beautiful Miss Hatton" grew famous—she became the rage. On the night of the day that she had been presented, the Duchess of Rosedene gave a sumptuous ball, at which she was the belle. Some young girls would have been both elated and excited by the sensation made. She was neither; she was cool, calm, stately as a young empress. Some of the noblest men in the land bowed before her, peers complimented her; but the beautiful face never flushed, the beautiful eyes never brightened with triumph.

"Who shall say that good blood does not tell?" thought the old soldier. "I do not believe her pulse would beat more quickly even if an emperor asked her to dance."

He was right; in this, the most brilliant scene in which she had ever mingled, a strange sense of unreality came over her. She could remember the fiery, passionate burning words with which her father had denounced all such gayeties and the men and women who joined in them; and yet, here was she, his eldest daughter, who had been trained

by him, the very queen of one of the assemblies he censured!

There was a few moments' pause for her, during which she said to herself that her past life shadowed the present, during which she wondered if she would have been perfectly happy had the past been different, had she been differently trained. Those watching her wondered at the shadow that seemed to fall over her face.

It was not the perfect beauty alone which attracted men, She was unlike most girls of her age. She was calm, but not content; nothing seemed to interest her long—the sweetest music, the most witty or animated conversation, could not hold her for any time. She was restless, as one always seeking something better than that yet found. The only time when she seemed quite satisfied was when she poured out all the pent-up passion and poetry of her nature in music of her own. Men were quick to perceive that she was not of the ordinary type of girls, that flattery did not touch her, that she was above all coquetry and flirtation. Half of those who met her went home that night raving of her.

The duchess was delighted with her success. She had felt sure of it, she had prophesied it; but it had far exceeded even her most sanguine anticipations.

"The world is at her feet, Sir Arthur," she said; "she can do as she will. No girl ever made a more successful *debut*. I am proud of her. Look at her now." The duchess was seated watching the dancing; Sir Arthur stood by her side. "Look," she continued, "at the easy self-possession. There is not the faintest flush on her face, not even the faintest stir in the diamonds that lie on her breast, not a quiver in the blossoms of the lovely flowers she holds."

Yet on one side of her stood a gallant, genial prince, on the other a group of the most notable men in the world

of fashion. She turned with ready attention from one to another, without coquetry, without affectation. The professional beauties fought shy of her, and were very hard in their criticisms, much to the amusement of the sterner sex; they did not see what there was to rave about. Lord Dunbar, who was supposed to be a good authority on beauty, said that if she had no other charm but that of the long dark silken lashes that fringed her eyes, she would still be the fairest of women.

The scene was like a dream to Leah, a dream that never quite faded. The golden flood of light that made everything so clear and distinct, the thousands of lovely fragrant flowers, the magnificent decorations, the grand crashing of the music, the fair faces, the rich dresses, the subdued silvery murmur of laughter and of sweet voices, the rhythm of the flying feet, the admiring eyes that rested on her, the deep voices, that had whispered compliments to her, lived in her memory for years. No other ball in after years was like this.

When they reached home Sir Arthur was surprised to find that his niece looked almost as dainty and as fresh as when she had started. The flowers had not withered in her hand, there was no sign of fatigue in the beautiful face, or of weariness in the dark eyes.

"It has been a grand success, Leah," said Sir Arthur, as he bade her good-night—"one of which we may both be proud."

"A grand success indeed," she replied. Yet even as she said the words, a sense of desolation and loneliness filled her heart.

A little later she stood in her luxurious dressing-room. Everything that surrounded her was costly; rich jewels gleaming in their satin cases, fans, slippers, ornaments of every kind, intermixed with choice flowers, made a very confusion of beauty; the delicate carpet of velvet pile was

soft and thick ; the hangings were of white and pink ; a few choice engravings adorned the walls ; treasures of marquetry, dainty carvings, and lovely statuettes told of the artistic taste which made the room a gem. She stood in the midst of it, her heart still beating with the emotion she had not been able to control. A success indeed ! Yet in the olden days, so far off, when she had been with Hettie for a stroll in the wood or by the sea, or even in the crowded streets of the city, she had felt happier and less lonely than now. She had everything that wealth and affection could lavish upon her, and yet she was lonely. If only the fair, loving sister were here ! If only the loving arms were round her, and she could kiss the sweet face ! A success ? Ay, it was that indeed ! But was she really happy ? Her maid had gone away, so she drew aside the curtains and stood at the window, watching the moonlight on the trees.

Was she happy ? What were the vague, curious desires that filled her heart ?

No girl in this world had a brighter future. True, there was a dark background to the past ; but the time to come seemed bright enough. She wondered what would make her happy ? Not money ; she had already many thousands, and the time would come when she would have more. Money had nothing to do with it. It was not rank or position, title or grandeur. She remembered that but a short time since she had heard the story of a beautiful and beloved young princess who was compelled from political motives to make a marriage of state. She heard of the sighs and moans that sounded at night in the palace, and how, on her wedding eve, the beautiful young princess was drugged to sleep. Ah, no it was not grandeur or rank ! The heart of a queen often aches as keenly as the heart of a peasant. There was something far better worth living for than all this.

Some exquisite lines were ringing vaguely through her brain of the desire of a moth for a star. Was she the moth, and happiness the star? There must be a bright, beautiful something in life that she had not reached yet, something higher and better than rank, fame, or gold, something that was the crown of life and the treasure of womanhood. The knowledge came to her, in that silent hour, that nothing would ever content her but "a great love"

CHAPTER XIV.

DURING the next three years Leah Hatton was the very queen of fashion. She was more popular, more sought, after, more admired, more beloved, more envied than any other woman of her day. Her beauty grew with her years. She was twenty-one now, and the magnificent promise of her girlhood had been fulfilled. Her loveliness had grown richer; the gleam in her dark eyes was brighter; the dainty bloom that had been faint as the hue of a blush rose had deepened; the face was radiant in its own loveliness—men found it more than fair. During those three years she had presided with infinite grace over the large establishment at Brentwood and the magnificent house in town. At Brentwood she had received party after party of guests, including some of the greatest statesmen of the day, and she was considered one of the most attractive hostesses in the land. In a wonderfully short time she acquired the art of entertaining, knew "who was who," and, in fact, was equal to all the requirements of social life. She never made any mistakes. After a few weeks the general found that he could with safety leave everything to her. The servants worshipped her; one word from their beautiful

young mistress was law. She was worshipped, too, by the poor around Brentwood, for she gave with a liberal hand; she was beloved by all her dependents, for she was both just and generous—by all who knew her for her beauty and talents and winsome grace. At Harbury House during those three seasons she was a queen. The best dinners, the best balls, the most successful private theatricals were given there. There were many other *debutantes*, but no one ever approached her; the throne she held was entirely her own.

Season after season the beautiful Leah Hatton came back to the gay world with fresh graces and charms. She was singular in many respects. She made many acquaintances, but very few friends. She had no girl-friend to whom she could speak of her thoughts and feelings; her heart grew sad when she thought of any one else in Hettie's place. Among the faces of the girls around her she saw not one so sweet and fair as Hettie's; and, remembering this, a coldness came to Miss Hatton which added to the effect of her proud young beauty. She was considered everywhere as the most eligible, the most desirable match of the day. It was well known that she was the general's niece; no one cared to ask whether she was the child of sister or brother. It was also well known that the whole of the general's vast fortune would be hers. She was at the very height of her popularity: people spared themselves no trouble to obtain even a glimpse of her fair face. When she went to the opera, more attention was paid to her than to the stage.

“Beautiful Leah Hatton!” What more in life could she desire than she had—wealth, popularity, affection? Yet she was not happy; her soul had found no rest. Brilliant and gay as was her life, it did not satisfy her. It was but as a dream to one who has infinite longings and infinite desires.

If Martin Ray succeeded in nothing else, he had done this for his daughter—he had taken her out of the common groove, he had made her think, he had filled her mind with a thousand ideas of life. These were always puzzling her. She had the air, the manner, the look of one whose thoughts and aims were higher and loftier than those of others. This added much to the charm of her passionate, proud beauty. The men who danced with her admired her the more because no flush of vanity came to her face. There was upon it the far-off look, the restless longing that nothing could gratify.

“As for lovers,” the duchess of Rosedene cried, holding up her hands in horror, “there is not an eligible man in the land who has not sought her! Such offers, and all refused! Refused too, without rhyme or reason! Leah has some notion that she must love some one, that love is the great end and aim of each one’s life—love—not wealth, pleasure, or gayety, but love; and, with such ideas, what can one do?” The duchess shrugged her shoulders as she spoke. “Love, with such prospects as she has before her!”

Some of the offers Miss Hatton received were dazzling ones. The young Earl of Barberry was handsome, talented and passionately fond of her. No; she would not be Countess of Barberry. There was the Duke of Lincoln, who had country seats, a town mansion, and untold wealth, who would have made her his duchess. She would not be Duchess of Lincoln; and she had no other reason to give than that she did not love him; and the one thing she longed for in this life was love.

“Love!” said the duchess. “It will come with marriage.”

“Not the love I want,” she replied; “that must come before. I want a romance in my life.”

"It is the way with those dark-eyed girls," said the duchess. "What a pity it is!"

Then a great legal celebrity fell in love with Leah; and of all the conquests she made that was certainly the most wonderful. He was a man whose name was a tower of strength, whose opinion was held in the highest esteem, and who had never spent one half-hour in wooing in his life. He grew desperate about her, and the wonder was that he did not run away with her. He could not realize his disappointment; he could hardly bear his life when she refused him. The duchess sighed, but said nothing. If the Earl of Barberry could not win her, there was little hope for the legal lord.

"You will marry some time, Leah," she said, with the resignation of despair.

"It is possible," she replied, smiling; "but it is more probable that I shall never marry at all."

"Should you mind telling me why?" asked the duchess, in tones of mock resignation.

"I will tell you, duchess; but you will be angry with me. I want some one to love me more than life itself—some one to be devoted to me, to give me all his thoughts, his whole life; I want his heart to be one with mine, his soul to be the other half of my soul. I want perfect love and I want a perfect lover. I have my ideal love, and no other will do; I have my ideal lover, and I shall wait for him."

"My dear Leah, you are all wrong," cried the duchess; "you are, indeed! Take care that you do not find such love and such a lover costly."

"I will take the pain, if there should be any, with the happiness," she said. "All my life I have thought that the one thing to be desired is love."

"There is no accounting for taste, Leah; but certainly, with such prospects as you have, to make love the chief

aim of your life is, to say the least of it, a sad pity. This ideal hero of yours is sure to be both poor and unknown."

Leah laughed again. How sweet that laughter was! The duchess smiled as she heard it.

"I cannot tell; he may be the very reverse of poor or unknown. I do not know who he is or where he may be. It is just possible that I may never meet him; but he exists somewhere. You know the old belief, duchess, that souls were made in halves, and that real marriage is the union of those half souls in one?"

"Oh, Leah," cried the duchess, laughing, "there is no hope for you!"

"Not much," she said, "for I believe that I am waiting for my ideal; and he, rely upon it, is seeking me somewhere. If we meet, I shall ask no more in life. He may be poor and unknown; if so, it will make no difference to me. He may be great, noble, and wealthy; it will be a matter of perfect indifference to me. Shall I shock you just a little more, duchess?" she added.

"Say what you will, my dear; I am resigned."

"I have an idea that the moment I see him I shall know him. I shall look into his face, and a revelation will come to me."

"A very dangerous notion, Leah. You may fall in love with the wrong man altogether."

"How can I, if my theory be true?" she replied. "I have no doubt it seems absurd to you; but it is a serious matter to me. I should not be surprised if some day I look into a face and hear a voice say: 'I have been looking for you all these years.'"

The duchess raised her hands.

"And this," she said musingly—"this is after five years spent almost entirely with me, after three seasons of brilliant, uninterrupted success!"

"I have enjoyed it," replied Leah; "but there must

be something better. Balls and operas, *jetes* and garden parties, dinners and picnics, dresses and diamonds, flattery and homage, are all very well—but they could not fill a life. There is no heart, no soul in them; and,” she continued, half sadly, “one must tire of them after a time.”

“Do you think so?” asked the duchess, looking at her gravely.

“Yes I do. One ball is like another—there are the same people, the same dances, music, jewels; all one’s partners say pretty nearly the same things. Dinners are the same—one differs very little from another. At the opera, although there is infinite beauty in the music, it is always the same story of love or jealousy. No, I do not think that even a life spent amid such brilliant scenes could fill one’s heart and soul.”

“You are a strange girl, Leah,” said the duchess. “Who would imagine that the belle of the season had such notions as these? You have made me very uncomfortable, my dear. I shall live now in dread always that some day or other you will meet with one whom you may choose to imagine your ideal, and do something rash. I always said that there was something in your face even that made you different from other girls. But, Leah as you have trusted me so far, trust me even further. Tell me, among all the men you have met—and you know the wisest the noblest, the best—is there not one of them whom you have liked!”

“Not one,” she replied. “I shall know when I meet my ideal; my heart shall speak and tell me. I have not met him yet.”

“When you do, my dear, I prophesy—— Well, I will not prophesy; I will only tell you that a grand passion brings more pain than pleasure; and that if you want to be happy you must avoid the terrible fever that men call love.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE Duke and Duchess of Rosedene had become very much attached to Leah, and when the season ended they begged the general and her to come to pay them a long visit at Dene Abbey. They were to remain there during the autumn and winter. Sir Arthur did not quite like the idea, and a compromise was made. The whole party were to visit Brentwood first, and remain there for six weeks; then they were to go to Dene Abbey and stay there as long as Sir Arthur wished—an arrangement which pleased every one. Leah by this time had grown to love the duchess so much that she never liked to be separated from her for long together.

Brentwood was looking its best at the end of July. The lovely month was as fair as it could be—not too warm, but with all the glory of sunlight, the song of birds, the bloom of flowers, the beauty of spreading trees and sing-brooks. There are few counties in England so charming as Warwickshire. Shady woods, green hills, clear, deep streams, meres on which the great white water-lilies sleep, valleys full of ferns and wild flowers, render it a beautiful county; and Brentwood was one of the most beautiful places in it. The mansion was built on rising ground overlooking the river Brent—a deep, clear stream, full of lights and shadows, that meandered through the fairest woodland and seemed to sing as it wandered, of the scenes it had left behind it. Of arches formed by the green willow-trees beside it, of dark, cold, shadowy nooks, of laughing hill-sides which glowed in the sun, of green fields, of white swans that sailed down it, of reeds and sedges through

which the wind made music, of pretty rustic bridges that spanned it, of lovers that whispered sweet words on its banks—of all these the river seemed to murmur.

The grounds of the mansion extended to the very banks of the river. There was a picturesque old boat-house, haunted, so rumor said, by the spirit of a jealous, unhappy lady who had drowned herself in the stream, and whose dead body had drifted into the cool, silent shadows of the boat-house, where it was found the next day.

The Brent woods were as beautiful as a dream—a fair, green kingdom, inhabited by the most musical of birds, by shy rabbits, by saucy squirrels, by a thousand living things known only to ardent students of Nature. There were avenues like great cathedral aisles, full of gleaming lights, half green, half gold; lovely shady “clearings,” where the flowers grew so that they formed a carpet—butter-cups and daisies, meadow-sweet and celandine, wild hyacinths and blue-bells, flowers enough to send a poet or artist into raptures. Hidden in the woods, too, were numerous little brooks, tributaries of the river Brent.

As the mansion stood on the slope of a great green hill, its appearance was very striking. From the background there seemed to arise a forest of green; on either side stretched smiling woodlands, and in front the beautiful terraces and grounds sloped down to the brimming river.

The general had invited several guests to Brentwood, and the party promised to be a very pleasant one.

“At some future day you will be sole mistress of this beautiful place, Leah,” said the duchess, as they were walking one morning on the great terrace.

“I suppose so,” she replied; “but I never like to think of the time. I wish that my uncle could live as long as if not longer than, I shall.” She seemed anxious not to continue the conversation, for soon afterward

she clasped her hands in delight. "O, duchess!" she said, "what quantities of my favorite passion-flower! And what colors—purple, scarlet, and blue! What rich clusters! I must gather some; they are like the faces of old friends smiling at me."

"You have brought passion-flowers into fashion," the duchess said smiling; "I never saw you without them. Why do you like them better than any other flower, Leah?"

"I do not know. I think it is because they are mystical flowers; they are full of mystery and passion and sorrow."

"You ought to like red roses best," said the duchess; "they suit you."

"No," returned Leah; "give me scarlet passion-flowers; they seem to me choicest of all."

"I suppose," laughed the duchess, "that when the ideal 'he' comes it will be discovered that his favorite flower is the passion-flower?"

"I should not be surprised," replied Leah, gently.

"That will be one of the signs by which you will know him," said the duchess, mockingly; but afterward the words came back to her, and she marvelled at them.

What the duchess had said was true—Leah had brought the passion-flower into fashion. It was her favorite. If in a fashionable crowd one saw the gleam of scarlet passion-flowers, it was certain that beautiful Leah Hatton was there. This fancy of hers was well known when Millar, the great artist, painted her portrait—that year the loveliest picture on the walls of the Royal Academy. He carried out the poetic idea; he painted her, in all the pride of her girlish beauty, in a dress of superb black velvet, with scarlet passion-flowers in her dark hair, on her white breast, and shining like flame in her shapely hand. The picture created quite as great a sensation as

the original had. People crowded to see it. The artist had named it "The Passion-flower," and those who saw it felt that there was some strange affinity between the beautiful face, with its dark eyes and wild-rose bloom, its ripe, scarlet lips, its dawn of passion, and the passion-flower. The critics all raved of it, society journals praised it, and it brought the mystical flower into fashion; and during the third season Miss Hatton spent in London she was known as the "Passion-flower."

"I have had an adventure this morning," said Sir Arthur, as they sat down to luncheon. "I find that the young master of Glen is expected home during the week. I lost my way in the woods, and came out quite close to the mansion; I have been all over it."

"Where and what is Glen?" asked the duchess.

And Sir Arthur smiled as he said:

"I ought to be a poet to answer you; it is almost impossible to do so in prose. Glen is simply one of the most lovely spots I know in England."

"More beautiful than Brentwood, uncle?" asked Leah.

"Quite different, Leah. Glen was once the dower-house of a queen; three hundred years ago it came into possession of the Carltons, and has been theirs ever since. It is simply perfect. Your eyes are almost dazzled by the gleam of sunlight in the waters of the many fountains, and by the bright colors of the flowers. The surroundings, too, are most picturesque."

"I should like to see it," said the duchess.

"So should I," added Leah.

"Fair ladies," cried Sir Arthur, "you shall see it whenever you will. The house itself looks so cheerful, no one would ever think that it had once been the scene of a tragedy."

"Was it?" asked the duchess. "Tell it to us."

"I am a new-comer," said the general, "and naturally enough, I know but little about it. But one of the gardeners at Glen spoke of the story this morning. I asked him how long the house had been closed, and he said fifteen years. Of course, I asked him how that was, and he said that Lady Carlton could never bear to enter it again, and that after the accident, she had taken her son, Sir Basil, to Italy, where she spent the remainder of her life, but that he, now that his mother was dead, was coming back to live here."

"What was the accident?" asked the duchess.

"A very horrible one. Lady Carlton was left a widow when she was very young. She had but two children—a girl and a boy; the daughter Adela, was seven years older than the son. She was a very winning girl, the very joy of Lady Carlton's heart. She fell in love—I forget who the lover was—and everything was arranged for the wedding. She was then eighteen, and the young brother only eleven. On the night before the wedding Lady Carlton gave a grand ball, and Glen was filled with a gay crowd of guests; they danced until the very walls seemed to rock. The old man told me that the bride was like some lovely laughing fairy. Just as the ball was closing, and when the happiness and gayety were greatest, a terrible cry was heard. It came from the supper-room, the grand old banqueting-hall where kings and queens had feasted. The guests rushed out, only to witness a most horrible scene. The beautiful bride, with terrible cries, was seen flying across the hall, her bright gossamer robes all aflame. Her light, fluttering ball-dress had caught fire, and, the draught of air fanning the flames, they met over her head, and enveloped her. For a moment every one was paralyzed; and then one of the guests, a gentleman, caught up a thick rug and rolled it round her. He was burned terribly, but he extinguished the flames. It was too late.

When the hapless lover hastened to the hall, he saw the girl lying in her agony on the ground, her golden hair burned, her face distorted, her pretty dress of white lace and the white water-lilies all hanging in scorched shreds around her. She spoke a few words to him, and then they carried her upstairs to die."

"What a terrible story!" said the duchess.

"When Lady Carlton recovered from the shock," added Sir Arthur, "she went abroad, and took her son with her. She died at Naples last year, and the master, Sir Basil, is coming home."

"It will be a great trial to him to return to the scene of such a catastrophe," said the kindly duchess. "You must ask him here as often as you can."

"The house is so cheerful, so bright and beautiful, you would never think that a tragedy had happened there."

"There is a tragedy associated with most houses, but the world does not know it," said the duchess.

"I pray heaven," said the general, "that there will never be one in this!"

CHAPTER XVI.

It was a lovely day in the first week of August. The laughing summer had taken full possession of the land; the yellow wheat and the glowing fruit had been kissed to ripeness by the warm sun. The sky was blue, without a cloud, and the fruitful earth fair to view. The river flowed calmly between the green banks, rustling through the reeds and sedges, stirring the great leaves of the lilies, rippling over the drooping boughs.

It was drawing near noon. Some of the men had sought the coolness of the billiard-room; some of the ladies had retired to the shade of the great cedar-tee, with books and work. Leah had gone to her favorite spot, the terrace, where the passion-flowers grew in such profusion. She had taken them under her special protection and visited them every day. She little knew what a beautiful picture she made while standing there. Her exquisite face, with its dainty color and sweet lips, was bent thoughtfully over the flowers. She wore a long trailing dress of pale amber. Every graceful line of her figure was seen to the greatest advantage; an artist who could have painted her as she stood there in the shade of the veranda, with the glorious coloring of sunlight and flowers about her, would have immortalized himself. She smiled as she gathered some of the passion-flowers, remembering the name given to her.

Then her thoughts went to Hettie, who had loved the sweet white lilies best. How different life would be if that beloved sister were here, how doubly precious this grand domain if Hettie shared it! In the gleaming light on the river, in the fire of the scarlet passion-flower, in the flowers of the gay parterre, she saw the sweet fair face with its aureole of golden hair. Would they ever meet again? she wondered, sadly. Love, even of Hettie, would help to fill her life—for life to her was nothing without love. Suddenly the wind, which had hitherto been but a languid breath, seemed to strengthen. Was it the quickening breeze that made her tremble? Had the thought of Hettie unnerved her. She found herself still looking over the terrace walls, her eyes fixed on two figures that were advancing slowly toward her. A strange sense of unreality possessed her. She could have believed herself in the midst of a dream; she could have believed that the brimming river, the blue sky, the green earth, the cluster

of flowers, were all pictures and not realities. For a few seconds everything seemed to be quite still around her—still even as death; then the golden light dazzled her, and a sweet message seemed wafted to her on the summer breeze. She made a desperate effort to rouse herself from the curious, trance-like feeling that was gradually mastering her, and then she saw Sir Arthur standing close to her, a stranger by his side.

“Leah,” said the general, “our neighbor, Sir Basil Carlton, has been kind enough to waive ceremony and call upon us first. Sir Basil, my adopted daughter and dear niece, Miss Hatton.”

She saw a dark head bent before her. She knew her doom was come; she had known it when she saw him walking between the great magnolia-trees. She had always said to herself that she should know at once, and now she knew.

For some minutes she did not dare to raise her eyes, knowing that she was about to look upon the face that was to hold all the light of earth and sky for her. She did look up slowly at last, with the same rapt, reverent gaze with which heathen worshippers look at the sun. A great hush, a great calm came over her. She saw a noble face, full of fire and impetuosity, she saw dark eyes and straight brows, a firm mouth, dark clusters of hair, and a dark moustache. Yet beauty was not the chief charm of the stranger's face; courage and dauntless truth shone there. Most people, when they first met Sir Basil Carlton, were struck by his handsome features and manly bearing, but they were attracted even more when the eyes took a tender light and the mouth a smile sweet as any woman's.

With the first direct glance of his eyes, her heart went down before him. He had come at last, this king among men, for whom she had waited so long. How strange that he should find her here, in the home that was to be

hers, in the midst of the flowers she loved! How strange that he should be introduced to her on this lovely morning, when sun, birds, and flowers seemed to vie with each other, and the river sung the sweetest melody she had ever heard! She felt inclined to look up at him and ask, "Have you looked for me long? Do you know me?" but prudence restrained her. Even the duchess, who loved her, had laughed at her ideas.

"I like England better than Italy," said Sir Basil, suddenly, after a few remarks. "Here, even in August, how cool and green everything is! You cannot think what a picture you made, Miss Hatton, standing against this background of foliage and flowers."

"You have been in Italy for many years?" she said, quietly.

He drew just a little nearer to her. A great, trailing spray of passion-flowers lay between them; he raised it, and she thought to herself how strange a coincidence it was that she should see him with her favorite blossoms in his hand.

"I was a boy of eleven when I went away," he said, "and now I am twenty-five. I have never seen home since then, and I regret it."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because there is no training like that of an English boy. I was just getting fond of cricket, and beginning to think about hunting and shooting; I was a good skater, and understood something about—the gloves!"

"Do you know," put in Sir Arthur, "that the ring-fences of our estates meet and touch in what they call the Thorn Meadow?"

"I remember hearing that when I was at home. The Brent woods, from which this place takes its name, extend almost to Glen. I knew every corner both of house and grounds when I was a boy."

"I hope you will come as often now as you did then," said Sir Arthur, and the young baronet bowed.

"You are very kind," he said; "I shall be only too glad to avail myself of your goodness. 'Coming home' is a very melancholy event for me, as you perhaps know."

"Yes; we have heard the cause of your mother's departure from England—and a very painful one it was, Sir Basil," said the general.

Leah looked up at him; all her soul shone in her eyes.

"Let us help you to forget the shadow which has fallen over your house and your life," she said; and his face brightened.

"I shall be only too happy, Miss Hatton. I dreaded my return. I remembered the Glen as one of the loveliest of homes. I have longed to be here. Yet the memory of that night will never leave me." His whole face changed. "My mother lived fifteen years after the accident happened; but the shock her system had received killed her at last."

Leah's dark eyes, full of interest and sympathy, filled with tears; and, as he saw them, his heart warmed to her. How long it was since any one had shed tears for this old sorrow of his!

"It must have been a terrible shock for you both," said Leah.

"Yes; I was only a boy, but I worshipped my sister. You cannot tell how deeply attached I was to her. I think the love of a sister is one of the greatest joys of earth."

Why did the fair face near him grow so pale? Why did the graceful figure shrink and tremble, the hand that held the scarlet flowers suddenly fall nerveless and helpless? Was it another coincidence that he should value so highly a sister's love?

"For years afterward," he continued, "I often awake

with that terrible scream of agony in my ears. If ever I was inadvertently left in the dark, I saw the flying, terrified figure surrounded by flames. But I am cruel to trouble you in this fashion. I must learn to forget."

"You do not trouble us," said Leah; and she did not know how much of sweetness had crept into her voice. "I should think," she added, "that it would be far better for you to talk about it than to brood over it silently."

"Perhaps it would," he answered gratefully. "You must forgive me this once. I came here this morning because I could not remain in the house. It was haunted by my sister's presence."

"If I were in your place, Basil," said the general, "I would have plenty of friends about me. Stay with us to-day, and to-morrow we will drive over and see your gardens and conservatories. We have a pleasant party, and I think you will enjoy yourself."

He looked at Leah.

"I shall be delighted," she said, simply, a faint flush dyeing her face.

"So shall I," replied Sir Basil.

And that was how the first day of Leah Hatton's earthly paradise began.

CHAPTER XVII.

HALF an hour passed, and they were still talking under the veranda on the western terrace. It seemed to Leah but a few minutes, and yet what a change had been wrought in the time! Quite suddenly, and almost unconsciously to her, the whole world had changed for her—her life had grown complete. But a little while before her

heart had been desolate. Despite the brilliancy with which she had been surrounded, there was a sense of chill and loneliness, of unrealized wishes, of vague hopes, of ungratified desires—a sense of the emptiness of all things. It had vanished as snow before the sun, and a sweet harmonious sense of the fulness of life, had taken possession of her. She could have stood for ever by the passion-flowers, looking at Sir Basil and listening to him ; but the general remembered the duties of hospitality.

“You will stay for the day?” he said. “One of the grooms can ride over to Glen for anything you may want.”

He did not know that his niece, whom the noblest and wisest in the land had failed to win, was waiting with the keenest anxiety to hear whether their guest would accept her uncle’s invitation.

“Leah,” said Sir Arthur, “perhaps Sir Basil would like some refreshment after his long walk. You walked from Glen, I believe?”

“Yes ; I came through the woods,” replied the young baronet. “I envy you those woods and the river.”

“If you will take my advice, Sir Basil,” said the general, “you will have some claret-cup. For a warm morning like this there is nothing like it. I will join you in a few minutes—I have to see my steward. Leah, you will take Sir Basil into the house. When he has had some refreshment, he will join the party on the lawn.”

With a smile for his niece and a bow for his guest, Sir Arthur hastened away, leaving them alone together.

It seemed to Leah as though the air throbbed ; her heart beat fast, her hands trembled ; all the rest of the world had fallen from her, and she stood alone with him.

“This is a beautiful old place,” he said. “I like the river. What fanciful lights and shades there are on it !”

The calm, quiet words brought her down from an exalted frame of mind to commonplace life.

“It is indeed lovely,” she said. “Do you like boating? I am very fond of it. I have a pretty little boat of my own, and I spend many hours upon the water. But I must not forget my uncle’s instructions. You must come and have some refreshment.”

She replaced the trailing sprays of the crimson flowers which she had held all this time in her hands. She did nothing in the least degree unusual, yet every little incident was vividly stamped on her mind. With the strange, new feeling about her she walked by his side down the long terrace. She took him into the drawing-room.

“Bring some light refreshments—also some fruit,” she said to a servant; and with her own hands she offered him some delicious grapes.

She remembered every word he uttered, every glance, every movement of his; and when he had taken what he wanted she looked at him with anxious, happy eyes.

“Shall we go on to the lawn now?” she asked.

“I am quite at your service, Miss Hatton. Have you a large party at Brentwood?”

She looked at him again, with the dreamy, vacant gaze of one who has forgotten everything, then remembered suddenly, and blushed as he had seen no other woman blush before. The first thought that occurred to him was that perhaps she had a lover among the visitors, and was shy of mentioning his name—else why that vivid, beautiful blush? It was gone now, and she was smiling as she spoke.

“Not a very large party,” she replied—“the Duke and Duchess of Rosedene, old friends of Sir Arthur’s; Lady Maude Trevar, who is distantly related to the duchess; Colonel Farquharson, whom my uncle loves very dearly because his face is bronzed and he calls luncheon ‘tiffin.’”

“Old Indian friends, I suppose?” said Sir Basil.

“Yes, they were inseparable for some years. There

are also Captain Langley and a very pretty niece of the old Colonel's. That completes the list."

"It sounds like a very good list, too," he said.

She remembered how he held the door open as she passed, and when the long train of pale amber was caught he stooped down to free it. She remembered how they passed through the grand old entrance hall, and out by the side door on to the lawn. The duchess was seated in the shade of the great cedar tree, with Lady Maud by her side, and pretty May Luson, who was evidently ready for mischief. Not far from them the colonel—a fine, handsome, elderly man, with a long, gray, drooping mustache—was enjoying a cigar and a newspaper. Captain Langley had been reading aloud to the ladies, but had been dismissed, because, as the duchess solemnly assured him, he had no taste for anything but humor.

There was some little stir when Leah, with her handsome cavalier, appeared. The duchess looked up with a smile. Leah led him to her first, and her grace gave him a very kindly greeting—all women were attracted to Sir Basil the moment they saw him.

They passed on to Lady Maud Trevar—a tall, handsome woman, somewhat *passee*, but evidently bent upon making the best of herself. She received him with a mixture of what she intended to be girlish diffidence and womanly frankness; both failing, the effect was lamentable.

Captain Langley was very pleased, and pretty May, looking more like a fair rosebud than anything else, laughed with delight.

"You live at Glen, Sir Basil?" she said. "I have seen a picture of Glen. There are innumerable fountains and terraces."

"I hope you will honor me by coming to see its attractions," he responded. "The general has promised me that pleasure."

He was quite at home with them in a few minutes. The colonel—who, while he abused India, knew no pleasure out of it—began to discuss with him the probabilities of a frontier war. Captain Langley aired his grievance—which was that some one most decidedly his inferior had been promoted over his head—and revealed that he was in a state of chronic indignation about it.

In a very short space of time Lady Maud Trevar decided that Sir Basil was worth any trouble to win. He was at home with them all, and quite happy. The duchess called him to her side, and began a long conversation with him. She was delighted with him, and considered him quite an acquisition. A rich and handsome young baronet with a fine estate, he would want a wife; and already she had begun to think of those of her acquaintance who were eligible for the post. She regretted that Lady Maud was old and *pussee*; her thoughts never went to Leah.

Leah had called to mind not once, but a hundred times, that he was to be with them the whole day. She sat watching him with contented, happy eyes, with a light on her beautiful face, as he went from one to another, thinking there was no other like him.

During the afternoon the duchess called Leah aside.

“Leah,” she said, “we must do something to entertain your young neighbor. I do not like to see his handsome face shadowed by melancholy. What can we do?”

“We will do anything that you suggest,” replied Leah. Something in her voice made the duchess look up.

“Leah, child,” she said, “what have you been doing to yourself?”

“Nothing,” replied Leah.

“Nothing? Nonsense!” said the duchess, energetically. “I could almost believe that you had been rouging!”

“I have done nothing of the kind,” replied Leah, half

indignant, half amused. "Why do you say such a thing to me?"

"My dear child, I perceive a change in you. A new soul shines out of your eyes; your face is transfigured! It has struck me at times that you had a restless expression, as though the world did not quite answer to your wishes. It has gone now. You look as though your heart had awakened." She wondered still more when she saw a crimson blush cover the beautiful face. "What is it, Leah? You have always trusted me. You may say what you will, but I am quite certain that there is something which would account for the change in you. Why, what happy eyes you have! I never saw the golden gleam in them so plainly as I do this morning."

With all her keen sagacity and worldly knowledge, it was wonderful that she did not connect the coming of the stranger with the change in Leah.

"Never mind," said the duchess. "You will not tell me, Leah; but I shall find it out. I know that an offer of marriage rather annoys you than not, or I should think you had received one this morning, and it had pleased you."

"I would tell you if it were so, duchess," said Leah, "I look happy because—well, because I am happy. Have you ever seen a sky so blue, the earth so fair? Did the birds ever sing as they sing this morning? Were the flowers ever so sweet? Something—I do not know what it is—something has occurred which seems to have brought me unutterable happiness."

"It is worse even than I thought," remarked the duchess. "Come and take this chair. Let us talk prose, not poetry, and decide upon what we can do to amuse your young neighbor. I like him, Leah. I shall not rest until the melancholy has left his face, and I see the brightness that belongs to youth shining there."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE day passed, as the days always do, whether they be shortened by happiness or lengthened by sorrow, but Leah Hatton kept no account of the hours. All that was taking place was a dream to her; the only effort she could make was to prevent other people from guessing her secret. He had come—the fairy prince who was to wake her from her long sleep; but the world need not know it—must not know it. It would think her mad—this wary, keen, wise old world that laughs at the sweet follies of youth.

She had surrendered her mind to a host of beautiful but unreal fancies; they had made the brightest part of her life. To any other than herself they would have seemed absurd; yet she had firm faith in them. She believed in this ideal lover of hers, who was looking for her in the world just as she was waiting for him. She had nursed herself in the belief that she would recognize him the moment she saw him, and it seemed to her that she had done so.

Hundreds of handsome faces had passed before her eyes, but not one had touched her heart until now. When she saw Sir Basil's she recognized it; a strange, magnetic influence seemed to come over her; in the depths of her heart she said to herself: "I have met my fate." But now she must hide her secret, lest the laughing wicked world should be amused by it. She never thought of Sir Basil's part in the matter, whether he shared her feelings and fancies; she was too much engrossed with her own.

The day went on, and she spent almost every moment of it with him—a lovely day, that grew brighter and fairer with every hour that passed.

That evening she stood in her dressing-room, the pretty

Parisian maid looking at her in something like wonder. Miss Hatton had most exquisite taste, and liked always to be well dressed; but on this evening it seemed as if it were impossible to please her. Dress after dress was discarded; she could not choose her jewels.

"Take those diamonds away," she said, and the superb suite of rubies and pearls were not pleasing to her. On the toilet table, intermixed with crystal and silver and richly-cut Bohemian glass, were some clusters of scarlet passion-flowers. She would wear them, and not the jewels.

The Parisienne sighed. They would look very beautiful, but they would give her an immense deal of trouble.

Leah had a fancy that she would like to be dressed after the fashion of her picture; but the black velvet looked to warm and heavy for this bright summer night. At last she chose a dress of white shining silk, soft and fine, and and with it she wore nothing but passion-flowers. They crowned her dark, beautiful head, and glowed like flames against her white neck; great trailing sprays fastened the folds of her dress.

"They look far more beautiful than jewels," said the maid; "but will they live, madam?"

"They will live as long as I need them," answered Leah. It seemed to her that the flowers she wore to please him could never die.

"I think, madam," said the maid, as she arranged the tall Pysche mirror, "if you will look now, you will be pleased."

Pleased? She flushed crimson as she saw the reflection of her own most radiant beauty. She was glad to be beautiful; she rejoiced in her own loveliness. The dark waves of rippling hair with their crown of scarlet flowers, the exquisite face with its fair bloom, the white graceful throat and white shoulders, the perfect arms and hands, the figure so replete with sweet, stately, subtle grace, gave

her infinite delight. She was child enough to kiss her warm, white arms, and to smile at the picture in her mirror.

“I wonder,” she said to herself, “if he will find me fair?”

There were still some minutes before the second bell would ring; she would not go down until the flush had departed from her cheeks and the sweet, happy expression of her eyes told less, or the duchess would soon discover her secret. She looked from her open window to the running river, and snatches of song rose to her lips. She could have fancied that even the river knew what had happened to-day; the waters laughed and flashed in the setting sun. Oh! happy day, day, to be remembered, for it stood out from her life as a bright star in the dark sky!

“The sixth of August,” she said to herself; “I shall never forget the date. I have been in the world twenty-two years, but I have never lived until to-day.”

Then the bell rang, and she went down into the drawing-room. More than one present drew a deep breath of silent admiration. The general thought he had never seen his niece look so well; and the duchess said to herself, ‘Something has come to the child: it is useless for her to deny it.’

Sir Basil, too, looked at her in wonder. He had been attracted by her appearance as she stood on the terrace; but now the sense of her great loveliness came over him and struck him almost dumb. He took her down to dinner, wondering that he had not been more impressed before, and he talked more to her than he had previously.

The dinner-party was a pleasant one. Leah was a charming hostess, and a more agreeable, hospitable, entertaining host than General Hatton it would have been almost impossible to find.

When the ladies returned to the drawing-room, the duchess took up a book, with some little hope of disguis-

ing the fact that she was going to sleep; Lady Maude had several secrets to talk over with pretty May Luson; so that Leah was alone. She tried to steady her thoughts, but she could not—they were all chaos. She tried to still the throbbing of her heart; it was impossible. The girl's every nerve was strained. The long French windows were wide open. She stood near one of them to see if the fresh evening air would drive away the thick crowding thoughts and fancies from her brain, and presently a voice near her said,—

“How plainly you can see the river from here, Miss Hatton!”

She raised her dark dreamy eyes to Sir Basil's.

“I often wonder,” she returned, “what I should do if I had to live where there was no river. I should miss it so much. I look at it always the first thing in the morning and the last at night. It is a friend and companion to me.”

“I am of your opinion; no landscape is perfect to me without water. I have a childish love of water, from the great wild tossing ocean down to the tiniest lakelet, The sound of its falling or dripping or rushing, as the river rushes there, is the most charming music in Nature. While I was in Italy, I had a terrible fever, and for many days I was quite delirious—I may say mad; and during the whole time what do you think my fancy was?” The face raised to his was full of interest. “I thought I was lying by a beautiful waterfall, under the shadow of great trees with spreading boughs. I could hear the dripping of the water and the soft splash as it fell into the rocky basin below; but, when I stretched out my hands to touch it, it was boiling—when I bent my head over the rocky basin and tried to drink it with my hands, it scalded me. Was not that a most uncomfortable delirium?”

“Yes I should imagine so: but I hardly understand what delirium is like.”

"Have you ever indulged in a strong fancy," he asked—"so strong that you hardly knew the fancy from reality?"

Before she had time to answer him, a flood of crimson overspread her face; and he wondered to himself why this proud young beauty blushed so deeply for nothing. Even had he known her fancies, he would not perhaps have understood them.

"Yes," she replied slowly; "I know what a very strong and vivid fancy is. It grows into a belief."

"All delirium is belief for the time," he said.

Then he made way for the duchess, who roused by the entrance of a gentleman, had come toward the open window in search of fresh air.

"We shall have a beautiful moon to-night," she said, looking up at the rosy sky, over which the gray shades of night were beginning to steal. "I like a full, bright moon. Leah, you look like a—a poem, with all those passion-flowers. Does she not, Sir Basil?"

"Miss Hatton is a poem," he replied.

The words were earnestly spoken, although he meant nothing by them. They made the heart of the girl by his side thrill with happiness.

"People have such different tastes," continued the duchess. "I do not like passion-flowers; they always seem to me mysterious and melancholy. I like the smiling beauty of a hundred leaved rose."

"It is strange," said Sir Basil; "but I like passion-flowers better than any other flower that blooms."

Leah turned her telltale blushing face away. The duchess laughed.

"I beg your pardon," she said; "I cannot quite believe my own ears. Would you mind repeating what you have just said?"

"I like passion-flowers better than any other flower that blooms," he repeated. "I learned to love them in

Italy, where they grow in wild, beautiful profusion—they look at their best when they cling round the old stone crosses and ruined shrines one sees continually. I think an old gray cross, covered with crimson passion-flowers, is one of the prettiest pictures in the world.”

“Ah!” said the duchess, slowly—her mind was opening to a certain truth. “Do you remember, Leah, what we said this morning about passion-flowers?” she asked, teasingly.

But Leah would not look at the duchess, and would not answer her.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE general had arranged for the whole party at Brentwood to go over to Glen in a day or two,

“I think,” Sir Basil had said, “that, if I could hear the sound of happy voices and laughter once more in the old hall, it would cease to be haunted.”

So the kindly duchess settled that they should go and do their best to be happy and bright. They were to drive over in time for luncheon, spend the afternoon in looking over the house and grounds, dine, and return home in the cool of the evening.

Sir Basil was anxious with regard to the entertainment of his guests.

“It is quite a new thing for me to have visitors,” he said, to Leah. “My mother’s health was so delicate, we received no friends in Italy.”

“I am sure we shall all be happy,” returned Leah, brightly. To her it seemed as though she were going to spend the day in some earthly paradise. “I long to see Glen,” she added. “I have heard so much of it.”

“I wish that more pleasant memories hung over it,” he said mournfully.

And she, raising her lovely face to his, said,—

“We must drive the unpleasant ones away for you and put other and happier in their place.”

“You will do that,” he declared, warmly, “if you come often.”

And, although the words meant so little, her heart thrilled with joy at hearing them.

She counted the hours until the day came; and again the patience of the maid was most severely tried.

Leah Hatton never looked more radiant and lovely than on the day when she went to see the home of the man with whom she had fallen in love. Over a dress of pale, cool amber she wore rich black lace, and on her head was a broad-brimmed hat with rich drooping plume—a hat that threw a shade on the bewitching face, softened it, and made it more charming than ever. She had no ornaments, but she wore a Maréchal Neil rose at her throat. The summer day itself was not more fair.

The duchess had been, she persuaded herself, the very perfection of discretion. Since the little episode of the passion-flower she had made no allusion to Sir Basil. She was quick to see and understand. Without hearing a word, she knew that this girl who had been as ice and marble to all lovers looked on Sir Basil with very different eyes. She remembered the words she had thought so foolish, yet which now seemed so true. “I shall know him when I meet him,” Leah had said. “I shall recognize him the first moment my eyes fall on his face.” She had laughed at the words and at the idea, but she laughed no longer. Could it be true—was it possible—that in Sir Basil this proud, cold girl had found the ideal she had waited for? The duchess was almost frightened.

“I will have nothing to do with it in any way,” she

said to herself. "I am not superstitious, but Leah has made me afraid. Supposing that she loves this man with all her heart, and that he does not love her? No; I will not hurry it on or help it by word or look."

She watched and saw enough. She noticed that, heedless of what Sir Basil thought or felt about it, Leah was learning to love him with all her heart. She was a different being; the calm and repose of true happiness had come to her; there was no more restlessness. Day by day, her beauty, under this new influence, grew more *spiritual*. Sir Basil admired Miss Hatton. He thought her beautiful and gifted; he enjoyed long conversations with her; he praised her voice and her singing; he liked to tell her all his thoughts and exchange ideas with her. But the duchess, in her own mind, decided that as yet he was not in love with Leah, although it was very probable that he soon would be. "How is it," thought her grace, "that he does not find it out? The girl's voice takes a different tone when she speaks to him, and her face is transfigured. But men are proverbially blind!"

As they started on this fair morning for Glen, the duchess wondered whether, on Sir Basil's seeing Leah in his own home, it would occur to him that it would be an excellent thing to have her there altogether—to ask her to be the mistress of the place he loved so well, but from which he had been exiled so long. It was a suggestive situation certainly. The kindly heart of the duchess grew interested in the affair. It would be a terrible thing for Leah to love without being loved. "She has just one of those passionate, poetical, impulsive natures that will lead her to love madly, and to die if she loves in vain," she said to herself. She watched the bright rapturous look on the exquisite face. "Heaven send the girl her heart's desire!" said the duchess, and her eyes filled with tears.

Sir Basil stood at the outer gate of the park to meet them.

“Welcome,” he said—“welcome to Glen!”

He walked by the side of the carriage which held the duchess and Leah. The duchess was pleased to see that he pointed out all the beauties of the place to Leah, and listened with interest to her remarks. She had been ambitious for Leah once upon a time; she had hoped to see her a duchess; she had hoped that she would make some wonderful marriage. But now she felt that the best thing would be for her beautiful *protegee* to marry for love. Sir Basil would be an excellent match for her. He was wealthy; even if he were not, Leah would have so much money herself that there was no need for her to make it a consideration in marrying. The young baronet was gifted with every good quality. She might certainly, with her brilliant beauty and grand prospects, have done much better; but she might also have done worse. With a girl of that kind, full of romance and fancies and strange ideas, the first consideration was her happiness.

She was startled from her thoughts by a sudden exclamation from Leah; her face had grown pale, as it did always in times of great emotion.

“Look, duchess,” she cried, “what a beautiful picture!”

The approach to Glen was through a magnificent avenue of beech-trees; they were not to be surpassed for size and beauty in the county. The avenue was wide and well kept, the grass green and smooth, and, when it terminated, the full glories of Glen were to be seen. Now, with the sunlight falling upon it, it was dazzling to the eyes of those who viewed it. The house itself was built of red stone, with white facings, and the front of it was ornamented with rich, quaint carvings. There was a terrace gay with white and scarlet blossoms, a broad flight of steps, ornamented

with huge vases and fine statues, leading to the gardens below. In the gardens were several superb fountains, the silvery spray of which rose high in the air and glistened in the sunlight; the flowers were of every imaginable hue. The whole formed a picture so brilliant that even the duchess could not refrain from a cry of delight.

"It is the most beautiful place I have ever seen," she said.

"You would not think it was darkened by a tragedy," observed Sir Basil.

"Nor is it," said the duchess, quickly. "Life and death are everywhere side by side. You must try to forget; think of the bright side."

Etiquette compelled Sir Basil to give the duchess his arm as he led the way up the broad marble steps. She looked at the statues with admiration.

"This reminds one of Italy," said Leah—"fountains, flowers and marble statues."

He turned to her eagerly.

"You like it, then?" he asked, anxiously. "I think it is beautiful, and I am pleased that you agree with me."

They passed into the entrance-hall, with its deep groined roof, its old-fashioned stained-glass windows and armor, its stained oak flooring and exotics.

With graceful courtesy Sir Basil bade them welcome; and Leah, looking at his face, saw that it was deadly pale.

"Was this the place," she asked, "where the accident——"

"Yes," he replied; "it was here that my poor sister rushed, enveloped in flames; and just here where these white lilies stand, she fell down to die. By my mother's orders they are kept there. Whenever I pass, I seem to see the flying figure again, and hear my sister's cry."

Leah stepped forward and stood by the white lilies.

“Look at me,” she said, flushing slightly, “as I stand here ; it will fill your mind with fresh thoughts.”

“It may well do so,” thought the duchess, as she noticed the unconscious grace and beauty of the girl’s attitude. Would he ever, as he passed through the hall where his fair young sister had met so sad a fate, forget the girl now standing there with her pleading passionate face, trying to make sweet what had been so bitter to him ?

“Thank you,” he replied, simply. “You have been kind to me, Miss Hatton, from the first happy moment I saw you ; you add to your goodness by giving me a pleasant memory.”

Leah’s face showed her delight ; it was indeed pleasant to her to hear such words of commendation from him. But the duchess said to herself, “Pretty little scene—sentimental enough ; but there is no love, Sir Basil, on your side.”

Then the other visitors reached the hall. There was a discussion as to the roof and the armor, and as to the date of a fine old window, and then they passed on to the library. Sir Basil made a charming and hospitable host. As the day wore on, Leah was pleased to see that his face brightened, and that several times it lost the melancholy expression that had seemed like a cloud over it. He was very attentive to her ; he lingered by her side, and showed her the chief objects of attraction.

The duchess summed up the whole situation briefly. Leah had loved him at first sight ; but, if ever he learned to love her, it would be after months of friendship.

That day spent at Glen was one of the happiest in Leah’s life, and the memory of it was to her like a strain of sweet music in which there was no discord,

CHAPTER XX.

As the days passed on, the intimacy between Leah and the baronet increased. The general grew warmly attached to Sir Basil. He said—what was a great thing for him to say—that, if Heaven had blessed him with a son, he should have liked him to resemble Sir Basil. All the visitors—and they were many—admired and liked him; he was a general favorite, and he spent far more of his time at Brentwood than at Glen.

With every day that dawned, with every sun that rose and set, with every bright moon that waxed and waned, Leah's love deepened. The world was as nothing to her; she became absorbed in this one passion—it was her life, her all. There are some to whom this fatal gift of a great love is given. They are the happiest, even as they are the most miserable; they reach the highest bliss that life offers, and they know the most bitter of its pains. No one warned Leah. The duchess looked on interested, as she would have been in any trial of skill or any struggle for mastership. She did not interfere either by word or look. She knew it was useless. She never ceased wondering how it was that Leah, who had refused some of the best offers in England, had given her heart and soul at first sight to this man.

Leah was hardly the same girl in Sir Basil's presence; her face, her voice, her manner changed completely; her love transfigured her. If he touched her dress in passing, she trembled; if he touched her hand in greeting, she grew pale as the petal of a white lily; when she sung to him, all the pent-up passion of her soul seemed to go out to him. Such a world of love lay in the dark eyes! It would have been a thousand times better for Leah had she never

had such a pretty theory as that of souls meeting, or filled her mind with ideal notions. No misgivings came to her, no doubt, or fear. She never asked herself whether her great love would be returned, she never asked herself how it would end ; she lived entirely in the present, each day full of happiness, of interest, of the beauty and glory of the passion that possessed her. She had forgotten that they would soon leave Brentwood, she had forgotten that they were going to Dene Abbey ; she had forgotten everything, except that Sir Basil was near her and that she loved him. Every dream, every wish of her life was realized ; there was no more to desire. She would have been quite content to lie down in the light of her great love and die. It seemed to her that all her life had been ordered for this. Now she had reached the haven of rest, never thinking that the storms in the haven might be greater than those on the open sea.

It happens so often that a great love is lavished in vain. Sir Basil saw nothing of Leah's. He admired her exceedingly, but he never dreamed of loving her. He would have done anything for her ; he had the kindly affection of a brother for her ; ever since she had stood by the white lilies in the hall, in the spot where his fair young sister had died, she had to him in some measure taken that dead sister's place. He confided everything to her, told her, of all his affairs, sought her advice, was happy in her society, never rested long away from her, thought of her with continual kindly affection ; but of love he never dreamed.

The duchess, who had said to herself that she would not interfere, did just this one thing—she told Sir Basil of the splendid triumphs that Leah had achieved, and how she had passed through three such seasons as few even of the most brilliant beauties had ever experienced. She told of the offers of marriage made to her, and how she had refused them all.

“Why did she refuse them?” he asked.

The duchess meant to do a kindly action when she answered:

“She has ideas that are peculiar for the nineteenth century; they are, I may say, obsolete.”

He looked anxiously at her, she thought.

“What ideas,” he asked—“if my question may be answered?”

“I am sure I may answer it,” said the duchess. “Miss Hatton has romantic ideas that are quite out of date. Marriage, in these days, is an arrangement. She might have been Countess of Barberry if she had liked; but she is romantic, and will never marry until she can marry for love.”

“That seems to me right,” said Sir Basil.

“I am glad you think so,” returned the duchess, dryly. “But Miss Hatton has another theory. It is this—that for every person in this world there are one love and one lover—half souls, she calls them, if you can understand the terms. She believes that she will recognize her half soul or lover whenever she sees him.”

“It is a very pretty theory,” said Sir Basil. “I do not see why any one should object to it.” He looked at her somewhat eagerly as he asked: “And has she met this ideal yet?”

“That is a question she alone can answer. You must ask her yourself,” laughed the duchess; and she smiled to herself as she thought she had given him a very plain hint.

The young baronet was far too modest to take it; that such a peerless beauty, such a wealthy heiress, should fall in love with and find her ideal in him never occurred to him. If she had rejected many noble and great men, she was doubtless looking for some one higher. Yet what he had heard increased his affection and respect for her. He

liked the idea of a girl who could make to herself an ideal, and wait patiently until she met with it. How many would have yielded to the temptation of rank and wealth, and have forgotten the belief and aspirations of early girlhood!

* * * * *

"We have been here at Brentwood a month next Wednesday," said the duchess to Leah, one morning. "We go to Dene Abbey next week."

Leah looked up at her with eyes that did not see.

"Next week!" she repeated; and it seemed to her that the sunlight faded. Next week she would see Sir Basil no more. "I had forgotten it," she said slowly.

"That is not very complimentary to me, Leah, nor to the admirers who will come 'o Dene to meet you."

"I do not want any admirers, duchess," she said.

"No," laughed the duchess; "better one true lover than a host of admirers."

Leah walked to the open window, and looked out upon the terrace where she had stood on the morning on which Sir Basil had first come to Brentwood. The passion-flowers were still in bloom. She remembered the sudden revelation that had come to her when she had looked into his face. Was there to be an end now of all the light and brightness that had surrounded her since?

The duchess looked anxiously at her. Leah's face was deadly pale in the glowing sunlight.

"The girl's heart is sick," thought the kindly woman, "and in all the wide world no one knows the secret but me. What can I do for her?"

Suddenly her face brightened. She rose from her seat and went over to Leah. The pale face was half hidden by the climbing roses that came in at the window.

"I having been thinking, Leah," she said, "that it seems a pity to break up this pleasant party here. I like Lady

Maude, and pretty May is a very sweet girl. I do not care about the military element, but I shall ask Lady Maude and May to go with us. That will be very pleasant; will it not?"

"Yes," replied Leah, coldly. The pain at her heart was so bitter, so keen that it was with difficulty she answered at all.

"And I have been thinking," continued the duchess, "that, as Sir Basil and your uncle seem so warmly attached to each other, it would be a great pity to part them, above all just now, when Sir Basil is evidently recovering health and spirits. The duke likes him very much, and I thought of asking him to go to Dene with us. He will find plenty shooting and fishing there. We are sure to have some pleasant shooting-parties in September."

Was it a dazzling burst of sunlight that brightened Leah's fair face and laughed in her expressive eyes? She turned with a quick, graceful gesture, and stooping, kissed the white jeweled hands of the kindly woman who had read so well her heart's desire. She spoke no word, and the duchess did not notice her emotion.

"What do you think of it, Leah?" she asked, when she perceived that the sudden thrill of pleasure had passed,

"I think," she replied, slowly, "that he will be very pleased."

"Do you?" said the duchess, trying to speak carelessly, while her heart ached for the girl. "Then I will ask him to-day."

She saw that the kindest thing she could do was to leave Leah alone. The girl trembled, and the hands that sought the crimson roses shook.

"I have some letters to write, Leah," said the duchess. "I think I will finish them before luncheon."

Leah did not even hear her. The duchess raised her hands and eyes as she went away.

"I thought I was in love when I was a girl," she said; "but that was child's play to this. I have always said a great love is a terrible thing, and so it is."

She would have been more sure of it still had she seen Leah when she knew herself to be alone. She bowed her head, while tears fell like raindrops upon the crimson roses; and from the girl's trembling lips came the murmured words of a prayer. She thanked Heaven. Heaven had sent Sir Basil; and now he was not to be taken out of her life suddenly, but they were to be together the whole of the happy bright autumn. And, for the time, self-sacrificing Hettie, of whom Leah had heard nothing since they parted, was forgotten in this new happiness.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE Duke and Duchess of Rosedene, with their visitors, were at Dene Abbey, within sight and sound of the ever-murmuring sea. Miss Hatton had the whole day to herself; she had no great household to manage as at Brentwood, she had no care about the entertainment of visitors; the long, bright hours were hers, to spend as she would.

Lady Maude Trevar had gladly accepted the duchess' invitation; but pretty May Luson had promised to pay a visit elsewhere, and could not break her engagement. The military element had dispersed. Sir Basil Carlton had been delighted with her grace's proposal to join the party at the Abbey. He liked the duchess; her kindly gracious manner pleased him; he was touched by her great kindness to himself, although he did not know the cause. He did not go with the party from Brentwood, but he followed them in a few days. It was a wonderful change from the

green, sweet woodlands of Warwickshire, to the country bordering on a sunny southern sea.

Dene Abbey was a very old house, one that hundreds of years before had belonged to an ancient order of friars. Bluff King Harry took possession of it, and gave it to one of his favorite courtiers. In course of time it came into the hands of the Rosedene family, who valued highly the grand old mansion and magnificent estate. The duchess always insisted upon spending a few months there every year. Modern rooms and modern luxuries had been added to the old mansion, but it still retained enough of its antiquity to be one of the show places of England.

From the windows, from the terraces, from the grassy knolls in the park—from every part, the sea was visible.

Dene lay in Sussex, near the little town of Southwood, which was a favorite watering-place. When calm, the water of the Channel lay like a fair mirror in the distance. When it was rough, the foam and the dashing spray seemed almost to envelop the Abbey.

There had been nothing wanting in the poetry of Leah's love-story; but if anything could deepen the romance of it, it was certainly the presence of the beautiful, restless, heaving sea.

The duchess had but one notion of pleasing her guests at Dene, and it was to give them perfect liberty. Some liked the woods, some the yellow sands, some the ever-changing sea. They went where they liked and did as they liked, which was the great charm of the place.

So Sir Basil, who liked the sea, and Leah, whose passionate soul delighted in it, were often on the beach together. They enjoyed the firm, yellow sands, the dancing, crested waves, the tall white cliffs covered with luxuriant vegetation, the briny odor of the sea-breeze, the pretty shells and pebbles on the beach, the seaweed which drifted with the waters. They spent long hours together,

listening to the music of the waves and talking of the beauty that lay around. And during this time, while the sea-gulls whirled in the air, while the southern wind kissed the waves, the heart of the girl who loved Sir Basil became so entirely his, her life so wholly wrapped in his, that death would have been easier than to see him pass out of it.

The duchess remarked it, and mourned over it, but did not interfere—it was too late. But she said to herself over and over again that it was ten thousand pities Leah had so much romance in her nature; she would have been so much happier had she been more like ordinary girls.

The evenings at Dene were delightful. The drawing-room was an immense apartment, containing five large windows. From them one stepped on to a smooth, green lawn; and from the lawn a short path led through the woods to the cliffs and the sea. When the moon shone on the white cliffs and the shifting water, the effect was dazzling. Then the duchess liked the lamps to be lowered and the windows all thrown open, when the wind, laden with sweet odors from land and sea, came in.

One evening the moon shone unwontedly bright; in the distance the sea looked like molten silver—it was a night to fill all hearts with an undefined sense of passionate longing.

“Let us have some music,” said the duchess, as she leaned back in her chair. “Leah, let us hear you sing.”

Then from out of the soft shadows appeared Leah’s tall graceful figure enveloped in sweeping folds of black lace. She went quietly to the piano. The white, slender hands moved gently over the keys; the beautiful face grew fairer as the passionate words fell from her lips. She sang:

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;

My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea ;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love is come to me.

“ Raise me a dais of silk and down ;
Hang it with hair and purple dyes ;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates
And peacocks with a hundred eyes ;
Work it in gold and silver grasses,
In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys,
Because the birthday of my life
Is come--my love is come to me.”

She did not heed who was in the room. The words sprung as it were from her heart to her lips. She was thinking just at that time more of her love than of her lover—this golden-winged love that had taken her captive and stolen her heart.

Sir Basil came quietly to her side.

“ Those are quaint lines, Miss Hatton,” he said. “ Whose are they ? ” There was no music on the piano, and it struck him suddenly that both words and notes were impromptu. “ I believe,” he added, impulsively, “ that they are your own.”

The white fingers wandered over the keys. She made no answer ; she was wondering whether he had guessed her secret at last.

“ My love is come to me ”—the words startled her when she came to think of their truth.

Sir Basil left the piano and went back to his chair, which was placed outside the long French windows. He thought more of Leah than he had ever thought before. He remembered all that the duchess had told him of her fanciful idea that she would be able to recognize her ideal lover the moment she saw him ; and now she sung that he had come. Was it really so ? He looked round on the men sitting apart in little groups ; there was not one he considered worthy of her. He never thought of himself.

Each time that night that his eyes fell on her fair face the words came back to him : " My love is come to me."

She was more shy and timid with him after that. She avoided him a little, but loved him just as much. She would have gone through fire and water for him ; she would have made any sacrifice for him. The marvel was that the young baronet never dreamed of the conquest he had made. As for Leah, she had not yet begun to doubt ; she felt certain that his love would be hers in the fulness of time.

A little incident happened shortly after this which changed the current of their lives and hurried on events.

Sir Arthur Hatton was a stranger to all fair love-dreams and sweet fancies. Lady Bourgoyne had married him without giving him any trouble ; his comfortable affection for her had never caused him a pang. That he should understand a nature or a love like Leah's was not to be expected ; but he was one day the unwilling witness of a little scene that opened his eyes.

In the library stood a large Japanese screen, and Sir Arthur enjoyed nothing more than placing this round one of the great bay-windows and intrenching himself therein with his newspaper. Every one knew his whim and smiled at it. People went into the library to search for books, read the newspapers, and write their letters, without paying the least attention to him. It was the only room in the house where he was free from the lively chatter and laughter of the girls, or the gossip of the older women.

One morning there was some Indian news in the *Times* which interested him greatly—letters written by fellow-officers whose opinions he valued highly. He wished to be undisturbed, so he betook himself to his favorite retreat. He found the library cool and empty ; the sun-blinds were all drawn, the light was dim and pleasant. He placed the screen round his favorite window, " Thank goodness," he

said to himself, "that I shall now be able to read in peace!"

Sir Arthur had hardly settled himself comfortably, however, before the duchess came in.

She looked over the screen.

"I shall not disturb you, general," she said. "A man deep in his morning newspaper is to me as formidable as a lion in his lair. Indian news, I believe?"

"And very bad news," answered Sir Arthur, briefly.

The duchess read for about half an hour, and then went away.

Presently Lady Maude Trevar entered, and, sitting down, wrote letter after letter without a single thought as to whether any one was in the room. She was not in the least surprised when the general, in turning his newspaper, betrayed his presence. Then came his Grace of Rose-dene.

"I do not like the Indian news this morning," he said. "If Government is not more on the alert, we shall have another terrible rising, I fear."

"Most likely," answered Sir Arthur, briefly again.

The duke went on in his usual amiable manner, making very mild and pointless comments, which elicited but monosyllabic replies.

"I see you are busy," said his grace. "We will discuss the question more fully after dinner."

Sir Arthur groaned as his friend went out. "Now surely I shall remain uninterrupted," he thought.

Fate was against him this morning; for the fourth time the door opened. It was Leah who now appeared. She was in her favorite colors of amber and white, with creamy roses at her throat. She did not observe the screen, much less wonder if any one were behind it. She knew it was a favorite recess of her uncle's, but she was not thinking of him. He recognized the gentle footstep, but her pres-

ence did not disturb him—he loved her too well, and he was accustomed to it; he did not think it necessary to tell her he was there.

For ten minutes there was almost complete silence. He could hear the sound of Leah's pen. She was writing rapidly. Then suddenly the door opened, and Sir Arthur's smothered groan was lost in the voice of the speaker.

"Shall I disturb you Miss Hatton?" It was Sir Basil who put the question. "I am in trouble, from which a lady alone can release me."

"I am glad you sought me," she said. And for the first time the general was struck with something peculiar in the tone of her voice as she answered him. "What can I do for you?" she asked.

"There is an old proverb which says that 'a stitch in time sãves nine.' Will you make that first stitch now, and save the nine hereafter, Miss Hatton?"

"Of course I will," she replied. "Where is the stitch needed?"

"In this driving-glove," he replied; "the button is nearly off. Would you be so kind as to fasten it?"

Leah laughed blithely.

"Certainly," she said, as she took the thick yellow driving-glove that he held out to her. "Will you excuse me one minute while I find needle and thread?" she added.

She went away, leaving Sir Basil looking over an open volume that lay upon the table.

"I hope," thought the general to himself, "that this good fellow will not find me out and begin to air his ideas on Indian politics to me."

But Sir Basil was in happy ignorance of the general's proximity. He read a few lines in the open volume, hummed a favorite air to himself, and then Leah returned.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," she said. "I will release you now in a few minutes."

The slender fingers soon accomplished their task. She held out the glove to him, and as she did so, her eyes fell on the spray of stephanotis that he wore in his coat.

"Your flower is faded," she said; "Let me give you another. I have a superstition that it is unlucky to wear faded flowers."

"By all means replace it, if you will be good enough," he responded.

She took the spray of stephanotis from him, and laid it upon the table. From one of the vases she chose a beautiful moss-rosebud, fresh as the dawn, and fastened it in his coat for him.

He thanked her briefly, stood talking to her for some few minutes, and then went away.

Sir Arthur, looking over the screen, was about to thank Heaven that he was gone; but no word came from his lips—he was stricken dumb.

What was she doing—his proud, beautiful niece—whose love no man had been able to win, whose smiles had been sought as a priceless boon? She had never seemed to care for love or admiration, for lovers or marriage. She had moved through the brilliant world like an ice-maiden. What was she doing?

She had taken the withered flower in her hands, and was kneeling down by the table and covering the faded spray with kisses and tears.

"Oh, my love," she sighed, "my love, if you only loved me! But I am less to you than the withered flower you have thrown away."

The general would have spoken then and have let Leah know that he had overheard her, but surprise and wonder kept him silent. He saw her kiss the open volume where Sir Basil's hand had rested.

“I shall die,” she sobbed, “just as this flower has died, and just as far from his heart! Oh, cruel world! I have asked but for one thing and it has been denied me. I wish I had never been born. Oh, my love, why can you not love me? I am fair enough for others, why not for you? I can win other hearts, why not yours? I would give my life for your love!”

The low smothered sound of her bitter sobbing mingled with the song of the birds and the whisper of the wind; it smote the heart of the old soldier with unutterable pain. He had rescued her from what he thought a shameful life, adopted her, and given her his love and protection; he had made her heiress of his vast fortune; and this was all that had come of it, this was the end of all his hopes for her. She was wearing her heart and her life away for a love that could never be hers, or at least that was not hers. From the sight of the kneeling figure, the clasped hands; the proud head so despairingly bent, the general turned with tears in his eyes.

“If I could but die,” she said to herself, “and be at rest; if I could but sleep and never wake; if I could but hide my love, and sorrow and pain!”

He was tempted to go to her, to take her in his arms and try to comfort her, but a sense of delicacy forbade him. She was so proud and sensitive, what would she think or feel if she knew that he had possession of her secret? Yet the bitter long-drawn sobs fell on his ear and tortured him. He could not help her, He would not for the world let her know that he had overheard her; so he laid down his newspaper and passed noiselessly out through the open window on to the lawn, and not until he had walked some little distance did he feel at ease.

“I would not have her guess that I have been a witness of that scene for treble my fortune, poor child!” he murmured.

This was her fate—brilliant, beautiful, worshipped and wretched. This was the love he had never appreciated, never even understood. How strong, and deep and terrible it must be thus to torment one on whom the brightest gifts of earth had been lavished. He forgot the Indian news—all that had interested and puzzled him. So this was Leah's secret—she loved Sir Basil, and he did not love her!

“Poor child, poor child!” muttered the general. “How distressed she was! No wonder she loves him; he is the finest young fellow I have ever met. Any woman might love him. The wonder is why he does not love her. Perhaps,” thought the simple old soldier, “he is like me. I did not understand such things until they were pointed out to me. I should never have proposed to dear Lady Bourgoyne if Major Wrattle had not told me that she loved the very ground I stood upon. After that it was plain sailing. It may be the same with Sir Basil. Something must be done. It is a sad thing when girls lose their mothers; it is only women who understand each other. If Doris were here, she would know what to do.”

His heart was heavy. He had meant this girl's lot to be so fair, and she was so unhappy. He grew nervous at the thought of meeting her again; but to his surprise, when he saw her at the luncheon table, there were no traces of sorrow on her beautiful face. She looked colder and prouder than usual, but there was no sign of love-sickness about her.

“Who can understand women?” said Sir Arthur, appealing to some invisible power, “They were beyond him altogether.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE general was greatly perplexed and quite at a loss what to do. At first he thought he would consult the duchess, who appeared to him to be a compendium of all worldly knowledge, but he soon dismissed that idea. It would be a betrayal of a secret that he had discovered himself only by chance. During the next few days he watched Leah covertly, and now that he had the key, he understood the enigma of her conduct better. He saw how completely engrossed she was in her love—that she seemed to have no thought, no interest, no care outside it. It would be in every respect a most eligible match, thought the general. The two estates would become one, and Sir Basil would make a name for himself. They were both young, handsome, gifted. What a pity that Sir Basil did not fall in love with the girl who was so devoted to him!

Leah came down one morning looking pale and tired; she had not slept during the night, and the dark eyes were languid and shaded. Sir Arthur grew alarmed and anxious about her. He wanted to take her out for a drive, but she declined going. She admitted that she was not well. He proposed that he should take her into the woods, or for a walk down to the sea; but the sun was hot—she would not venture. The general was greatly disturbed.

The duchess found him wandering uneasily up and down the terrace.

“You are looking very grave this morning, Sir Arthur,” she said. “May I venture to ask what occupies your thoughts?”

“I am thinking about subjects that I do not in the least understand,” he answered. “It seems to me that

even after so many years' experience, I know but little of life. Tell me, duchess—you understand matters—do girls ever really suffer and die from love?"

The duchess started. Had he, too, found out the secret that she had discovered?

"Yes," she answered, "I think they do sometimes die of love. Not often; there are exceptional cases, as there are exceptional natures."

His face cleared a little.

"It is not the kind of thing you would expect from a sensible girl?" he interrogated.

"No," replied the duchess; "it is the last thing that would happen to a sensible girl."

He gave a great sigh of relief.

"And yet you think there are girls who would really die if they were what is called 'crossed in love?'"

"Yes," said the duchess, "I do think so. If a girl is full of romance and poetry, and throws her heart and soul into her love, the consequences are likely to be serious if matters do not progress smoothly."

There was little comfort to be gained from this—for Leah, he knew, was visionary and romantic.

"It seems to me," he said gently, "that such love causes more pain than pleasure."

"I think it does," agreed the duchess.

Then she went away. She would say no more; it did not seem to her either fair or honorable that they should discuss the secret which both had discovered.

The general became more and more anxious. He was thinking always of his niece; he watched her face intently. If it was unclouded, if her eyes were bright and the red lips smiling, he was happy; but if she looked sad he was miserable. He had not known until now how dearly he loved her. He had thought money and position all-powerful; but they were not so. All his wealth could not buy

for his niece that which she desired—could not give her love and happiness. It was late in life for him to make this unpleasant discovery. What could he do for her? Sir Basil liked her; he was quite sure of that. He seemed happy always when he was with her; he sought her society frequently—why should he not love her?

It struck him suddenly one morning that, if Sir Basil only knew how matters stood, he might, in all probability would, ask Leah to marry him.

“I spoke to Lady Bourgoyne at once,” he said to himself, “when the major told me that she would never be a happy woman unless I married her. The chances are that in the same circumstances Sir Basil would follow my example.”

He determined that, as he was Leah’s guardian, uncle, and adopted father, he was the right person to give this delicate hint.

A favorable opportunity occurred a few days afterward. He overtook Sir Basil, who was strolling on the beach alone, smoking a cigar. The general reddened all over his honest bronzed face when he thought of the great interest at stake, and how much depended on the result of the conversation.

They first discussed the weather and matters of general interest. Then Sir Arthur began cautiously to feel his way. He always thought afterward that this conversation had been a masterpiece of diplomacy. He commenced to talk about Glen and its surroundings.

“You will want a mistress for that beautiful home of yours some day, Sir Basil,” he said.

The young baronet laughed.

“I suppose so,” he said.

“Have you begun to think of looking out, or settling down, or whatever it is called!” asked the general.

“No; I have not had time. I am in no hurry; I

should like to make some position for myself before I think of marriage," said the young baronet.

"Quite right," cried the general, hastily. He must not show his hand too soon. "Are you ambitious!" he asked, suddenly.

"Yes," was the frank reply. "For my part, I do not believe in hereditary position; I believe that every man should carve out a name and fame for himself. I, for instance, would far rather be known as Basil Carlton, statesman, or skilful soldier, or able writer, than merely as Sir Basil Carlton, of Glen."

"I hope to Heaven," said the general, "that you are not a radical!"—and his thoughts flew back to Martin Ray.

"No, I am not a radical; but I think there are many fine and noble men in England to be found among the radicals."

"That may be," acknowledged Sir Arthur. "Politics," he continued, "are a fair game, at which every man can play. I respect the convictions of every honest man; but I loathe and detest men who trade upon others, make tools of them, and foster rebellion and murder."

"That is not radicalism," said Sir Basil, calmly.

But it was not politics that the general wished to discuss.

"I suppose you would like to go into parliament, Sir Basil," he remarked.

"I have often thought of it," he said; "and I shall most certainly try for it. That is my ideal life—to serve my country in some way during part of the year, and to live on my estate during the remainder. One of my greatest ambitions is to have a model estate."

"A very noble ambition, too," remarked the general. "I approve of that. And you do not think of marrying yet? But you will want a wife to do the honors for you, if you carry out your plans."

"I had better make my mark first," he said.

The general looked at him keenly.

"You are not one of those who despise marriage, or think it of little consequence?" he queried.

"No—far from it. I think it is the one step in life that makes or mars a man; his happiness or misery most certainly depends upon it; therefore, I hope to look before I leap."

"Quite right," said the general; "you could not do better. Men have such different tastes. Now, what is your idea of a wife?"

Sir Basil laughed.

"I do not know that I have formed one yet."

The general looked relieved. If his heart was yet untouched, why could he not learn to love Leah?

"I should like to know," he said, thoughtfully, "what you would expect in a wife. What are the qualifications you deem necessary in a woman who would aspire to that position?"

"I have never thought about it; I suppose my ideas are not different from other people's," answered Sir Basil, laughing.

"Would you marry for beauty, money, or position?"

"No; I should marry for love," said Sir Basil. "I should never marry for beauty, though I should like the woman I love to have a fair face of her own. I do not care for money—I have quite enough; but I shall not be ill-pleased if my wife has some fortune."

"His ideas are sensible," thought the general to himself. "I am sure that, if I had thought of marriage at all, it would have been much in the same way." Aloud he said, "I should like to ask you one more question, and I beg that you will not think me curious."

"I know your true friendship for me," said Sir Basil,

"and I feel that nothing you might ask me would be prompted by idle curiosity."

"I should like to know," pursued the general, "if you have passed through the fever called love?"

"No, I have not," said Sir Basil, "I am heart-whole and fancy-free. I may add that I thank Heaven for it."

"So do I," thought the general. He was silent for some minutes, not quite seeing his way to the next question.

"If the story of the marriages of one generation could be written, it would be a wonderful volume," said Sir Arthur, musingly. "Some men are led into marriage. I was; and my marriage proved a happy one. I had never given a thought to it until some one told me that a certain lady favored me very much. I found it was true, and we were very happy."

Sir Basil was surprised to see that the general looked flushed and perplexed. He was a little amused, too, at his choice of such a subject for discussion. He wondered if Sir Arthur had any thoughts of marrying again.

"There are some very knotty points about this same love-making," continued the general. "I do not think, taking it as it is conducted now, that the ladies have a fair chance."

"Why not?" asked Sir Basil.

"The advantages are mainly on the side of the man," said the general. "If a man sees a girl and likes her, he has but to tell her so; she can say 'Yes, or 'No,' as she pleases."

"Certainly," chimed in Sir Basil.

"Reverse the question. If a young girl sees a man and likes him ever so much, she cannot say so."

"It is certainly not the custom of English girls!" laughed Sir Basil.

"Do you think it fair to the weaker sex that they should be obliged to conceal their sentiments?"

“ I must confess I should not like to see the custom reversed,” replied the baronet. “ Besides, there is a view of the matter which does not seem to have struck you, Sir Arthur. Women are more clever than men ; they have a thousand quick instincts that we do not possess ; and I fancy that, if any girl gave her heart unsolicited, there are many ways in which, without losing either her dignity or her modesty, she could let it be known.”

The general looked hopeless, helpless. This view of the subject had not occurred to him.

“ I mean,” continued Sir Basil, “ that, without saying one word, by her face and manner any woman could make a man understand that she liked him.”

“ If that be the case,” thought the general to himself, “ why has not Leah done so ? ”

Then he remembered that she was too proud and cold ; she would die rather than stoop to that. But he must save her. Even the duchess admitted that at times an unhappy love proved fatal.

“ I should like to know your opinion, Sir Basil,” he said. “ Should you think less of a girl if she had a great affection for a man who had shown no signs of any for her ? ”

“ Certainly not,” he replied.

“ I will put a case to you,” said the general, warming now to his work. “ Suppose that a lady, young and beautiful, all that is most gracious and graceful, meets a man and likes him so well that her liking grows into love for him, and that love takes such complete possession of her that not only her happiness but her life is endangered ; would you think it prudent or discreet if some of her friends, some one who loved her, told him of it ? ”

“ I should think it the kindest thing to do,” said Sir Basil, carelessly.

“ You would approve of such a line of conduct ? ” said Sir Arthur.

"If the man so loved were quite free, I could see no objection to it," said Sir Basil.

"Thank Heaven I hear you say so!" cried the general.

"Why, what has it to do with me?" asked Sir Basil.

"I—I know some one," stammered the general—"some one who cares for you in that way, whose life is wrapped up, so to speak, in yours."

"In mine!" cried Sir Basil. "You must be mistaken, general."

"I am not, indeed. Think of all the people you know, and see if you cannot find some clue."

"I am sure I cannot," said Sir Basil, quickly. "I have not mixed much in ladies' society, and of those I know I cannot imagine one caring much for me."

"Yet there is one," declared the general, slowly. "What the noonday sun is to the flowers, you are to her. She loves you as I believe very few women have the power of loving."

"How do you know?" cried Sir Basil, in astonishment.

"I found it out by accident. I would have given a great deal not to have known it. I have never been happy since."

Sir Basil grew pale and agitated.

"How strange that you should know that! Are you quite sure? Is there no mistake?"

"None. I could almost say I wish there were. I assure you that I have been most unhappy ever since I made the discovery; I have not known what to do. I honestly believe that in time the girl will die if her love remains unrequited. It seemed to me that in keeping her secret I was almost helping to kill her; in telling it Heaven only knows what other harm I may do! If I did not believe it to be a case of life and death, I would not stir in the matter. Even now, far as I have gone, unless you wish it, I will not mention the name."

"I do not know what to say," declared Sir Basil, deeply agitated. That any one loved him so deeply touched him.

"Think over it," continued the general. "You are heart-whole and fancy-free; why not make this girl happy? If you loved any one else, it would be a different matter; but you do not."

"No, I do not," said Sir Basil, slowly.

And then for some minutes there was silence between them. It was the expression on the general's face that made Sir Basil speak at last.

"Tell me who it is," he said, abruptly; "I should prefer to know."

"Heaven grant that I am doing right!" said the general. "I would give my life for her, because I love her so; but, if I do her any injury while seeking only to do her good, I shall never forgive myself."

"Tell me," said Sir Basil. "I—I dare not guess."

"Yes, I will tell you," replied the elder man, solemnly. "Heaven grant that I am acting wisely! It is my niece and adopted daughter who loves you."

"Your niece? Miss Hatton?" cried Sir Basil. "You cannot surely mean it. Why, the duchess told me that she had had more offers of marriage than any woman in England!"

"So she has," said the general.

"And you say this proud, beautiful girl loves me? It seems incredible!"

"She loves you with all her heart," replied the general, "and you are fancy-free. Let me mention this—she is true, gifted, generous; she has some of the noblest qualities of a woman; she will be one of the wealthiest heiresses in England. Think over it, Sir Basil. She would be so happy, poor child, while I—I cannot tell you what it would do for me—I love her so dearly, and she is so unhappy"

“Are you quite sure that there is no mistake?” asked Sir Basil. “Your niece could aspire to any position—socially speaking, I should be no match for her.”

“There is only this matter for consideration,” said the general—“she loves you. Ah, if you had seen her tears!”

“Tears!” repeated the baronet, in great distress. “You do not surely mean that she has shed tears on my account? You make me feel as though I had been in some measure to blame.”

“I should like to add this,” said Sir Arthur—“I should like you to remember this one thing always—what my heart has dictated I have done for my niece; I have told you the story, and I leave it with you to act upon it as you think best. We will never resume the subject; let it be buried between us for ever. I have spoken for her sake against my own will.”

Silently they grasped each other’s hands, and parted.

“Heaven grant that I have done the right thing!” said the general to himself. “I believe men make a dreadful muddle of everything of the kind; but I hope for the best.”

Sir Basil’s thoughts were far more tumultuous. He admired Leah exceedingly; but he had never dreamed of marrying her. He had felt no tendency whatever to fall in love with her. She had always seemed to him beyond his reach. He remembered all that the duchess had told him of the offers of marriage she had received; and this beautiful girl, who might have been Countess of Barberry, loved him secretly!

It was some time before he could collect his thoughts, and then a thousand memories filled his mind—of looks and words, the true meaning of which he had not understood until now. How blind he had been! He had said that a man would understand even the faintest signs of a woman’s regard; but had he understood?

The beautiful, proud face rose so clearly before him. He had not thought much of marriage ; but it appeared marvellous that he had but to speak one word and she would be his. He was not in love with her, but his heart beat when he thought of her. He was one of the least mercenary and most generous of men ; he would have scorned the idea of marrying for money ; but it was not unpleasant to think of the immense wealth that would be his if he wedded Leah Hatton. He could make good use of it. Would any one believe that this grand, imperial creature cared enough about him to shed tears ? He was still young ; not only was his heart touched, but his vanity was flattered ; it raised him in his own esteem that he should all unconsciously have won the love of such a woman. He would cultivate her society more, and, if he found the general's assertions to be true, he would ask her to be his wife.

As he returned to the house, calmer in mind after this decision, it seemed to him a strange coincidence that he should meet the duchess and Miss Hatton. The duchess spoke gayly enough ; Leah's face flushed crimson, and a thousand welcomes shone in her dark eyes. For no other man living would her face have so changed and brightened. On the previous day Sir Basil would not have noticed it ; now it struck him.

"We are going down to the beach," said the duchess. "Will you accompany us, Sir Basil ?"

"With pleasure," he replied. "I have been there once *this* morning, and very beautiful the sea looks."

They strolled on to the yellow sands, where the waves rolled in briskly and broke into sheets of white foam, and sat down to watch the incoming tide. In one heart there was unutterable happiness ; Leah had read something in Sir Basil's face which she had never seen there before. In another heart there was unutterable perplexity ; for Sir

Basil saw that the general had not been mistaken. Reading all that passed now by the light given by his words, there was no doubt but that Leah loved him.

“They are beginning to understand each other,” thought the duchess, as she listened to the two voices. “It is possible that it may all come right in the end.”

The two hours they spent that morning on the beach seemed to Leah to pass like two moments; and her face grew so beautiful in her new-found happiness that it dazed Sir Basil when he looked upon it. Her sister Hettie, her father, and all the horrors of her past life were forgotten in the bright present.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Duchess of Rosedene had decided to give a grand fancy-ball.

“Let me design a costume for you, Miss Hatton,” said Sir Basil. “I once went to a fancy-ball at Naples, where each lady was dressed to represent a flower. It was the prettiest picture imaginable. Instead of Marie Stuarts, La Vallières, Joans of Arc, and Pompadours, we had a room full of impersonations of beautiful flowers. I remember the ‘Heartsease’—a tall girl, dark, pale, and handsome, dressed in velvet of the color of a purple pansy, with heartsease in her hair and all over her dress. The ‘White Lily’ was another great success. There was a wonderful variety of roses. I wish you could have seen the ‘Geranium’—it was a most charming costume. Now I have two ideas for you, Miss Hatton—that you represent either the passion-flower or primrose.”

“I will not represent the passion flower,” she said. “I

was very found of it—I am now—but it has strange memories for me.”

She could not forget that it was amid the passion-flower sprays that she had first seen him. She would not wear them to dance in.

“Very well,” he said, “that is settled. I must sketch a primrose costume for you. That will suit you best—the coloring is so delicate. You must have a pale primrose-colored silk that will fall in soft folds, with fine web-like lace; you must have primroses in your hair and round your neck and arms, and a garland of the flowers round your waist; and the folds of silk and lace must be fastened with bunches of primroses and green leaves.”

Leah laughed lightly. She was delighted that he should take an interest in her dress. He seemed to watch her looks and listen to her words with keener interest. His manner was changed.

“You speak with the authority of a Worth,” she replied.

“I assure you that such a costume would be most picturesque,” he said. “Wear it to please me.”

Over her face rushed a wave of hot color. She would do anything to please him. He must have read the thought in the eyes that dropped before his.

“I will have the dress made just as you wish,” she said quietly.

“I am sure that you will be charmed with it,” he told her “Yours is just the kind of coloring that pale primrose will suit.”

The shy, happy eyes looked into his, and Sir Basil knew that every word the general had said was true.

The duchess was delighted with the young baronet’s suggestion.

“What a pretty idea!” she said. “I am sure I shall like it much better than all those stiff costumes and imita-

tions of queens and heroines. I have to thank you for a very pleasing inspiration, Sir Basil."

Everything conspired to make the ball a success. The great heat had passed; the sea-breeze that came through the woods was full of fragrance; the moon was bright; there were flowers everywhere, and the trees were brilliantly illuminated with lamps. When the guests were tired with dancing or wanted to seek the fresh air, they had but to cross the conservatory into the beautifully-illuminated grounds, where the lamps, the sparkling fountains, the trees all silvered by the moonlight, and the picturesque groups of guests made up a scene never to be forgotten.

The duchess was charmed. Leah was the belle; she never looked so beautiful. The pale, lovely hue of the primrose suited her to perfection. There was about her this evening a certain consciousness of her own beauty; those who looked at her noticed her flush of delight, the gleam in the dark eyes, the smile on the perfect lips. The general had noticed her with admiring eyes.

"If Sir Basil does not fall in love with her to-night, he has neither taste nor reason, neither sense nor heart," he said to himself. "What more could man desire? Who is more worthy of love than she?" He felt happier presently, for he saw that Sir Basil was more attentive to her.

The baronet had begged her to give him the first waltz, and then he asked for another. He was beginning to feel the intoxication of being loved by a beautiful woman. He saw the most eligible men in the room crowding round her. He knew there were some present who would give anything they possessed for the smiles, the brightness she lavished upon him, and which were his without asking. It was something worth living for, an intoxication of vanity, a triumph, to know that this superb woman loved him; he had but to speak, and her whole face changed for him. She loved him—he said it over and over again to himself

—this woman whose smiles were so hard to win. He watched her, he danced with her, falling every moment more and more under the spell of her beauty and charms.

“You are tired,” he said, when the dance ended and she leaned on his arm; “come out into the moonlight and rest.”

Ah, the beautiful world into which they went! There lay the broad expanse of sea in the far distance, the moon shining on it: around them were the brightly illuminated grounds. One of the principal fountains was a marble Undine, an exquisitely-carved figure, whose hand, touching a marble basin, seemed to scatter the rippling sprays of water.

“This is my favorite spot,” said Leah. “I think this Undine is the fairest work of art in Dene. Have you noticed the elegant pose of the head, the grace of the up-raised hand, as though she were bidding the waters flow?”

They stood still for a few moments, looking at the fountain in the moonlight. The marble Undine was beautiful, with its statuesque grace, its serene calm; but the girl, with her passionate, living beauty, the moonlight falling on her fair face and on the rich folds of pale primrose, was more beautiful still. Slowly but surely the spell of that witching hour came over Sir Basil. The knowledge that Leah loved him, the faint odor of the flowers, the charm of the night sky and the distant sea, the dark eyes that drooped beneath his gaze, the white hands that trembled in his, the face bent over the dimpling water—all conspired to shed a glamor over him.

“This reminds me of the lovers’ night in the ‘Merchant of Venice,’” he said. “It is just as perfect; one can think of nothing but flowers and love.”

“A happy night,” she returned, gently, bending her face over the glistening marble.

“How plainly I can see you there!” he said, looking

at the reflection. "Every primrose can be seen distinctly in the water. Now tell me, are you not pleased with your costume?"

"If you are," she sighed. Her heart was beating fast with a passion of love and pain. He could be so near her, he could stand with her in that lovely spot, and yet nothing brought his heart nearer to hers! She did not know that at that moment he cared for her more than he had ever done; for Sir Basil, as he gazed at the face reflected in the water, had seen something there which had stirred his heart—a sad, wistful look, not at all suited to the beautiful face; and he knew quite well what had called it there. It was love for himself.

The next minute he had clasped her hands in his, and bending over her, whispered to her the words that made the music of her life.

She made no answer—to have saved her life she could not have uttered a word; but the light on her face was answer enough to him. The happy eyes fell; the beautiful head, with its primrose crown, rested on the edge of the marble basin. In her heart she was thanking Heaven for the blessing given to her.

"Do you love me, Leah?" he asked.

Ah, Heaven, the love that shone in her eyes, that radiated from her face! A voice of sweetest music whispered,—

"I have loved you from the first moment I saw your face. I pray Heaven that I may see it last in this world."

The words fell softly over the rippling waters, softly as the sigh of a summer breeze; and when they ended Sir Basil kissed her, speechless with emotion.

Three days afterwards Sir Basil and Leah stood looking again at the marble Undine. The sparkling waters were rising now in the sunlight, and as they fell into the great marble basin, they glistened like drops of gold.

"I shall always love the Undine," said Leah. "The duchess has promised to let me have it photographed, and I shall keep the little picture where I can always see it. Undine's lover gave to her a soul; you gave me——"

"What?" he asked, gently, seeing that she paused.

"You have given me life." she said.

There was no misgiving in her mind, not the faintest doubt. She believed implicitly that he loved her as she loved him. They were the two halves of one soul; now they were united and shared but one life, one soul between them. Sure that he felt as she did, she made no secret of her love. She did not measure her words; she disclosed her whole heart to him.

She puzzled him greatly on one occasion. They had wandered through the woods down to the sea. The tide was rolling in; the sun shone on the water till it looked like burnished gold; afar off gleamed the white sails of many a graceful yacht. Beautiful as was this fair world, love made it fairer. They sat under the shelter of the cliffs; and Leah turned from the rippling waves to look at her lover's face.

"Basil," she said, "I have often wished to ask you—did you recognize me on the morning that you met me first?"

"On the morning when you stood like a beautiful statue, draped in white and gold, among the passion-flowers?" he said. "What a picture you presented, Leah!"

"Did you recognize me?" she repeated.

"In what way, my darling?" he asked.

"As I did you. I knew in one moment that the lover for whom I had waited had come at last. How strange that I always had that feeling! Sometimes, when the duchess talked to me, and seemed angry because I had dismissed one whom she considered an eligible suitor—sometimes my courage failed me. She thought my ideas

vain and sentimental. Yet, you see, I was right. Tell me, Basil, did you recognize me? Did you say to yourself, 'That is the girl who has been made for me, the one woman out of the whole wide world who is to be my wife?' Did you, Basil?"

He was puzzled. If he had said "No," she would be unhappy, and he could not bear to cloud her beautiful face; yet he could not say "Yes" without swerving from the truth.

"Men have not those quick intuitions," he said. "That which a woman knows, discerns by instinct, is some time in piercing the denser brain and more stolid heart of a man."

She looked a little disappointed.

"When did you find it out then?" she asked, anxiously.

"Find what out, Leah?"

"Why, that you loved me, Basil."

In spite of himself a flush rose to his face, but she took that as a sign of loving emotion.

"Am I to tell you the exact hour and minute?" he said, laughingly.

"If you can," she replied.

"I cannot, Leah. I suppose, as the novelists say, 'it stole upon me unawares.'"

"Basil," she whispered, "do tell me one thing. When you are away from me, you know, I like to sit and think over every word that you have said to me, I like to dwell on all the pleasant and happy thoughts I have about you. Tell me, Basil, did you admire me when you first saw me?"

"Indeed, I did," he replied, heartily. "I thought you then, as I think you now, the fairest woman in the world."

"Did you? I am so glad. I am well content that you should think me fair. I have never cared or thought

about what people call my good looks ; but now I am glad, since they please you."

He was very near loving her, she was so loving to him. Yet even on that morning, when she opened her mind to him as a flower opens its petals to the sun, even then he did not catch one spark of the divine fire that men call love. The time came when she counted the happy days of her life, and this was one of the brightest.

The news of their engagement had been made public at once. Sir Basil had gone direct to the general and told him. They had not said much to each other, but the general was greatly comforted. He believed that Sir Basil had grown to love his niece, therefore, all was well.

The duchess was not surprised ; she had foreseen the result from the first, she said. She congratulated Sir Basil in such a fashion that he was prouder than ever of what he had won.

"I shall always think of you," she said, "as of a most remarkable man. You have won for yourself what no other could win."

Later on she said to Leah, after kissing her :

"I am right well pleased, my dear. I suppose, Leah, it is 'this or none?'"

"Heaven has been very good to me, and has given me my heart's desire," replied the girl, as her eyes filled with tears.

There was to be no hurry about the wedding. Glen must be altered and improved, must be decorated and re-furnished. During the spring of the coming year a general election was expected, and Sir Basil would be busy trying to secure a seat in Parliament. It was agreed on all sides that the marriage should not take place just yet. Nor did Leah wish it to be otherwise. She was supremely happy ; her life was crowned, her love was blessed. The

general and his niece remained a few weeks longer at Dene Abbey, and then returned to Brentwood.

Leah took with her the photograph of the marble Undine, but no one save Sir Basil understood why she prized it. She was perfectly content ; there was no cloud in her sky, she had no misgiving, no fear. Just as the glowing sun absorbs all minor lights, so her passionate love eclipsed all else. She wished for nothing save that Hettie should know how happy she was. She would have liked to tell her fair-haired, beloved sister of this love which made her one of the happiest women in the world.

The general and Leah went back to Brentwood, Sir Basil returned to Glen, and the months that followed were full of quiet happiness. Every day brought the master of Glen over to Brentwood. As the whole mansion was in the hands of workmen, he often remained at the general's long days together. The more Sir Arthur saw of him the more he liked him ; he never wearied of sounding his praises to his niece—he loved him as he would have loved a son of his own.

Those happy weeks bound the heart of Leah so completely to her lover, made her life so entirely one with his, that nothing but death could have taken her from him.

When Christmas came, the snow was lying on the ground.

As Leah was one day watching the whirl of the soft snowflakes, her mind went back to the little house in Manchester, where she and Hettie had been so long together. Suddenly she went in search of her uncle, whom she found in the library.

He wondered at the emotion on her face.

“Uncle,” she said, “give me permission to speak to you. I would not ask it but that I am ill with suspense.”

“Say what you will, my dear,” responded Sir Arthur, drawing the beautiful face to him and kissing it.

“You have forbidden me to speak on the subject,” she said. “I hardly like to presume upon the permission you now give me, but I had a terrible dream last night, and it has troubled me so much.”

“Surely you do not believe in dreams, Leah?” laughed the general.

“I do not,” she replied: “but this has haunted me all day. I dreamed that, although I was going to marry Basil, something always parted us; that I never could see him, though I could hear his voice; and then, when I followed it, I could not find him. If I was in his presence, there was always a thick veil of crape between us, which I could not tear away. I cannot tell you how nervous it has made me. It seems like a foreboding that we are to part.”

“Nonsense, Leah!” laughed the general. “There must be many partings in this world, but rest assured that while you both live there will never be one between Sir Basil and you.”

She looked a little relieved, but the cloud still rested on the fair face.

“I thought you would perhaps laugh, uncle, but you must listen to something else that I have to say. I have been trying to think if there is anything on earth which could part us, and I have come to the conclusion that the only thing I have to fear is the announcement of the fact that I am Martin Ray’s daughter. He must know that.”

“Certainly. I shall tell him myself,” said the general. “I have always intended to do so, but not yet—not yet, Leah. Believe me that it will make no difference. I have talked a great deal with him on political matters, and his opinions are not one-half so strong as mine are. You need not have the least fear on that score, Leah, I assure you. I shall tell him of your parentage, and he will be surprised; but you are the child of my sister as well as of Martin Ray. Do not forget that. There has been no deceit.

The simple fact is that in adopting you I have given you my name, because I did not care to have your prospects in life spoiled by associating yours with Martin Ray. Any one would understand that. I know Sir Basil thoroughly. He will not mind. There are some men who might object, but he is not one of them."

"I shall be glad when you have told him," she said quietly. "I do not like even the shadow of a secret between us. But you have taken all fear from me. I never remember to have been nervous before. I wonder of what it is the sign?"

Sir Arthur smiled as he raised the beautiful face and kissed it.

"I can tell you, Leah," he replied, "it is a sign that you love Sir Basil with all your heart, and that the faintest fear of ever being parted from him is to you like the overshadowing of a great calamity."

"Yes," she assented, with a happy smile. "But is it not better to love too much than not to love at all?"

"I cannot say," replied the general; "of the love you speak about, that fills your heart, I know nothing."

"Perhaps you would be quite a different man, uncle, if such were not the case," she said, laughing in her charming fashion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHRISTMAS passed by; the reign of King Winter was ended. Spring was come; the odor of violets filled the air, the birds began to build, and the hedges clothed themselves with green.

After sundry flying visits to the metropolis, Sir Arthur

decided to take up his residence in London at the end of April.

"You will not mind that, Leah?" he asked.

"No, though, if it were possible, I would rather stay here at Brentwood than go to London at all."

"It would cause a revolution," said Sir Arthur. "I dare not think of such a thing."

"One thing is certain," remarked Leah—"every one will know of my engagement, and I shall have more time to myself. I wonder when Basil will go?"

"I think he spoke of going next week; he will not remain at his country seat alone. He will be compelled, however, to leave town every now and then, and spend a few hours at Glen, to see how the work progresses."

"I shall be glad when the season is over, and we are here in peace again," said Leah.

"Are you beginning to tire of gayeties, Leah?" asked Sir Arthur.

"I think it is not that, uncle," she said, gently; "it is that my heart is more at rest here."

Sir Basil was spending a few days at Brentwood before the general and his niece started for London. He asked Leah one morning, when she was giving orders about the packing, if she could spare him five minutes; he had something very particular to say to her.

She smiled to herself at the request. How cheerfully and gladly she would have given him every moment of her time, if he had wanted it!

"You look very serious, Basil," she said.

"I want to speak to you on a grave subject," he replied.

They were standing in the deep recess of a large bay-window; the odor of violets filled the room. Sir Basil took from his pocket a small morocco ring-case.

"I do not know," he said, "whether our family custom will please you, Leah. I have heard that some of the

Ladies Carlton did not like the fashion ; and, if it does not find favor in your eyes, I will lay the old custom aside."

"Anything will please me," she told him, "that pleases you."

"Every family has, I suppose, its own traditions and customs," said Sir Basil. "I can tell you the origin of this custom. One of our ancestors saved his sovereign's life. He was out hunting with his royal master, who was wont to brag of his prowess, yet at heart was a coward. The details would not interest you, but our ancestor covered an act of arrant cowardice of the king's, and at the same time saved his life. The incident happened a few days before the wedding-day of Hugh Carlton, and the king insisted upon presenting the wedding-ring. It was a magnificent circlet of thick pale gold, with the royal arms engraved within. The then Lady Carlton wore it with vast satisfaction, and was proud of it. When she lay dead in her coffin it was taken from her hand. Hugh Carlton did not care to bury the gift of a king ; he took the ring from her finger and kept it by him. In the course of a few years he married again, and he used the same wedding-ring. During all the succeeding generations the same thing has been done : all the heads of the house of Carlton have married their wives with this ring. Two hundred years since it was a thick gold circlet with superb diamonds ; now the diamonds are all gone, and the ring has grown thin by constant wear. I am not quite sure ; but I think it was melted down once, and more gold added to it, and then re-made. My grandmother, Lady Dorothea Carlton, wore it : my dear mother wore it ; and now I offer it to you, my love. It shall be just as you like, Leah ; if you would prefer a new one, I will get one—if you would like to wear the same that so many Ladies Carleton have worn, then keep it."

"What would you like me to do ?" she asked. "The

tradition is of your house, not of mine. Is there any legend about the wedding-ring?"

"Yes, this—that whoever wears it lives long and happily. If you ask me what I should like you best to do, I say most certainly let it be your wedding-ring. Let me see, Leah, if it will fit you."

He took it from the little case, and she looked at it with some reverence. So this was the king's gift, and this was the famous Carlton wedding-ring! On how many slender girlish hands had it been placed? From how many dead white fingers had it been taken? There was something almost weird and uncanny about it."

"My mother had a beautiful little hand," he said, "but the legend did not hold good in her case; her life was not a long or a happy one. My father died when she was quite young, and the terrible tragedy of my sister's death came soon after. She had a troubled life."

He took her hand and placed the ring upon her finger. It fitted her exactly, as though it had been made for her.

"Have those who wore this ring been happy wives, do you think, Basil?" she asked, tremblingly, looking up at her lover.

"I hope that all wives are happy. Why should they not be?" He was thinking of something else, and hardly knew what he was saying.

"I have seen many wives who were not happy. What wife could be happy if her husband did not love her?"

"But, my dearest Leah, we must presume that every husband does love his wife."

"Yes, at first," she said, slowly. "No honorable man would ask a woman to marry him unless he loved her."

She spoke very earnestly, her face slightly flushed, holding the old-fashioned wedding-ring in her hand. Something in her words struck him with pain; yet she did not doubt him. He thanked heaven at that moment that she

would never know how her uncle's affection for her had caused him to interfere in her behalf.

"If this ring could speak," she said, "if it could tell the history of all the wives who have worn it—the happy and the unhappy, the loved and the unloved—it would fill a volume, Basil. And some day—it may be soon or many years may pass first—when I lie dead, it will be drawn from my finger. If you, Basil, should be the one to remove it, you will think of the hour when you first gave it to me."

She raised her face for him to caress her, and he kissed the beautiful lips. He drew her to his breast and said,—

"My darling, I hope it will be many long years before that time, and I hope I shall die first."

He knew how much she loved him then, for she clung to him with passionate words and bitter tears.

"Ah, no!" she cried. "If ever you offer up a prayer for me, Basil, let it be that, when Heaven calls you, I may go with you. I—ah me, you know, Basil, I could not live without you! I could not even try."

"Because you love me so, my Leah?" he asked, tenderly.

"Yes, because I love you so. Do you not feel so as regards myself? If I died, could you live? Would not the world become a dreary blank to you? Ah, Basil, I am sure that if you died I should never eat, never sleep, never smile again!"

He was greatly touched by her words.

"You love me so much?" he said again.

"Yes, I love you so dearly," she replied—"you will never know how dearly. There are times when I think that men never appreciate or never understand the great love of women."

"I will try to understand yours, Leah," he said, gently. "I hope," he added, with genuine earnestness, "I shall make you happy, Leah."

"Happy," she repeated, as though the word surprised her—"happy. You love me, Basil, do you not?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Then how can I help being happy? I could not be anything else. Many people live with divided loves; they share their affections; they have mothers, brothers. I have only you. I mean that all my love is concentrated on you. The other lesser loves are absorbed by it, as the river absorbs the waters of its tributary brooklets. Ah, Basil, I shall always be so pleased that you brought this wedding-ring to me! It seems to have made it easier for me to talk to you about my love."

"Has it not always been so, Leah?" he asked.

She had half hidden her face against his breast. She raised it now, bright with unutterable tenderness.

"No, not always," she replied. "Sometimes my heart is quite full, and I try to tell you, but I cannot. Sometimes, when you are away from me, I think of all that I shall say when I see you next; a thousand thoughts come to me, a thousand words that I long to speak. And then, when you come, I am mute; my fancies leave me in the sweet reality of your presence. You know what Shakespeare says, Basil?—

"Oh, sweet love, I always write to you,
And you and love are still my argument!
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent;
For, as the sun is new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told!"

Are they not noble lines, Basil?"

"Yes, very. How well you understand all this wonderful science of love, Leah!"

"And you?" she said, looking up at him. "Do you not understand it, too?"

"I have had the sweetest teacher the world ever saw!"

cried Sir Basil. "I can understand men losing the whole world for the love of one woman."

"Would you lose it, dear, for me?" she asked, putting her arms around his neck.

"Yes," he answered unthinkingly.

"I shall feel doubly married when I wear this," she said, still holding the little ring in her hand. "It will not only bind me to you, but to all the race of Carltons. Let me keep it, Basil, until our wedding-day."

"Certainly," he said. "I am glad it is in such safe, sweet keeping, Leah. If you like, it can be made to look just like a new ring."

"No," she replied, touching it with her lips, "I like it better as your mother wore it. All the new wedding-rings in the world would be nothing by the side of this."

"You must not wear it till we are married," he said; "that would be unlucky."

He watched her as, with a happy smile, she placed the ring in the case and then closed it.

A few days after that they were in London; and Leah's heart beat more quickly and lightly when she thought of the treasure hidden in the jewel case."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE season was a brilliant one. The news of Miss Hanson's engagement was received by some with pleasure, by others with annoyance. Those who had known her before saw a wonderful change in her; the restless expression had gone from her face, and in its place reigned perfect calm. No one could look at her and not know that she was happy beyond words. In time the crowd of "fashion-

ables " grew accustomed to seeing Sir Basil always by her side ; even her admirers accepted the situation and resignedly took the second place.

Sir Basil tried by the most assiduous attention to make up for any shortcoming there might be in his love. He was Leah's shadow. Every day brought her flowers, books, music, presents of every kind, from one who externally was the most devoted of lovers. There were times when he almost believed himself to be one of the happiest men living, when he was lost in wonder at the prize he had won, and tried to assure himself that there was nothing left for him to desire. Yet he knew that the depths of his heart had never been stirred, that he was capable of a deeper, far greater love than this ; his heart had never yet beaten the quicker for any word of Leah's ; he had a kindly affection for her—that was all. He would have given her the love of his manhood if he could have done so ; but she had failed to touch his heart. She would never know it. He would make her happy, he could crown her life, and she should never suspect that he had not loved her with his whole heart and of his own free will. It did not occur to him that it was a dangerous thing to marry without love, no matter how great the temptation might be ; he forgot that few men pass through life without some touch of the great fever called love ; nor did he reflect that the fever might awake in his heart when it was all too late. Leah's beauty delighted him, her grace and brilliancy fascinated him, he rejoiced in the admiration that her loveliness excited, but it was not love that shone in his eyes as he gazed upon her ; and she was too much engrossed in her own love and happiness to notice any failure in him.

One evening, by some mischance, Sir Basil had been unable to accompany Leah to the theatre, and she had gone with the Duchess of Rosedene. It was to see "Pygmalion and Galatea."

By some strange fortune Hettie was in the theatre that night. Martin Ray had long been ailing, and had lived for the last two years in the country. He had come up to town on business, and, for his own comfort's sake, he had brought Hettie with him. The landlady of the house where he was staying happened to have some tickets sent to her, and she begged Miss Ray to accept one. Hettie, who seldom had any kind of enjoyment, whose life was one monotonous round of duty, was eager to avail herself of it. Martin Ray raised no objection; he would be busy that evening with his companions, and she could please herself.

Hettie was delighted. She had grown into a lovely girl. She had not the brilliancy of Leah; she had not her fire or passion; she lacked her spirit and daring. But she was sweet and loving; her angelic face told of an angelic nature; her fair, tranquil loveliness touched men's hearts as does the strain of sweet music. One felt the better even for looking at her; mean thoughts died in her presence. She was "in the world, but not of it;" patience, self-sacrifice, resignation were written in each line of her sweet face. Her golden hair had a darker sheen, her eyes a deeper light than they had on the night when she lost the sister who had been to her as the half of herself. She was still in the very springtide of her girlhood and nothing more fair, more loving, or more true could be imagined.

Her life had not been a happy one. The loss of his brilliant daughter, for whom he had formed such great plans, had soured and embittered Martin Ray. From the moment that Hettie had drawn away from Leah, and placed her arms around her father's neck, she had been most devoted to him; with angelic patience she had borne with all his discontent, his grumbling, his angry denunciation, his sullen resentment against the whole world, his selfish neglect of her. She waited upon him during the day

and then sat up during half the night to copy papers or to make extracts for him. Her patience never wearied. If any one pitied or sympathized with her, she would say, with her sweetest smile, "My poor father, he has had so much to bear!" She was utterly unselfish.

No words could tell how she had thought of her beautiful sister—how she dreamed of her, longed for her—how she tried to fancy what she had grown like and what she was doing. Going to London made her think of Leah more than ever. They had been living in a small country town, for Martin Ray's health was failing. There could be no hope of seeing her sister there; but here, in London there was a possibility. Hettie watched the newspapers, and soon found that General Sir Arthur Hatton, with his beautiful niece, lived at Harbury House. Some time, when her father was out, and she had a leisure hour, she would go to Harbury House; she would pass and repass it—she would stand opposite to it. She did so, but never once did she see Leah. Though both were living in the great city, they were far apart as the poles. In her heart all day she cried for Leah; on her lips trembled always the name of "Leah." She read in the newspapers of Leah's triumph—that she was one of the most admired and popular queens of society. She read of Leah at court with the Duchess of Rosedene, of Leah at State ball and concert, of Leah at the most exclusive and *recherche* entertainments in London; and she longed with all her loving heart to see her in her grandeur and magnificence, to gaze once more at the beautiful face and into the dark eyes. Her own eyes grew hot with burning tears when she thought of them.

The desire of her heart was unexpectedly granted. She went to the theatre, little dreaming that her sister would be there on that same evening in all her brilliancy and magnificence. Hettie and her companion were in the

pit—and even that seemed a great thing to the girl. The landlady had apologized; she would have liked to take Miss Ray to the dress circle, but it was not possible. Simple, kindly Hettie protested that the pit was the very best part of the theatre—it was cooler and one could see the stage better; which view of the matter largely helped to comfort her companion.

While the curtain was down Hettie amused herself by looking round the house. The scene was a complete novelty to her. She enjoyed seeing the fair faces, the rich dresses, gleaming jewels, and exquisite bouquets. After a short time she noticed that the attention of many people was directed towards a box on the grand tier. She wondered what was the source of attraction, and she looked herself in the same direction. Her eyes brightened and her beautiful features assumed an expression of wonder. It could never be—and yet—She saw a lady dressed superbly in satin of the color of the most delicate heliotrope, with a suite of magnificent opals—a handsome woman with a stately graceful bearing, her face a charming combination of refinement and happiness. She carried a fan, the handle of which blazed with jewels, and before her lay a bouquet of costly flowers. With her was a younger lady, so beautiful that Hettie's eyes were dazed as she looked at her. She wore some soft shining material shrouded in rich black lace. Her hair was fastened with diamond stars. Before her lay a bouquet of scarlet passion-flowers. The graceful arch of the neck, the gleaming white shoulders, the proud carriage of the head were all Leah's."

A cry rose to Hettie's white lips, which she repressed; her heart beat fast, and something like a mist came before her eyes. This magnificent woman, in all the splendor of dress and jewels, surrounded by all that was gorgeous, was Leah, her sister. Could it be possible that that beautiful head had ever rested on her breast, that night after night

she had slept with that figure closely clasped in her arms? Was that the face that she had kissed in such an agony when they parted? She gazed at it long and earnestly. Leah's face had always been to her the fairest object on which the sun shone; now it was as fair, but there was a change in it. Leah's face had been restless, had always worn a wistful look, as of one whose desires were not granted; now it was both calm and bright, while infinite love shone in the happy eyes. That was Leah, her friend, companion and sister. She thought of the pale face when her sister had gone to Sir Arthur's side; she remembered the voice trembling with emotion which had said, "I asked Heaven to help me, and it has sent you to deliver me from this furnace of fire." This was the same Leah, but calm and self-possessed. She moved her fan with a languid grace. She looked more at home and at ease in the midst of her splendor than she had looked in the little house at Manchester. Hettie's heart yearned for her. She could have stretched out her arms to her and cried out her name; but she had promised never again to speak one word to the sister whom she loved so dearly—never again. Something more bitter than death had parted them. Hettie saw no more of the stage until Leah's companion rose and both disappeared; she kept her eyes fixed on the proud face of her sister.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FROM that evening a very fever of unhappiness seized Hettie. She longed so intensely to see Leah again; her thoughts were always with her. Martin Ray began to complain bitterly of his youngest child; she was so absent,

so inattentive—it was the first time he had had to find fault with her. She was always dreaming instead of working, thinking instead of doing. What had come over her? Nothing but an irrepressible longing to see again the sister whom she so dearly loved. Leah in her magnificence haunted her—Leah with the love-light shining in her eyes. Ah! how could she be so happy when she was parted forever from them? Did she remember them in the midst of her wealth and luxury? Did she ever think of them—she who had once loved them so dearly?

At last the fever of longing mastered her. She would not break her promise—she would not speak to her; but she must look upon her face again. For days she struggled hard to find a few moments' leisure; but Martin seemed to know that she wanted a few hours for herself, so he kept her constantly employed. At last it came, this leisure hour for which she had longed. Her father went out, and was not to return until after midnight. Quick as thought she dressed herself. It was just eight o'clock, and she would probably be in time to see Leah leave Harbury House for whatever ball or party she might be attending.

Those who lived in that noble mansion little thought that the fair young sister of their beautiful mistress stood outside for many hours, with a wistful look on her pale face, her eyes fixed on the great entrance-door. Leah had left the house before she reached it; but Hettie was resolved to wait for her return. It would have touched a heart of stone to see the patient figure walking up and down with tireless footsteps.

The stars began to shine; silence fell over the great city; the distant roar of carriages grew less. She could hear the measured tread of the policemen; the soft shadows of night fell around her. She knew she ought to go home; but she could not leave the spot until she had seen Leah's face just once, if only for a moment.

At last came the sound of wheels ; lights appeared, as though by magic, in the windows of the great house. The carriage drew up before the hall door and the footman descended. Hettie drew back into the shade as a flood of light fell upon the pavement. She saw the carriage door flung open, the general descend first, and then Leah. She saw the lovely face, more beautiful than ever, enveloped in a mass of soft white lace. Leah made some laughing remark as she stepped from the carriage to the ground ; and Hettie saw that she carried a bouquet of scarlet flowers in her hand. In another minute she had passed through the wide open door.

Then Hettie came forward and touched the footman on the arm.

“ I will give you,” she said, “ a sovereign for the flowers which that lady carried in her hand. Could you get them for me if I remain here ? ”

The man looked at her in astonishment.

“ Do you understand ? ” she went on, quickly. “ I will give you a sovereign for the flowers that lady carried in her hand.”

The light from the lamp fell on her sweet, upraised face, and the man was more bewildered.

“ What do you want them for ? ” he asked.

“ Never mind,” she replied—“ I do want them. Do not waste time talking to me, but get them if you can.”

“ Look here,” said the footman ; “ that lady is our young mistress, and I would not have any harm come to her.”

“ I mean no harm,” she returned quickly. “ I simply want them to keep by me after they are withered and dead, for love of her—that is all ; but I do not wish any one to know.”

“ Oh, if that is what you want them for, all right ! ” said the man. “ I will get them for you. Stand there ; I will not be a minute.”

Leah had laid her bouquet on one of the hall-tables. It was composed of scarlet passion-flowers. The man took it up and went back to the door.

"Here," he said, briefly; and the next moment Hettie had exchanged her one sovereign for the faded-bouquet.

How she loved her treasures! How she kissed them! Leah had held them in her hand, perhaps even touched them with her lips.

"It is all that I shall ever have to remind me of my beautiful Leah," she said to herself. "I will keep them as long as I live.

She hastened home, reaching there fortunately before Martin Ray's return.

In her own mind Hettie had decided to repeat her little experiment. If she could see Leah once or twice in each week, it would amply repay her for any trouble.

But her pleasant anticipations were soon destroyed. Martin Ray was not well pleased with his visit to London. He was not treated with the respect that he considered due to himself; besides which, his health was rapidly failing. He did not rest until he had left the great city behind him and was once more in his pleasant country cottage.

Leah did not know that her sister had seen her, and the little incident of the flowers had never been mentioned.

It happened that an artist, travelling in the county where Martin Ray and Hettie lived, had seen her, and had made a very perfect sketch of her face; this he had afterward made the subject of a picture that he sent to the Royal Academy. It was called "The First Glimpse of Morning," and it was one of the finest paintings exhibited that year. It represented a young girl looking from a casement window in the early morning. The gray and rosy dawn was in the eastern skies; the trees and flowers seemed to be waking from their sleep, and a few birds were on the wing. The window was wreathed with lovely

roses ; and the girl's face, framed in the green foliage and crimson flowers, was something to wonder at. On it there was the reverent look of one whose first thoughts in the morning had been given to heaven—a face so fair and sweet that one felt the better for gazing upon it. The golden hair and the blue eyes, the delicate bloom, the spiritual rapt expression, made the picture famous.

Leah and Sir Basil went together to the Royal Academy. She was exceedingly fond of pictures.

“Have you seen ‘The First Glimpse of Morning,’ Leah?” he asked her. “If not, come this way. There is always a crowd round it. There—that is my ideal face, the loveliest that could be either imagined or copied.”

Leah looked at it earnestly, and in her own heart she thought how much it was like the face of her sister. She did not know then that it was perfectly like her.

“It is a lovely face,” she said slowly, wondering if Hettie, whom it so strongly resembled, had grown up as beautiful as that.

“Do you know,” said Sir Basil, “that I see in it a great likeness to you?”

“Do you?” she questioned, her face flushing warmly.

Then, as though he had made a discovery that surprised him, he said,—

“That face, Leah, has what yours in some ways lacks—tenderness.”

It was perfectly true ; yet the moment he had said the words he repented of them, she looked so terribly pained.

“I am sorry that my face lacks anything in your eyes,” she said—“above all, tenderness.”

“Do not misunderstand me, Leah. I do not say the heart—merely the lines of the face.”

“What do the lines of my face express?” she asked.

“Courage, pride, spirit,” he replied. “This face is full of yielding and sweetness.”

She said no more. But after they had left the Academy and reached home, Leah went up to her lover. He was bending over a table, writing. She put her arm round his neck, and her beautiful face touched his.

“Basil,” she whispered, “I am not happy.”

“What is the matter, Leah?” he asked.

With her white hands she raised his head until his eyes looked into her own.

“Will you promise not to laugh at me,” she said, “if I tell you why?”

“Yes; I promise, Leah,”

“I am not happy because you have seen a face that you like better than mine,”

“Nay, Leah. I did not say that. I said that the pictured face had what yours lacked. I did not add that I liked it better.”

“Do you like my face—love it, I mean?” she whispered.

For answer he kissed the sweet lips, and whispered words such as she longed to hear.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“LET us repeat the happy experiment of last autumn.” said the Duchess of Rosedene to Sir Arthur. “Come with us to Dene. I do not remember ever to have enjoyed anything more than your visit. I will ask Sir Basil to come, and the two lovers will be happy—that is, if such unreasonable beings as lovers are ever happy. They seem to me more of them discontented.”

The duchess had keen eyes, and she had noticed the shadow that lay on Sir Basil’s face. It was not the shad-

ow of discontent, or of sorrow, but of something that words could not define. More than once she had wondered if he were quite as happy as the successful lover of one of the most beautiful girls in England should be. She knew nothing of the general's interference, and had no idea that Basil's declaration of love had been anything but spontaneous. She decided in her own mind that they would go to Dene Abbey again for the autumn, and while there the marriage might be arranged for the following spring. That would give the lovers a few more months of the happiest time of their life, and they would learn to understand each other even better than now.

Sir Arthur and Leah were quite willing; they were even delighted. Leah liked the Abbey better than any other place on earth, because she most implicitly believed that it was there Sir Basil had learned to love her. She should again see the marble Undine with its grace and beauty, and the rippling waters that had sung that night of love.

August found them at Dene, well and happy, without the faintest knowledge of the doom that was fast drawing nigh. The Abbey was built near Southwood, a pretty town on the slope of a green hill, and so close to the sea that when the tide rose high some of the little houses were not unfrequently in danger. The little town ran up the hill after a quaint fashion of its own, and the houses seemed to climb with the social position of those who occupied them. The fishermen and the boatmen lived at the base; but nearer to the summit stood the pretty villas inhabited by the gentry—picturesque little houses half buried in foliage and overlooking the boundless, restless sea.

Partly on account of its bracing air, and partly because he at times had a few engagements in the neighboring towns, Martin Ray had for some years made this place his

home. His health was bad, his spirit broken, his means were small, his life was spoiled, saddened, blighted, his heart restless and embittered. It seemed that only hatred kept him alive—hatred that burned in his heart more virulently than ever—hatred of all rule, all authority. The spirit and courage of his youth had left him. For four years he had lived in a cottage standing alone on the slope of the hill. When the tide was in, and one looked from the upper windows, it seemed as though the house almost hung over the sea. It was called Rosewalk, because the hedges of the lane in which it stood were covered with roses. Rosewalk was one of the beauties of Southwood; and here, where the murmur of waves lulled him to rest and the song of the birds woke him in the early morning, Martin Ray made his home.

As he sat watching the crimson sunset over the waves, what visions came to him! His life had all gone wrong. He had intended to make for himself a place in history, and he had failed; he had mistaken self-love and self-interest for patriotism. Most of all, as he sat hour after hour watching the blue sea from the rose-wreathed windows, he brooded over the loss of his daughter, the child that had voluntarily left his side and clung to a stranger. He never forgot that scene. The names of his daughter and of the hated stranger had never been breathed; yet, when the crimson sun sunk into the waves and the day died "in a dream of amber skies," it was of his beautiful Leah he dreamed and thought, the child whom he had intended to succeed him.

A man like Martin Ray is soon lost to memory. He lives on popular agitation; and when strength and health fail him, and he can no longer go among the people with words that "fret and stir," he is soon forgotten. Martin had few friends; his name was no longer a tower of strength. He learned in that beautiful

home by the sea some of the most bitter lessons. The one joy of his life was his fair, sweet Hettie—the child who loved him with such faithful, tender love, who had devoted her life to him since she made her choice five years before. He could not have lived without her.

Hettie made the most of her education; she gave lessons to the children of the well-to-do people who lived in the neighboring villas, she sung in the fine old Norman church, she made pretty little sketches of the lovely scenes around them, and so earned money enough to supply her father with all that he needed. It was characteristic of him that he never noticed his daughter's shabby dress or her worn shoes. She gave him unreservedly all she had—her love, her money, her time, and her attention. The only break that ever came to the monotony of her life was when her father, going out on business, took her with him for a few days. She thought it an act of kindness on his part, while he knew that without his most loving and devoted daughter he should enjoy very little comfort. She had never spoken to him of what she had read and seen of Leah. She knew that he perused the newspapers, but no word or look from him revealed the fact that he had seen her name. Hettie was compelled to preserve silence on the subject, but her thoughts ever reverted to Leah. So it often happened that, when father and daughter sat together in the porch of the pretty cottage, watching the sea in the distance, both were thinking of Leah. Martin saw her still as the beautiful child with the flash of defiance on her face with which she had left him. Hettie dreamed of her always as she had seen her last, in the brilliancy of her beauty and magnificence. Neither of them ever imagined how near she was to them. Southwood did not possess a newspaper of its own, and Dene Abbey was quite out of their world. The great green hill rose between them,

and separated them as though they were in different hemispheres.

In Southwood no one troubled himself or herself about politics. "The Voice of the People" was dumb there; the popular agitator was but little known. Most people had an idea that the quiet, stern-looking occupier of Rosewalk was a writer; and they knew that he could not be well off because his daughter had to support him by her exertions.

This fair, gentle girl, whose whole life was spent in working for others, who never had time to think of herself, was greatly beloved. If ever she had a leisure hour, it was spent in some deed of charity. She visited the sick and the sorrowful; from her slender-store she helped those who were in greater need. When means failed her, when she had neither food nor money to bestow, she gave kind words full of consolation and tender in their wisdom. She worked very hard, from early morn until dewy eve. She rose with the sun. She had manuscripts to copy for her father, lessons to arrange, a hundred things to do. If the day had been twice as long, she could have filled it with pleasant duties. She was beloved by all—by the children whom she taught, by the parents who employed her, by every person with whom she had to deal. It was not only her fair, angelic beauty, but her sweet temper and winsome ways, that won all hearts.

These were the days of Martin Ray's decadence, and he could not perhaps have chosen any spot on earth where he could have been more secluded or more forgotten.

It was a strange chance that brought these two sisters so near together, yet placed them so far apart. The steep green hill that stood between Abbey and Southwood was typical of the great barrier of caste which parted them. There were times when both at the same moment watched

the same seas, the same skies, yet neither had the least notion of the other's presence in that part of the country.

The summer had been hot and oppressive. Martin Ray had suffered much, and it was some relief when the cool breezes of autumn came. They heard casually that Dene Abbey was filled with visitors, but that any of the visitors concerned them never occurred to them. Father and daughter would not have sat so quietly watching the heaving waters had they known that Leah was so near them.

The occupants of Dene Abbey seldom attended the pretty old Norman church at Southwood, where Hettie sang so sweetly and so clearly. There was a church nearer to them called St. Barbauld's, which stood in the centre of a little village near the sea. But Sir Basil liked Southwood best. He admired the quaint old Norman church, with its square tower and fine arches. Through the windows one could see the tall elm-trees; and Sir Basil said that more devotional thoughts came to him there than in any other place. So, one Sunday morning, when the whole party went over to St. Barbauld's Sir Basil went through the woods, climbed the steep hill, and descended the beautiful, grassy slopes, until he reached the old Norman church where his fate awaited him. He never forgot one detail—the green churchyard, the row of elm-trees that seemed to shut it in from the world, the old-fashioned sundial, near which tall sunflowers grew, the golden haze that filled the air outside, and the deep shadows within.

The rector read the prayers, and said a few words to the people—simple, honest words that went home to every heart and left an impression there. When the clear, earnest voice ceased, there was a slight stir in the organ-loft, and then a dead silence.

What broke it? A clear, sweet voice, which Sir Basil never forgot, singing a solo in a grand old anthem, every

word of which was distinct and audible—beautiful words, well matched with the fine music and the angelic voice. He listened in wonder; he had heard some of the finest singers in Italy and some of the grandest music in the world, but nothing like this—clear, sweet, and pathetic, at times sounding as though it were full of tears, and again jubilant and ringing. He was not sentimental, and flattered himself that he took a practical view of most things; but as he listened he thought to himself:—

“That must be how the angels sing.”

He looked up into the organ-loft from which the sound came, and there he saw a picture that was photographed on his brain for evermore. A tall, slender girl stood in the midst of the choir, in a dress of pale blue—a girl with a face so fair, so rapt, so seraphic, that it awed and bewildered him. She was singing—not to the people, who listened with bated breath—not to him, whose eyes never moved from her face. Her head was slightly upraised, her face upturned. Her thoughts had pierced the old groined roof and the blue ether that lay beyond, and had gone to the land where angels dwell. Her golden hair made a halo round her head, and he could have thought that an angel had descended from “the realms of light.” Then, as the perfect spiritual loveliness of the face dawned upon him, he found that it was strangely familiar to him. Somewhere else he had seen those lustrous blue eyes and that sweet pleading mouth—the same face, but with a different expression. Then it dawned upon him slowly that this girl had been the original of the picture. “The First Glimpse of Morning,” and he remembered what he had said to Leah, “That face has what yours lacks—tenderness.” “I am destined to know her through the arts,” he said to himself. “She dawned upon me in painting, I see her etherealized by music—yet what is she to me?”

She was nothing to him, yet during the whole of the

day that rapt spiritual face seemed always before him. He would have asked who she was, but he knew no one there, and when the anthem was finished she vanished. He lingered in the old churchyard, where the tall elm-trees cast graceful shadows on the grass, but he caught no glimpse of her. He went home to Dene Abbey with the clear, rich voice ringing in his ears. There was a little rivulet that ran through the Dene woods; he bent over it, and, lo, the sweet face smiled at him from its clear depths! He laughed at himself. No woman's face had ever haunted him before. With all its brilliant beauty, even Leah's had not haunted him as this one did.

During luncheon he spoke of the music he had heard at Southwood, of the clear, sweet soprano voice, so rich and rare in quality.

The duke said that he had heard a young singer spoken of there as having a very beautiful voice. One or two of the visitors said they would like to go to Southwood Church. The Duke of Rosedene declared half laughingly that there was a feud between himself and the rector of Southwood and that until it was healed neither himself nor the duchess would leave St. Barbauld's.

Sir Basil decided that every Sunday while he remained at Dene he would go and hear the beautiful voice that had charmed him so greatly. "If any one could fall in love with a voice, I should think that I have done so," he said to himself. Some strange instinct that he did not understand at the time kept him silent to Leah concerning both the face and the voice of the fair young singer. He would have told her that in her he recognized the original of the painting they had admired, but that he remembered so well that she had been hurt by his comparison of her own and the pictured face, and he did not wish to remind her of the circumstance.

"I wonder," thought Sir Basil, later on in the day, "if

she stands there every Sunday in that pale blue dress, the light on her golden hair?"

He was sitting by one of the open windows that evening, haunted still by the fair face he had seen, when Leah came suddenly behind him and laid one hand caressingly upon his dark head.

"Basil," she said, "you have been very *distract* to-day. Do you know that you have not spoken fifty words to me. I have been patient to bear it so long, but now you must make amends for it,"

Even as he looked up into her face the other fairer one seemed to come between them.

"How shall I make amends," he asked, with a smile.

"You must find that out for yourself," she replied.

He drew her to the seat by his side and whispered some tender words to her. She loved him so entirely that very little satisfied her. One more exacting might have thought that he was not a very demonstrative lover, but Leah was too much blinded by her own passion to note any defect in him. That hour spent with him at the open window in the autumn gloaming was one of the happiest she ever knew.

That same night, while her maid stood brushing out the long dark rippling waves of hair, Leah, with a happy smile, was looking at her own face in the glass. She said to herself—and the words came home to her afterwards: "If I never have any more happiness while I live, I have had enough for a lifetime." She loved him so well.

The week that passed before Sunday came again was a long one to Sir Basil. He had not the least intention of ever being, even in thought, untrue to Leah. If he had dreamed that there was any danger in seeing the beautiful singer again, he would have avoided her. He was engaged to marry Leah Hatton—how could he know that he

was in danger. In Italy he had loved to listen to such voices; here in England he never missed good music when he had a chance of hearing it. What harm could there be in going to Southwood Church to hear a grand old anthem beautifully sung? He did not speak to Leah about it. He had one definite motive for silence, and he had twenty reasons that were not quite definite.

Sunday came—a beautiful day, bright, warm, full of fragrance, the sky serenely blue, the green earth all smiling and fair. Sir Basil was more silent than usual at the breakfast-table, and the girl who loved him, looking at his thoughtful face, wondered if he were thinking of her or of the future before them.

On that bright Sunday morning no warning came to Sir Basil that he had better not see the young singer again. He went. She sang more sweetly than ever, and looked to his enchanted eyes fairer than before. With her dress of pale blue, her fair, flower-like face and golden hair, she reminded him of the beautiful figures he had seen in the churches in Italy. He must find out who she was; he would much like to know what name went with that face. He would like to speak to her; it would be pleasant to know if her voice sounded as sweet in speaking as in singing.

This time, when the people went out of church he contrived to be among the first, and then he saw the blue dress trailing over the grass; he noticed that every movement and action of the girl was as full of grace as her singing was full of music. The sun was shining on the tall elm-trees and the green graves where the dead slept so well; on the old Norman church, on the groups of worshippers; and something stole into his heart that had never been there before—a new delicious life. It thrilled in his veins and beat at his heart—a keen pleasure so great as to be almost pain. He thought the tranquillity of

the day had touched him ; he thought the beautiful music had affected him. Something had with sudden sweet swiftness changed the fair face of Nature for him.

He watched the girl who had sung of the "bright seraphim." She had stopped first of all to speak to a group of fair-haired children ; then he saw that the old men and women all tried to have a few words with her ; after that she disappeared, and he could not see in which direction she had gone.

He found the old sexton. Sir Basil discovered in a moment the way to his heart ; it was suggested by the almost pathetic manner in which the man said that it was a dry day. He was so completely overwhelmed when Sir Basil dropped something into his hand with which to make the day more comfortable that he would have answered any number of questions.

"Who was the lady that sung?"

She was Miss Ray—Miss Hettie Ray, daughter of the old man who lived at Rosewalk.

Where was Rosewalk ?

"It is a cottage built on the slope of the hill round there by Southwood"—a vague direction, but Sir Basil remembered every word of it.

Who was the old man ?

Ah, that the sexton did not know ! All that he could tell was that he had heard that he was a bit of a writer in the political line, that he was poor, and that his daughter worked very hard. He knew little of him, because he kept away from every one and shut himself up in his little cottage.

"Rather a curious history," thought the young baronet. "Such a father and such a daughter ! He cannot possibly be a political writer of any note, or I should have heard some one speak of him. Before long I will see for myself what Rosewalk is like."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was a fortunate thing for many reasons that the Duke of Rosedene was alone when Sir Basil met him, for he led up gradually to the subject which occupied his thoughts. Did the duke come more than once a year to Dene? Did he know the people at Southwood? Was it true that a political writer lived at Southwood?

The duke shrugged his shoulders good-naturedly.

"I really don't know," he said. "Who is he?"

Sir Basil did not know; he was asking for information. Some one had told him that a political writer lived at Southwood.

"Politics have not been much in my line lately," said the duke—"not for some years. I am glad they are in yours. I like to see the young men of the country coming forward; it is a healthy sign. What about this man? What is his name?"

"Ray," answered Sir Basil.

"Ray," repeated the duke slowly. 'Ah, yes! I remember the name very well, but I know nothing of the man. Ray? He was a great Radical; I believe they called him 'the Voice of the People' years ago. I have heard nothing of him for a long time; nor do I take the least interest in him.'

"I have been so long away from England that I am often ashamed to find how ignorant I am about men and things."

"My dear Sir Basil, you have no reason whatever to regret your ignorance with regard to Ray. He was one of those who lived on the people and misled them—incited

them to riot and rebellion. He never did them any good ; and if my memory serves me rightly, he was once imprisoned for treason."

"Rather a stormy career," said Sir Basil.

"He wrote one or two good things in their way," said the duke, "but based on a wrong principle. The best pamphlet was called 'An Appeal to the People, by One who Serves Them.' It made some little sensation at the time. As you seem interested, I will make some inquiries and tell you the result."

Sir Basil dreamed of Hettie all that night—a fact which he explained to himself by saying that he thought a good deal about her singing. When he woke from his sleep, he was murmuring to himself the name of "Hettie Ray." There was a strange charm in it for him. He liked to think of her as a politician's daughter, even though the father had been a notorious Radical.

"I have made inquiries about this Ray, Sir Basil," the duke said a few days later. "I find that he is an ill-conditioned, miserable kind of man."

"I expected so," returned Sir Basil.

"He is a dangerous dog with his teeth drawn. He is old and infirm ; he will never do any more mischief in this world. I hear that through ill-health and failure in means he has come to Southwood to live the remainder of his days in peace."

"An aged lion," said Sir Basil.

"Exactly so. They tell me that he has a good and beautiful daughter who keeps him by her own exertions ; but no one seems to think much of him or take any notice of him. If it is the same thing to you," added the duke, "I would rather that you did not mention to any one the fact that Ray, the once famous 'Voice of the People,' lives near here."

"Why," asked Sir Basil, more suddenly than politely.

But the duke did not seem at all disturbed by the question.

“The man is, and always has been, mad with morbid vanity and a desire for publicity. I should not like my visitors to know anything about him. He would get up some kind of sensation—a paper war of some kind, if he had the chance. I am glad the hill shuts us off from Southwood. I have a great dislike for men of that stamp.”

It was in consequence of this that Sir Basil never mentioned the name of Ray in the presence of the guests at Dene Abbey. He would not do anything against the duke's wish; nor had he the least desire to draw any attention to this man. He never spoke of the music at Southwood Church again; but the less he said the more deeply he thought on the subject. Upon one thing he was quite determined—he would go and see Martin Ray. He was in some measure, a public man, and he would not resent the visit. He succeeded in convincing himself that his intended visit had nothing whatever to do with Hettie. He wanted to see a man who had been a popular celebrity. At the same time he determined to be thoroughly prudent. He would not in any way compromise the duke. He need not announce his name or say where he was staying. He was simply about to call upon a man who had once been famous but who was now forgotten; and Sir Basil persuaded himself it was a kindly thing to do, to pay respect to fallen greatness.

So one autumn day Sir Basil strolled over to Rosewalk. He told Leah that he was going for a long ramble; but he did not ask her to accompany him. There was in his mind no direct thought that he was going somewhere clandestinely. He climbed the steep hill once more, and there before him lay the pretty town of Southwood. He saw how it seemed to wind up the hill, beginning at the

foot with humble cottages, and ending with handsome villas as it approached the summit.

He saw near the brow of the hill a pretty green lane with tall hedgerows, and he decided that that must be Rosewalk. In the midst stood a small cottage, half buried in foliage. He did not know why his heart beat fast when he saw it. A sudden fit of timidity came over him. What if he should see the beautiful singer, or if, from one of those flower-wreathed windows, he should hear her voice?

After walking so far his courage had failed him; he passed through the lane, and did not even look at the cottage he had come to see.

He felt ashamed of himself, and went back again—the lane was a long one. When he returned he found that an elderly man was standing watching the passage of a ship at sea. The scene was so beautiful that he was charmed with it—the blue waters, the white-sailed ship, the grassy hill, the peaceful green lane, the picturesque, flower-hidden cottage. The man stood looking over a low ivy-hidden wall. Some instinct told him that this was Martin Ray.

“This is a lovely scene, sir,” Sir Basil remarked, as he paused in front of the old man.

“It is well enough,” he said.

And then Sir Basil was slightly disconcerted. He hardly knew what next to say. He stood and looked, first at the blue rippling waters, and then at the stern, worn, haggard man. It was better perhaps to be frank.

“I am looking,” he said quietly, “for the house of Mr. Martin Ray. Can you tell me if this be it?”

“I am Martin Ray,” answered the other, briefly.

And again Sir Basil was nonplussed.

The man raised himself from his leaning attitude, and looked at the handsome, dark face before him.

"You wanted to see my house and me—why?" he asked.

And then Sir Basil's sense of good breeding came to his aid.

"My reason is very simple," replied Sir Basil, raising his hat. "I heard that you were living here, and I wished to see one who rightly or wrongly, has been a leader among the people."

"Are you of my way of thinking?" asked Martin abruptly.

"No, I am not," replied Sir Basil. "You carry to excess that which I believe in but little. I hold a middle path between you and those whom you would call your enemies."

"A middle path," repeated Martin. "Ah, then you will not interest me!"

"I am not sure that I wish to do so," said Sir Basil. "It was not with a view of interesting you that I desired to see you."

"I did not intend to be rude," returned Martin Ray. "I mean this—my life has been a fierce fight. I know but two extremes. You must forgive me—I hate all mediocrity."

"You are like an old soldier who smells gunpowder," said Sir Basil, good-temperedly. "You would enjoy a warm political argument with me; but it is not possible. I am only just beginning to understand matters. I could not hold my own with you"—which words delighted Martin. "I have not had the advantage of an English education; my youth has been spent in Italy, and politics have formed no part of my training."

"A sad pity! An English lad should be reared in England," remarked Martin, gruffly.

"There is an exception to every rule, and every creature living has to bow to circumstances," said Sir Basil,

“No man can be so arrogant as to stand up and say, ‘All other men should do this or that.’”

“Perhaps not,” admitted Martin, more humbly.

“In a few months or a few years,” continued Sir Basil, “I shall be better informed about politics than I am now. I intend to read, to study, to think; and then, when I have mastered both sides of the various questions I shall be able to form clear and decided views of my own.”

“That is right,” said Martin.

“At present I am inclined to trust in what I should call the happy medium. All my faith does not lie with those who believe in the divine right of kings, nor yet with those who would make a ‘king’s crown fair target for good shot.’ I have read some of your writings. You go too far; they bristle with sedition.”

“You are plain spoken,” said Martin Ray.

“I believe in truth and plain words,” replied Sir Basil. “I have heard that you are out of health, and that of late you have not been fortunate. I hope it is not so.”

“It is quite true,” was the answer. Martin Ray was beginning to like this handsome, frank young man who was evidently interested in him. If any one had whispered to him that this was caused by the fact that he was Hettie’s father, he would have scouted the idea. “My health and strength have failed me,” he said; and there was a certain dignity in his pathos. “I am a dead lion; and every one knows that a live dog is better. Time was when my ‘roar’ struck the ears of hundreds—now it is not heard. I have outlived myself. I had great hopes once, great ambitions. I must have been mad when I dreamed that I should be the elected leader of a free people.”

“All Englishmen are free,” said Sir Basil.

“Ah,” he cried, with sudden energy and fire, “but they have not the same freedom that I would

have given them! I have been mad all my life, I believe; but I have had dreams of a grand nation, a grand people, free from taxes and national debt—free, and led by me. There have been times when I have seemed even to myself, by the splendor of my own dreams, more than human, more than man. Now my dreams, my pride, and my very life almost have come to an end.”

“I cannot quite see the sense of your argument,” said Sir Basil. “If a people are to be led, what does it matter whether they are led by a high-souled, generous king, by a noble woman like our queen, or by a man like yourself, whose rule would of necessity be inferior, because your education and learning must be inferior?”

“I will answer that question another time,” replied Martin Ray, with a nod of dismissal. “Come and see me again. You have stirred an old pain in my heart. Good-by.”

And without another word Sir Basil retraced his steps to Dene Abbey, thinking the whole way of the man he had just left.

CHAPTER XXIX.

On that same evening a large party was assembled at Dene Abbey, and Sir Basil made a great effort to give his mind to the present. He tried to forget the beautiful voice he had heard and the sweet face he had seen in the old gray church; he tried to forget the stern, haggard man looking with sad, wearied eyes over the waste of waters. He did his best; but the eyes of love are keen, and Leah saw that he was quiet and talked less than usual.

How she loved him! How her whole heart shone in

her face as she went up to him! How the love-light glistened in her dark eyes and the sweet, sensitive lips trembled with their love-sighs! She had a pretty caressing fashion of going behind him and whispering loving words that no one else could hear.

"Basil, my darling," she said tremulously, "you have tired yourself with that long ramble. I felt almost jealous because you did not ask me to go with you."

He wondered, in a dull, vague kind of fashion, why his heart did not beat more quickly for the love this queenly, beautiful woman lavished on him, for the words she whispered in his ear, for the warm, caressing touch of her white hands. Why was it? He forced himself to talk to her, and he promised to row her as far as St. Margaret's Bay on the morrow.

"I will sing for you," she said. "A new song came for me this morning. It is dedicated to me; I have been asked twenty times to-day to sing it; but I resolved that you should be the first to hear it. It is called 'The Tryst;' the words and the accompaniment are alike beautiful. Listen, and tell me what you think."

"I will come with you," he said. He was sitting at the far end of the room, away from the piano.

"No; I want you to stay here and listen critically," she replied, laughingly.

He did listen critically, wondering what there was in the rich contralto that reminded him so forcibly of the clear, ringing soprano he had heard in the old gray church. He heard each word distinctly.

"She glided o'er the meadow grass,
And through the young green corn;
Sweet as the summer blooms she was,
And fresh as summer morn.
We laughed and loved beside the brook,
That sang its gay refrain;
And where we met that day, my love,
We swore to meet again.

"But ere the grass was dry and brown,
 Amid the ripening corn,
 Up to the churchyard on the down
 A maiden's corpse was borne.
 I weep alone beside the brook,
 All swoll'n with autumn rain;
 For where we met that day, my love,
 We shall not meet again."

There was profound silence in the room when the music ceased. No one spoke to Leah as she went back to her place by her lover's side.

"Do you like it?" she asked.

"How could I help it?" he cried. "But there is something strangely familiar to me in your voice. I had a peculiar, weird sensation, as though I had heard it in another world."

"That is impossible," she replied, laughingly. "If I had met you in another world, I should have remembered it. I was jealous and pained for whole days after you said that you thought another face fairer—no, sweeter than mine. If my voice reminds you of another's I will never sing one note to you again." As she uttered the words her face flushed, and the sensitive lips trembled.

He was flattered by her jealousy; but it did not pain him as it would have done had he loved her.

"Basil," she said, gently, "do you think I am very jealous?"

"I do not know, Leah. I hope not. I should imagine that to be jealous must cause acute pain."

She opened her beautiful dark eyes more widely than ever.

"Do you not know what it is like," she said—"this pain of jealousy."

"No," he replied. "I do not remember that I was ever jealous in my whole life. Ah, yes, once I remember! When my sister's lover came, and I knew in my boyish

heart that he was to take her from me—I was jealous then. I did not eat or sleep ; I was inconsolable ; and I remember well that the pain was real—a hot bitter sense of injury and wrong. I remember, too, that for a time I hated the man who was going to marry her. I have never been jealous since.”

“Never ?” asked Leah.

“No,” Sir Basil laughed ; “I may safely say never.”

“Do you think that jealousy is a sign of love ?” asked Leah, wistfully.

“I cannot tell ; I have never thought about it.” he replied. “I should almost say not.”

“And I think the two must go together,” said Leah. “I am jealous. I think if you, Basil, were to love or praise any one very much I should be miserable. I am sure that if you paid much attention to any one else, or said that any girl was very pretty, or looked at any one as though you admired her very much, I should be jealous.”

“I do not see why,” he said gently.

“Ah, then, you do not understand, Basil,” she rejoined. “I cannot help it. I do not wish to be jealous ; I do not make myself jealous ; it comes naturally. Yesterday, when you were talking to Lady Grantleigh, she was laughing and looking up at you ; and your eyes were so bright, Basil, I felt a pain as of a wound inflicted by a sharp knife. I could not help it ; it came and went. Basil,” she whispered, bending her beautiful head, “have you ever been jealous of me ?”

“No,” he replied, frankly, “never, Leah.”

A shade of disappointment came over her brilliant face.

“Never, Basil ? Ah, then, I am sure you do not love me as much as I love you. Are you quite sure ?”

“I am sure,” laughed Sir Basil.

She knitted her brows with an air of perplexity.

“I do not understand that. When you see other men

around me, and hear the compliments they pay me, do you never feel any jealousy?"

"No, on the contrary, I like to see you admired."

"The other day," she continued, "when Major Stapleton followed me to the piano, and would turn over the leaves of my song, looking so sentimental about it, were you not jealous?"

"No, I thought him very kind," answered Sir Basil, cheerfully.

"I will try to make you jealous," she said, after a few moments' thought.

He looked at her gravely.

"Never play with fire, Leah," he remarked. "We are happy. What new element do you want to introduce into our happiness?"

A slight quiver passed over her face, the scarlet flowers at her breast stirred, the white, jewelled hands trembled. Ah! what indeed? Why was she not content?

"I do not want a new element," she said—"only to deepen an old one."

"What is that, Leah?" he asked.

"I should like you to love me more," she said. "Sometimes it seems to me that I ask for bread, and you give me a stone. It may be my fancy; but I cannot help thinking that I love you better than you love me."

"How can you measure love?" he asked.

"By love," she replied, quickly. "There is no other way."

"You must have patience with me, Leah," he said. "I am a novice in all these matters."

"You ought not to be a novice now," she replied. "I wish you would tell me when you really began to love me."

There is nothing more embarrassing or irritating to a man than to have his love probed by a woman when he is conscious of a deficiency in his affection. Sir Basil was

always at a loss how to answer Leah when she talked to him in this fashion. She had asked him so many questions about his love for her, and he had no answer to make, the simple fact being that he had never thought of loving her until Sir Arthur had placed the matter before him.

"Leah, you like to talk about love," he said, endeavoring to turn the conversation.

"Do I?" she questioned, gently. "It must be because my heart is so full of it."

Afterwards she wondered if it was wise or prudent to let him know how dearly she loved him. Yet how could she help it? And why, as he loved her—why, as she was to be his wife, should she be ashamed to show her affection?

She left Sir Basil more than a little puzzled. If jealousy were part of love, then assuredly he knew not love, for he knew not jealousy. And he wondered whether Leah would ever find this out.

CHAPTER XXX.

SIR BASIL CARLTON was clever and ambitious. He was most desirous of making up for lost time. He regretted the long years spent away from England. It was true that he had acquired a knowledge of art that he could have gained in no other way—music, painting, sculpture, were household words to him; but he regretted that he had not secured the education usually given to an English boy. Nothing, he fancied, could ever atone to him for the loss of that. He found that in England politics occupied the same place as the fine arts did in Italy. He found himself looked up to when the question was one of music,

of painting, or of sculpture ; but, when he essayed to discuss politics, men smiled—and Sir Basil was not one of those who were content to be smiled at. He was determined to master the questions of the day, to see what was to be said on every side, to form his own opinions slowly, not hurriedly, and then to give his time, attention, and interest to whatever side he embraced. He longed to be a statesman ; politics delighted him. He could not take up the pen—he had no faculty for literary work ; he did not care to enter the army or navy, and he was not content to live without occupation. He was wealthy ; his estate of Glen was a most valuable one ; and hundreds of men in his place would have thought of nothing but a life of indolence and pleasure. Sir Basil thought only of what he could do to make his life useful ; he had no idea of living at ease in a world where there was so much that required doing.

He resolved to study politics ; and he was well pleased that chance had made him acquainted with one who in his time had caused some stir in the political world. Sir Arthur Hatton, had he lived in olden times, would have been a cavalier of most perfect type ; the Duke of Rosedene was a devout believer in the divine right of kings. Martin Ray believed in nothing except the rights of the people—*Vox populi, vox Dei* was his maxim ; so that Sir Basil had every opportunity of hearing all sides of the question.

When he started for Rosewalk the next day, he honestly believed that he was going to see Martin Ray from the most honorable and the highest motives. He might, of course, see the beautiful singer again ; it was not improbable ; but he was not going for that purpose.

A second time he left the Abbey for a long ramble without asking Leah to accompany him. This time she noticed it, but said nothing. The wind was keen that au

tumn afternoon. It brought a delicious freshness from the ocean and the scent from the wild thyme on the hill-top.

When he reached Rosewalk, a young and beautiful girl was seated near the wall overlooking the sea. What, at the first sight of her, made his heart beat so fast? He had to pass close by her; but he would not look at the golden hair and sweet face. He went into the quaint flower-wreathed porch and rapped at the door. Then, as one watches things in a dream, he saw the young girl arise and walk toward him with a firm graceful step.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I want to see Mr. Martin Ray."

She drew back a little, and looked at him with the air of one surprised.

"My father!" she replied, "He is not at home."

The blue eyes looked into his for a moment, then they fell, and a soft color like that of the fairest petal of a rose covered her face; the dark eyes looking at her were so full of passionate admiration that she could not raise her own to his again.

"Not at home," repeated Sir Basil. "I am sorry for that. I was to see him to-day, and I have walked some distance. Have I your permission to wait until he returns?"

She looked slightly confused at first; then she felt that it would be impossible to refuse. She was only too pleased that her father should have a call from so pleasant a visitor.

"You can wait if you wish to do so," she replied; "but the hour of his return is quite uncertain."

"If you will allow me, I will risk it," he said. "I do not think any one could find a more beautiful spot than this in which to while away the time."

He sat down on the pretty rustic bench, which was so placed that one could see the incoming tide. The waves

were rolling in grandly ; the wind had freshened, and they broke in sheets of white foam. The sunlight lay on the sea and on the shore, on the white cliffs and on the green hill ; it fell on the golden hair and sweet face opposite to him. A feeling of perfect rest came over him, of happiness such as in his whole life he had never known before.

For a few minutes they were silent. Hettie did not raise her eyes from her work, and he was wondering why the presence of this one woman made so great a difference to him. No man living had a keener sense of honor than Sir Basil, but it stole upon him unawares, this sweet glamor of love, and had made its home in his heart long before he knew that it was there.

"I heard you singing in church last Sunday," he said. "I have been staying in this neighborhood for some time. You have a very beautiful voice ; I was quite delighted with it."

"I am fond of music," she answered—"above all things, I am fond of singing ; it is the one pleasure of my life. I forget everything else when I sing."

"Is there so much in your life that you would like to forget," he asked, suddenly—"so young a life as yours?"

Her thoughts flew to Leah. Surely no one in the world had so much to forget as she, who had lost this best beloved sister.

"I am not sure," she replied. "There are some things I should like to be able to think less about."

She did not wish to forget Leah, but she would gladly have thought less bitterly of her loss. While singing she forgot the keen pain, but never the cause of it.

"I should not have thought," he said, "that you had had any trouble in life. You are young, and your face has something of the joy of childhood in it."

She smiled and blushed when she saw his eyes, so full of admiration, bent upon her.

Then he talked to her of the country, of the sea, and of her father, and he was delighted with her enthusiasm about him. If the scales had fallen from her eyes, she would not admit it even to herself. With all the force of her loving, tender nature, she clung not only to her father as he actually was, but even to the ideal she had formed of him. It was touching to hear her speak of him ; in his fallen estate he was even greater in her eyes than he had been before. His discontent, irritation, anger, and gloom made no difference to her ; his words to her were always full of wisdom. It was natural that he should feel hurt ; the world, she believed, had been cruel to him—had undervalued him and ill-used him. If gentle Hettie in her heart hated anything, it was this world which had not acknowledged her father's worth. She did not know much about his doctrines and belief ; he had not given himself the trouble to teach her. She had every quality that went to make a noble woman ; but she was not talented.

There was always that line between Leah and Hettie. Leah had genius ; she had the touch of divine fire that separates those who have it from the whole world. Martin Ray, knowing this, had never tried to teach Hettie ; she was the better able to love him.

"There must be good," Sir Basil said to himself, "in one who is loved as she loves her father."

And, though the duke, in his quiet haughty way, had denounced him, Martin Ray rose from that moment in Sir Basil's estimation.

When once Hettie had lost her shy, embarrassed manner, she talked to Sir Basil with all the ease and grace that were natural to her. He told her of the picture in the Academy and she was amused to hear about it, and in her turn related how the artist came to Southwood in search of picturesque scenes, and, saw her sitting by this same wall, and begged that he might take a sketch of her face. She

did not know that the picture had been the success of the year. He told her all about it.

"You seem to live quite out of the world here," he said, when she expressed her surprise.

And then she told him of her busy life, and how, do what she would, she could not make the days long enough.

He sat by the ivy-covered wall more than an hour; and when at last he rose, longing to stay, yet aware that he had been there long enough, they both felt as though they had been friends for years.

Hettie was a little dismayed when she remembered how freely she had talked to one who was an entire stranger after all. She had conversed with him as though he had been a lifelong friend, and she did not even know his name; but he had called to see her father, and it would have been rude to let him sit alone and not speak to him. Presently she forgot all about her imprudence and only remembered how pleasant the interview had been—the murmur of the deep voice had been musical as the ripple of the waters or the song of the birds, and she seemed still to hear it; then the handsome face, with its keen dark eyes—she had seen no such face before!

The work on which she had been so busy fell from her hands, and she began to dream. Would such a pleasant hour ever come again? Would she see him and speak to him again? If not, she thought to herself, this was certainly the happiest hour she had had in her life. How well he seemed to comprehend her! He understood, too, about her father, and her contempt for a world which did not appreciate him. He, this young stranger with the dark noble face, had seemed to read and divine her thoughts. Her eyes looked smilingly over the sea.

He was so different from the type of men who had come to see her father hitherto. During her whole life she did not remember to have talked to any one like him.

The gentlemen whose little children she taught were something like him, yet far inferior. She liked to recall the grace of his words and his looks. A soft dreamy smile played over her lips, her heart was stirred with a faint sense of pleasure. The western wind and the autumn flowers were all part of her dream. If she had never seen him again, that dream would have remained with her a happy memory, a little oasis of bright coloring amid the gray monotony of her dull everyday life, a picture to look back upon.

The music of the sea was sweeter that night than ever; and Hettie fell asleep with a smile on her lips, and dreamed of a dark face, and dark eyes that said to her what no other eyes had ever said.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SIR BASIL called several times at Rosewalk, and Martin Ray, who had all his life hated every one who could be called aristocratic, took a fancy to him. They did not agree in all respects. Sir Basil told him frankly that he thought some of his ideas terrible and hideous.

"You will see," said Martin. "You will live longer than I shall. What I now teach the world it will believe and practice when the stinging-nettles are growing over my grave."

"Why do you suppose that your grave will be covered with stinging-nettles?" asked Sir Basil.

Martin laughed a bitter little cynical laugh.

"I do not imagine that any one living will care to plant flowers there," he replied.

They were both startled by a cry of pain.

“How can you say so, father? After giving you my life, do you think I shall forget you in death?”

Sir Basil never forgot the reproach in the sweet face that quivered with pain. The blue eyes had a strained, hunted expression.

They were all three standing within the pretty porch when this conversation took place. Hettie forgot everything, except that her heart was wounded. She went up to her father with a little cry of outraged love, and put her arm around his neck.

“Dear,” she said, “I should, if I live the longer, be as faithful to you in death as I have been in life.”

“I know that; you are a good child,” responded Martin.

He caressed her shining, golden hair lovingly; but before him rose the brilliant face of the child he loved with his whole heart, and who had renounced him, and something of repressed impatience came into his manner. The child who had renounced him and his doctrines, his life, and the mission he had given her, was still a thousand times dearer to Martin Ray than the child who had served him with tender, faithful, devoted love.

Something in this little scene struck Sir Basil forcibly. He admired the daughter's devotion; but what did that hungry wistful despair in her father's face mean? Why was he not comforted by the sweet love of his daughter? Why had he not taken her in his arms and thanked her tenderly for her great devotion.

So the weeks sped on, and Martin Ray, in his own cynical, selfish fashion, after a time became quite fond of Sir Basil. He looked for his coming; he was more gloomy than usual on the days when he did not make his appearance.

They were talking together one morning, while Hettie

was away giving her lessons ; and Sir Basil said laughingly that it was strange they had met so often without Martin even knowing his name.

There was something impressive in the gesture with which Martin suddenly held up his hand.

“ Is it a name that you have made for yourself ? ” he asked.

“ No ; it was made for me, ” replied Sir Basil.

“ Then I do not want to know it. As a man with good intentions, I like you ; you are straightforward, honest, and honorable ; and, if you have one of those names with a ‘ handle, ’ probably borne by many generations of men who have lived upon their fellow-men, I do not wish to know it. The first time I saw you I thought you looked like an aristocrat. If you are one, do not tell me so ; it would spoil my opinion of you. ”

“ It shall be as you will, ” laughed Sir Basil. “ If ever I do make my name famous, I will disclose it to you ; if not — ”

“ I do not care for a title that has been handed from father to son. I like a name that has been fairly earned. Strange to say, my wife was prouder of her grand old name than of anything else. It was singular that she should marry a man like me. ”

Sir Basil bethought himself that the duke had desired him, should he ever make the acquaintance of Martin Ray, not to mention his name.

“ If you call me ‘ Glen, ’ ” he said. “ I shall understand ; and that name will do as well as any other. ”

“ I hope, ” said Martin, half savagely, “ that you are not a young duke in disguise. ”

“ I am quite sure of that, ” replied Sir Basil, laughingly. “ I am neither duke nor ‘ belted earl. ’ ”

“ It would be hard work to hate you ; but I should hate you if you were, ” said Martin.

From that time he always called Sir Basil "Glen;" and when Hettie spoke of him it was as "Mr. Glen."

It often happened that when he called at the cottage he found Hettie at home alone; and then they talked together by the ivy-covered wall.

"Knowing you has made such a difference in our lives," she said to him one morning. "My father seems so much better for it. You cheer him, and give him back some of the old fire which had nearly died out. I am glad for his sake that you find time to visit us."

"Are you not glad for any other reason?" he asked impetuously. "Are you not pleased to see me yourself?" Then he remembered that he had no right to say such words to her. "I beg your pardon," he said, gently. "I express myself badly. What I mean is, that I receive more pleasure in being allowed to call here than I can possibly give."

It was such sudden, abrupt changes in his manner that made her think more of him, perhaps, than she otherwise would have thought. He exhibited at times a certain degree of tenderness, which would vanish like magic and give place to silence that was almost stern.

Sir Basil was very kind to the man whom every one else seemed to have forsaken. He brought him newspapers. If he heard him express a desire for a particular book, he obtained it for him. More than once, when Martin took ill and feeble, he had sent a case of choice wine. Martin took it all in good part; it was a tribute to his worth that he quite approved.

"There is the making of a fine man in Glen," he would say to his daughter.

"Is he not a fine man now?" she would ask, half timidly.

And Martin would shake his head.

"Not yet. He could be trained. He has genius, and

he has eloquence ; he would make a good orator. I like him ; but my own impression is that his ideas are not yet sound, that he is studying the two great questions, hesitating between the two great parties."

"You must help him, father," Hettie would answer, blithely—"no one understands these matters so well as you do." And such demonstrations of faith in him pleased Martin Ray.

It was impossible that these long absences should pass unnoticed. Not that Leah was unreasonable, or expected Sir Basil to follow her like a shadow, but she did wonder why he never asked her to accompany him.

"Another long ramble, Basil?" she said one morning, as he passed her in the hall. "I am afraid we shall have rain."

"It looks like it," returned Sir Basil ; but he did not offer to remain at home.

"I will go with you to the park gates," she said, gently.

She always looked beautiful in the old-fashioned broad-brimmed garden hat that threw a softened shade on her face. Her dress of pale amber trailing over the green grass became her admirably.

"They will be the handsomest couple in England," the duchess remarked, as she caught sight of them from the conservatory.

"You worship beauty, duchess," said the general, laughing at her enthusiasm.

"When I see it," she replied.

Leah and Sir Basil went through the grounds to the gates of the park.

"Shall you be long, Basil?" she asked, wistfully.

He noticed that she did not ask where he was going.

"No ; I am going to Southwood, Leah," he replied.

"The fact is, I have made the acquaintance of a famous old politician there, and his arguments interest me."

The words conveyed no meaning to her. That the old politician should be her father, Martin Ray, never occurred to her. Never were two persons so near a truth without revealing it; never did the points of two lives meet so closely, and then diverge. If she had merely said, "What politician?" or "Who is he?" he would have answered, "Martin Ray," and who can tell how different many lives would have been? She was engrossed in her lover and in everything concerning him; but she was not curious, and was not given to questioning him. She knew that he was greatly interested in the political struggles of the day; she knew also that he hoped in time to become a statesman; and that an old politician should instruct and amuse him seemed to her quite natural. It was a strange decree of fate that the man whom she loved with all her heart should have met and have grown interested in the father she had renounced.

"Basil," she said gaily, "I shall take to politics. When you are a great statesman, chancellor of the exchequer, or prime minister, you will want a political wife. I shall give grand dinner-parties, and cajole everybody into telling me his secrets."

"You will have to be very clever to do that, Leah," he rejoined, laughing.

"I shall manage it. You will see that I shall learn all the plans of the various parties for you. I am sure that I shall make an excellent wife for a statesman." They had reached the park gates, and she continued: "If I had anything but a garden-hat on, I would accompany you, Basil. The house is dull to me when you are out of it. Make haste home again, dear."

How she loved him! How grateful he ought to have been for such love! How happy he ought to have been!

Yet he sighed as he climbed the hill, and caught sight of the restless sea ; and his face, when Martin Ray saw him, was not the face of a happy man.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Two more weeks passed, and by that time Martin Ray had grown warmly attached to the man whom he would call "young Glen ;" Martin himself was ill—his health was fast failing ; and he clung to this younger man, so full of health, strength, and vitality—only a chance acquaintance, but one of the few ties that bound him to the outer world. Men had forgotten him ; he said bitterly that they had not even waited until he was dead. Now that his health and strength had left him, now that his grand sonorous voice could no longer declaim its magnificent denunciations, now that the inner fire had burned out, and in the sunken eyes the light of enthusiasm shone no more, he was forgotten by the thousands whom he had led ; not one cared what had become of him, and, but for the faithful love and service of his daughter, he must have died. In these days much of his pride had left him, and there were times when his eyes ached for one glimpse of Leah. Then, sitting moodily watching the sea, he would ask himself if he had really cursed her, and if Heaven had heard his evil wish.

One day Sir Basil, coming earlier than usual in the morning, found him sitting by the ivy-covered wall, his face buried in his hands. When he raised it to greet him, the baronet saw plainly the traces of tears.

As usual, Martin was cynical, even about himself.

"I am a very rueful-looking patriot this morning," he said. "I have been ill all night, and I am alone."

Sir Basil glanced round.

"Where is Miss Ray?" he asked.

"My daughter is always busied about something or other; she has not much time to give to me. It was different once."

Sir Basil felt indignant. He knew that, no matter where Hettie might be, she was working for him and for no one else.

"I think," he said, quietly, "that Miss Ray gives you all her time. I have never seen a daughter so devoted."

"She is very good," he allowed; and then he added, abruptly, "I had another daughter once."

It seemed as though some irresponsible power forced him to talk of Leah. It was the first time he had spoken of her since the day she had left him, and, like pent-up waters suddenly let loose, his thoughts and feelings at once found vent. He rose from his seat and stretched his arms out toward the great heaving ocean.

"I have never pretended to be what people call tender-hearted, but my love for that girl was deeper than the sea," he cried—"deeper and wider than yonder sea!"

Sir Basil thought to himself that he looked like one of the grand heroes of old, with his tall figure and massive head, his arms outstretched in appealing despair.

"I made two idols," he continued. "The first was my wife—she died; the other was my daughter."

"Did she die also?" said Sir Basil, pityingly.

"No, she is worse than dead—a thousand times worse than dead. If I could weep over some green grave containing her I should be happier."

"Not dead?" said Sir Basil, wonderingly.

"No; she deserted me; she cast me off, much as you would throw away your old gloves. I swore that I would never mention her name; but, if I do not speak, my heart will break. I have thought of her all night against my will—quite against my will."

“It is only natural that you should think of her,” rejoined the baronet.

“No; you do not know what she did. I had these two daughters, Hettie and—another. Hettie is a loving, gentle girl; the other was a genius, a bright, beautiful, gifted girl, who would have been a prophetess among the people. My heart was wrapped up in her. People say that a father should make no difference in the love that he bears his children. How can he help it? To me one was as a magnificent imperial eagle, the other like a gentle white dove. I loved the eagle best. I wanted to make her a heroine, to teach her to go among the people, to teach as I had taught. She was so beautiful, so full of fire and spirit, a grand soul shining in her eyes! I told her what I wanted. I asked her for her life’s service. What is the service of a life when one loves a cause? On the very day that I unfolded my plans to her a stranger came among us—a man related to my wife. He was rich—bah, how I hate to speak of him!—and he wanted to adopt my children. I refused his offer; he appealed to them. Ah! Heaven, when I think of the scene! She, the daughter whom I loved best, left me, and went up to him, this stranger, and clung to him. ‘Take me away,’ she cried. ‘I have been praying to Heaven to send me a deliverer from this furnace of fire!’ She went away with him, and I cursed her.”

As he finished speaking, Martin Ray’s arms fell nervelessly by his side, and his gray head drooped upon his breast.

“And the other—Hettie—what did she do?”

“Ah! good, faithful Hettie! She came to me. I see the picture now, Glen. She put her arms round my neck. ‘I will love you, and serve you, and be true to you until I die,’ she said. And so we four stood looking at each other. Then the other two went away. Hettie and I have

been alone ever since ; we have never uttered her sister's name since the day she left us, and we never shall. If Hettie ever breathed it, I would send her from us. Yet to-day I grieve that I cursed my eldest child. What do you think," added Martin, after a short pause, " of the choice my daughters made? "

" I think Miss Hettie one of the most devoted, most unselfish girls in the world," answered the baronet.

" And what do you think of the other? " asked Martin Ray.

" What can I think? " said Sir Basil. " What could any man think of a girl who deserts her own father and clings to a stranger? "

" You condemn her then? " questioned Martin Ray, eagerly.

" It is not my place to judge or condemn. Perhaps she could put the matter in a way which would make it appear quite different ; but, so far as I can see, I should say that Miss Hettie was by far the more noble of the two. I should think her sister selfish, and certainly wanting in nobility of character—wanting, too, in natural affection, if she could desert her father and cling to a stranger."

" I have never been the same man since," said Martin Ray, with a sigh.

" I should hardly have thought that two sisters could have differed so greatly," remarked Sir Basil, quite unconscious that by his own words he was condemning the girl he had asked to be his wife.

" I should like to know," said Martin Ray, with a haggard face, " if curses ever really cause evil ; I should like to know if that proud, beautiful head will bend under the curse I laid upon it? "

" I hope not," answered Sir Basil, quietly.

Martin turned to him suddenly.

" Promise me," he said, " that you will not reveal one

word of what I have told you. Hettie believes that I have forgotten her sister. I wish her still to think so."

"I shall never speak of it," promised Sir Basil. "You may rely upon me."

But as he went home he thought much of the story he had just heard. What a strange thing that two sisters should differ so greatly—that one should be so noble, so full of self-sacrifice and that the other should leave her father and go away with a stranger! He admired Hettie more than ever.

"She has an angelic face and an angelic nature," he said to himself. "It is not often that the two go together."

He remembered the story again when he saw Leah. So perfectly unconscious was he that she was the heroine of it that he thought to himself how grandly Leah would have acted in the circumstances; he felt sure that she, too, would have gone to her father's side and have stood by him against the whole world.

When he called again at the cottage, Martin was very ill, and Hettie in great distress. She looked to him more beautiful than ever, her blue eyes filled with tears, her lovely face so full of sorrow and compassion. He watched her preparing with deft fingers all that Martin needed. He thought of the heavy burden laid upon those young shoulders, and he wondered again at the heartlessness of the sister who could have left it all for her to bear. His heart went out to her, as he believed in simple pity. It was such a hard life.

"I wish," he said, approaching her, "that I could do something for you."

"You have done a great deal for me," she replied, with a quick, bright smile.

"Have I? What is it, Miss Hettie?"

"You have given me comfort by speaking so kindly."

"If I knew how to give you comfort," said Sir Basil

quickly, "I would ask for nothing better. I cannot tell you how sorry I am to see you so sorely tried. Let me lift that heavy tray for you. Those little white hands of yours were never made for hard work like this.

"I think," she said, smiling through her tears, "that you would be amused to see how much what you call my 'little white hands' can do between sewing and writing. It seems to me they travel many miles each day."

Sir Basil stood by quite helpless. He saw how anxious and distressed Hettie was, and he thought with bitterness of the sister who had left her. Something of what filled his heart was shown in his manner, and in some vague way they understood each other. Without words, something was acknowledged by both—his sympathy, her gratitude for it, his kindly affection, and her pleasure in it.

Sir Basil did not stay long; but when he bade Hettie farewell something was in each face which had never been there before, some new feeling stirred each heart. They said good-night hurriedly, with averted faces; but in Hettie's heart there was a thrill of something like new life, and in Sir Basil's a strange, tumultuous happiness that he hardly understood.

Leah wondered more than ever at the preoccupied manner of her lover. Was he thinking of her? Was it the future that troubled him? Was he dreaming of politics? The last thing in this world that she would have suspected was that he was thinking of her long-lost sister Hettie.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE time came when Sir Basil Carlton stood face to face with the knowledge of his own secret, when he said to himself that, if marriages were made in heaven, Hettie was the one woman intended for him, that she was the only woman in this world he could ever love. She stood out quite distinct and clear to him. He knew that at last he had met the love that was his doom, that he—Sir Basil Carlton, engaged to marry the great heiress, Leah Hatton—loved with his whole heart Hettie Ray, the daughter of a man whose name seemed to be hated and despised among the class of which he himself was a prominent member. That Hettie was poor and unknown, that she was the daughter of such a father, he cared nothing. If he had been free, he would have pleaded his suit, he would have taken her in his arms and never let her go until she had promised to be his wife. As it was, knowing that he loved her, he must look upon her face only once again, and then it must be to say farewell.

He marvelled within himself at the strange fate that had befallen him. The woman who loved him better than her own life was beautiful as a goddess, and she would bring to her husband, both money and lands; yet his heart did not incline to her. He was grateful to her, fond of her, but he did not love her with the love that comes but once in life.

She had loved him; and, because her happiness was dear to him, because her uncle had told him that her life was wrapped up in his, because he was heart-whole and fancy-free, he had asked her to marry him. And, now that he was bound in faith and honor to her, he had met

the one woman who seemed to have been made for him. He was perplexed, agitated. He loved one woman with his whole heart, and had promised to marry another. Which way did honor lie? Was it best to keep his promise, to go away and never look on Hettie's fair face again, to give up the one love that might have blessed his life, and marry the woman he did not love, but to whom he was in honor bound? Which was best? Was it honorable to marry without love, or was it most honorable to break all other ties and marry the one truly beloved?

He had not sought his fate; he had been almost asked to marry Leah; so much had been said to him that, without being absolutely cruel, he could not have done otherwise; and now he found that he had made himself miserable for life.

"I wish," he cried to himself, in vain reproach, "that I had not been so impetuous. If I had waited but one year longer!"

Sir Basil was dissatisfied with himself; look which way he would, he had reason for self-reproach. He should have taken more time to think over the subject, and knowing himself bound in honor to Leah, he should have been more careful about Hettie. He knew now that he had loved Hettie at first sight; he ought not to have yielded to the temptation of seeing her a second time. When he found that morning, noon, and night the fair face with its halo of golden hair haunted him, he should have known the reason.

He stood face to face with this one fact at last—that wealth, title, fame, grandeur, nothing that earth could give him was of any value unless with it he had the love of Hettie Ray. He was in despair.

"Who is it that directs this power we call love?" he asked himself. "Why can I not love the woman I must marry? Why can I not marry the woman I love?"

Looking forward through the possible years of a long

life, he saw no gleam of brightness; there could be no happiness in a future unshared by Hettie Ray. He was not the first man who had stood confused and embarrassed on the threshold of life—not the first to go through that terrible struggle between duty and inclination from which no man, perhaps, altogether escapes. What would he have said or thought had he known that the two girls between whom he was so curiously placed were sisters? He thought himself already the sport of fate. If he had known the truth, he would have believed himself cursed by fate. He began to wonder what Hettie's feelings were—if she cared for him; and then his conscience reproached him. He knew she did; he had read her love in his eyes on that night when everything was changed between them. If he were but free! It seemed almost unmanly, but he could not help the bitter sob which rose to his lips. He knew that the present state of things must end, that he must make up his mind with respects to some immediate course of action. He must not play with fire, he must not dally with temptation, he must decide at once which way honor lay.

That same evening, after dinner, the duchess proposed that they should spend an hour in the picture-gallery, which ran half round the house and was one of the most magnificent parts of it. The Dene collection of pictures was considered one of the finest in England. Portraits of the Rosedenes of many generations hung there with pictures by the old masters and by modern artists. White marble statues and *jardinières* with costly flowers filled the numerous recesses; while comfortable seats were interspersed here and there.

The duchess sat in a lounging chair of crimson velvet, watching the pretty groups scattered about; but there were two among the guests upon whom her eyes chiefly rested. One was a tall, graceful girl draped in palest amber, half covered with black lace; diamonds shone on her dark head,

on her white breast, and on her beautiful arms. She carried a fan glittering with jewels and made of pale amber plumes; her dress was cut after the fashion of an old Venetian picture, and with the diamonds at her breast were some scarlet passion-flowers. She formed a perfect picture; and so many of the gentlemen present seemed to think, for they haunted her like shadows. Shadows, too, they were to her, for she saw only Sir Basil; her eyes never lingered with interest on any one else. She had been walking up and down what was called the south gallery with Sir Basil, and the duchess saw with annoyance that while Leah's whole soul shone in her eyes and trembled on her lips, he was distant and preoccupied.

"The man who has won the love of such a woman ought to be proud of her," she thought; "but if I were to express my ideas on the subject, I should say that he looks most decidedly bored."

It was true. All the brilliancy of Leah's beauty, her grace, her wit, the touch of genius which made her different from others, the very lavishness of the love she gave him, tired him. He knew that the position was pitiful, that it was cruel; but he could not help it. As he walked by her side, the shining amber robes and the light of her diamonds contrasted unfavorably with the pale blue dress and sweet face of the girl whom he loved so dearly.

"Basil," she said, "I am sure you are not listening to me; your thoughts are elsewhere. Do you know what Lady Fanny Curtiss said about you to-day?"

"Lady Fanny is so very uncomplimentary, I hardly care to inquire," laughed Sir Basil.

"She said that you looked like one of the Gunpowder Plot band—that you wanted only a slouched hat, a large cloak, and a lantern to make you a perfect conspirator."

"What called forth Lady Fanny's wit?" he asked.

"You have looked so sad, Basil, during the last few

days; you have lost all the bright, cheery, genial manner which made you so—so irresistible.”

“What an expressive word Leah!” he replied, trying to treat the matter lightly.

They were standing then by a magnificent statue of Cleopatra holding the viper in her hand. The marble face of the unhappy queen looked down upon them.

“Do not laugh at me, Basil,” she said; and the passion in her voice awed him. She stood quite still and laid her hand, as though for support, upon the arm of the Egyptian queen. “Tell me dear, is it my fault that you are not happy? Have I done anything that has displeased you? You know that I live only for you. Is it I who vex you, who grieve you, Basil?” Her beautiful head drooped nearer to him. “My love, my love,” she whispered. “if there be a single thing in my daily life that does not please you, tell me, and I will change it.”

At that moment he wished himself dead; he hated himself because he could not give her back love for love.

“There is nothing in you that could be changed for the better, Leah,” he said; “you are perfect. You never either grieve or vex me. I am out of health or spirits I think.”

She touched with her warm loving lips the hand that lay near her; but the marble Cleopatra was not colder than was his heart.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SIR BASIL had decided. He had tried to think of his case as though it were another's; he had tried to weigh it, give judgment upon it. There were two courses open to him—he could go to Leah, tell her his story, and ask for his

freedom, or he could leave Dene and never look on Hettie's sweet face again.

If he decided to pursue the former, he knew that it would be far less cruel were he to plunge a knife into Leah's breast ; he knew that it would kill her more surely than if he had gone away and left her long before. Was it his duty to consider her first? Clearly. He had asked her to be his wife ! he had never dreamed that a time would come when he should love with all the madness, the passion, the impetuosity of youth ; he had fancied in some vague way that his engagement would save him from it. Yes—before he thought of himself or his own happiness, he must think of Leah.

Only a few months since, his life had lain before him bright and calm as a summer sea ; he had known but little trouble. He had youth, wealth, every good gift, in short ; now all these were valueless to him, because he must renounce the thing he loved best. Weighing all the circumstances, he did not think he could have called himself dishonorable had he told the whole story to Leah. But he could not crush her—her whose only fault was loving him not wisely, but too well. She must be his first care, since she was his promised wife. But, while he was deciding to surrender all hopes for the future, he determined to have one more glimpse of paradise and say farewell to Hettie, so that he might take with him through all time the memory of her words and looks.

On the morning after he had come to this decision he told the general that it was very probable he should be compelled to return to Glen in a few days. Business awaited him ; one or two leases had fallen in—and there was adjoining property for sale—in fact, there were several important reasons why he must go at once.

“ Leah will be very sorry,” said Sir Arthur, whose first thought was always for his beloved niece.

Sir Basil was not the man to do things by halves.

“Why need you linger after I am gone? You can bring Leah back to Brentwood. I am sure she will be pleased to be at home again, though they make us very happy here. And, Sir Arthur,” he continued, determined to rivet his chains at once, “when you are once more at Brentwood, I want to talk to you about—about the marriage; it is time something was settled.”

Sir Arthur laughed and looked pleased.

“You must talk to Leah about that, Basil,” he said. “*Place aux dames* always!”

“Yes, I will talk to Leah about it,” returned the other, impetuously. “I do not see the use of this long delay.”

“Nor do I,” said the general. “I do not understand the art of love-making; but you have both had plenty of time to make up your minds. You love each other; I do not see what need there is for further waiting.”

How Sir Basil winced at the simple words, at the implicit faith, the complete confidence and trust reposed in him! What would this old soldier say if he knew that he had given his heart, his love, to some one else?

The same day he told Leah of his intention to leave Dene. He often afterward thought of the scene. She was in the drawing-room, standing by the table, turning over the leaves of a book, when he went up to her.

“Leah,” he said, gently, “I find from my letters this morning that I must go back to Glen. I have some important business to attend to at home.”

She had been smiling as she looked over the engravings; but her face changed as she heard the words.

“You are going, Basil,” she said—“leaving us?”

A quiver of pain passed over her face, a wistful expression crept into her eyes. He thought to himself, if the simple announcement of his departure for a few days could cause her such pain, what would have happened had he

told her all? He could not be cruel to her. He must take care that she never knew, never suspected the truth. He must endeavor to make her happy, although he could never be so. How well she loved him—and, oh, the pity of it?

“Leah,” he said, taking her hand in his, “I will not talk to you now. The general told me that you will not remain much longer at Dene. You will return to Brentwood in a few days: and then you will let me speak to you about our marriage? I want you to fix a date for it, to tell me when you think it can take place. It seems uncertain, and I am tired of uncertainty.”

A look of unutterable relief came over her face. Ah, Heaven be thanked! It was of her, of their marriage and their future, that he had been thinking lately with so grave a face. A great tearless sob rose to her lips—she had been so unhappy about him, and all without reason, his silence had been caused only by his anxious thoughts of her. They were alone in the drawing-room. She looked up at him, all the love that filled her heart shining in her dark eyes. She put one fair arm around his neck.

“Basil, I have been so unhappy about you,” she murmured. “People said that you looked preoccupied and dull. I could see for myself that you were not the same; and I wondered if you had ceased to love me.”

“Ceased to love you, Leah!” He tried to speak carelessly, but his whole frame trembled and his lips grew pale. “Ceased to love you! Leah, tell me what you would do if that happened.”

The face raised to his was full of earnestness and truth

“What should I do?” she replied. “There would be but one thing on earth for me to do, and that would be to die. When all that made life worth living was gone, how could I live?”

“Life is very precious,” he said, drawing her closer to himself; “and it is not easy to die.”

"It would be easy for me," she declared. "I have let all my desires and interests merge themselves in yours. I have kept back nothing for myself, not even one thought of my heart."

"I know you have not," he said, touched inexpressibly by the pathos of her voice and face. He caressed the dark masses of hair, and the girl's whole face grew radiant at this unexpected indication of his tenderness. "Leah," he went on, thoughtfully, "I am the last one to preach on such subjects, but do you think it wise for any one, man or woman, to become so completely engrossed in his or her love?"

"No, certainly not," she replied; "I do not think it wise; but there are some who cannot help it."

"You have given me your heart, your love, your life. Suppose it should be the will of Heaven that I die—what then?"

"I should die too," she replied, with a look so calm that he saw she would find nothing to repine at in such a fate. "I have my own ideas about true love," she added; "and ours is true love, Basil, though the portion of it that comes to us in this life is smaller than that which I feel assured we shall enjoy in the next. And you, Basil," she asked, looking up at him with happy eyes, "what should you do if I died?"

Heaven help him! He hated himself. He longed for the power to take her in his arms, to whisper loving words to her, to kiss her lips, to make her happy; but he could not—the fair, sweet face with eyes like blue hyacinths floated between them.

"I cannot tell," he replied. "Men are so unlike women; even the quality of their love is different."

"One thing, I am sure, would never happen; you would never care for any one else," she said, with the implicit faith of a loving woman.

He hated himself more than ever as the words fell on his ear.

"You believe in constancy, Leah?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, musingly. "I cannot imagine anything so terrible as losing you; and even if I lived after such an awful calamity, I could never care for any one save you. No other would have power to interest me. I believe in one love and no more."

"If she knew," he thought, with a bitter sigh. "Leah," he said, after a few minutes' silence, "could anything that I might ever do make you hate me?"

"No," she replied, "nothing. I have asked myself that question. If you were in a felon's cell to-morrow, I would share it with you. I would go to the scaffold with you."

"Dear," he said, gently, "that is a great love, but is it not a blind love?"

"Yes," she answered; "and in this world a blind love is best. You have made me very happy, Basil," she continued. "During these evenings, while you have looked so thoughtful, I have watched you anxiously."

"Why did you not tell me that you were troubled?" he asked.

"I did not like to do so. Although I know how much you love me, Basil, there are times when I feel timid and almost afraid of intruding on you."

"I thought," he said, jestingly—only too pleased to jest—"that in perfect love there was no fear?"

"There is fear in every love," she replied. "I must know, for I feel mine so strongly. Ah! me, I am happy to-day, Basil! In future, when you look thoughtful, I shall say to myself that you are thinking of me."

She raised her face to his; and, bending down, he kissed the loving lips and the tears from the happy eyes.

My love," she murmured, "I could almost wish to die here and now, while I am sure that you love me."

And it would have been well for her if she had died.

The sound of her voice, the clasp of her arms, the kiss from her lips, the memory of her loving words, went with him as he set out to say farewell to the girl he loved. Just that one half-hour from a whole lifetime should be his. He would take Hettie's hand, look into her face, and say "Good-by," never to meet her more, his first, last only love; and then the rest of his life should be given to duty.

It was the close of an autumn afternoon when he sought Hettie Ray. The light was dying in an amber sky; and he walked with swift footsteps up the green hill that he would never climb again.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HETTIE RAY was watching the amber light. The king of day was setting in royal splendor. He had donned new colors this evening; he had dispensed with crimson and gold, and had surrounded himself with clouds of deep amber and purple—kingly colors that, falling upon the sea, gave a weird gleam to the waters. The light of a daffodil sky was there in full perfection, but the green earth looked strange under it; a curious glow lay upon the hills, upon the trees and the grass. To Hettie's loving eyes it seemed as though Nature were waiting, and that, when the sun had set, something would happen. The sun was sinking lower and lower; the amber clouds seemed to touch the water's edge. From the waves on the shore came a musical murmur, from the birds in the trees an evening hymn. Hettie, in her old seat by the ivy-covered wall, was tranquilly watching the lovely scene.

Her father had fallen asleep. He was very ill, and she was anxious about him. She had decided that if he were not better on the morrow she would call in a doctor. She had been up with him all night, and she had been hard at work all day; she was tired and anxious—yet there was a look of happiness on her fair face. In the midst of the gloom and the darkness there was a ray of light for her—the handsome young stranger whom her father called “Glen” loved her; she felt sure of it. She was so shy, so modest, so completely without vanity or coquetry, so simple and sweet; in her busy life she had had but little time to think of love and lovers. Deep in her heart lay a dim vague knowledge, half hope, half fear, that some day or other this beautiful dream would come to her.

She could not be unhappy while thoughts of “Glen” pierced the gloom. All the fatigue of the night and the labor of the day had been as nothing to her, because of her thoughts of him. She did not own to herself that she loved him and was ready to give her love unsought; but she knew that if he loved her, as she had now some reason to believe he did, she would be the happiest girl on earth. How handsome he was, how noble, how good! What a knightly face was his, what a courtly manner! She could understand now the true meaning of the word “gentleman.” And, while she was thinking of him, while the amber clouds rested on the water, he stood suddenly by her side. No rose ever blushed more sweetly; her whole face changed; her eyes welcomed him, and said what her lips could not utter.

“How strange!” she said. “I was just thinking of you.”

He longed to tell her that there was no moment, night or day, in which he was not thinking of her, but he restrained himself. He was there to say good-by. He might wait a few moments. He was on the brink: let

pause there, let him stand by her in silence for the last time and watch the waves breaking on the sands.

"I was thinking of you," repeated Hettie. "I knew that you would come."

"I have a motive in coming," he said. "I will tell you presently what it is. Let us watch the setting of the sun together."

He knew that the sun of his life would set with it; he felt somewhat like a soldier who, condemned to be shot for some act of insubordination, stands by the side of his own open grave. "When the sun has set, I shall have told her, and I shall have gone too," he said to himself. He bent his pale, troubled face over the glossy ivy.

Hettie looked more fair and seraphic than ever, feeling sure that he had come to tell her that he loved her—she had seen it in his face on the previous night. She folded her white hands, and they stood side by side in perfect silence while the sun set. As it seemed to touch the water's edge, the clouds turned crimson. The change was so quick and so marvellous, it was as though the restless heaving sea was suddenly covered with flame.

"Look," cried Hettie—"how beautiful!" For with the roselights came shadows of the richest purple. The sun seemed to sink into the water: the day was dead.

Sir Basil turned to her, wondering in his own misery at the light on her fair face.

"I came to tell you something, Miss Ray," he said. "I know it will interest you. I am going away."

He purposely avoided looking at her. If he had seen the sudden change in her face, the deep anguish, he would not have gone at all. She made him no answer, for the simple reason that her lips had suddenly grown mute.

"I have business that compels me to leave," he said, "and I come to say good-by to-night."

The western wind seemed to grow chill. Hettie's

heart was heavy with pain and fear. He had been so much to her, and her life was so cheerless. She thought of her sick father and her hard work, of her joyless, loveless life that he had so suddenly brightened. She thought of the happiness that had been hers so short a time, and then, with a passionate burst of tears, she cried,—

“Do not go away !”

“I must,” he said, briefly. “There is no choice left to me. I must go.”

He saw the fair head bent until it rested on the ivy-leaves. He was only human, and he could bear no more. He drew closer to her.

“Hettie,” he said—“let me call you Hettie for the first and last time—tell me, why do you shed these tears ? Are they for me ?”

“I am sorry you are going,” she sobbed.

“Are you really so grieved as this ?” he asked. “Oh, Hettie, can it be true ? What am I to you ? Why should you care ?”

“It is quite true that you are nothing to me, but you have been kind to me, and my life is so lonely.”

His heart beat fast with the greatness of his temptation. It was stirred to its very depths by her fair loveliness, her love, and her bitter tears. He constrained himself with a desperate effort—“Death before dishonor !” Great drops stood upon his brow, and his limbs trembled. The mad thought came into his mind : if but for once he might take her in his arms, kiss her face, and die !

“I am glad to have been able in some small way to comfort you, Hettie,” he said ; but the restraint he placed upon himself was so great that his voice sounded stern and even harsh.

“Perhaps,” she said, looking up at him through her tears “you will come again ; You have been interested in my poor father. You have enjoyed your visits to our

home. You seem to have no enforced occupation, and to be able to please yourself. You will come again ? ”

“ He could hear how her breath caught at every word. There was nothing for it but to tell her the truth, and then she would see that he must go. The autumn wind moaned ; all the light had gone with the sun ; a gray shade had crept over the sea ; the waves rose and fell with a mournful wail which was the forerunner of a storm.

“ Hettie, I will tell you the truth,” he said. “ Strange that there should be a scene like this between us—who were strangers some weeks since—and you do not even know my name.”

“ No.” she said ; I have never heard it. My father always calls you Glen. It is singular, but in that first hour that we talked together I felt as though I had known and trusted you all my life.”

“ I need never tell you my name, Hettie. We must part to-night, and we must never meet again. Do not cry, dear. It is harder for me than for you.”

She clung to his arm, still weeping. He felt the quick beating of her heart, and he stopped yet another minute before he said the fatal words which must part them for ever. He felt in that moment that, if this grief of hers were caused by him, he deserved any punishment.

“ Hettie, listen to me, dear. How we have drifted into this matters but little, whether I have been blind or careless matters less ; the fault must be mine. I ought to have resisted the first temptation. After I had seen you that first time in church, I ought never to have seen you again. My sense, my honor, my conscience, tell me so.”

“ But why ? ” she cried, in amazement. “ I do not understand you. Tell me why.”

“ Because I am engaged to be married. because I am

bound by the most solemn pledge ; and, because of this promise, I must go."

"Why," she said, in a faint, low voice— "why must you go ? If it be some one who loves you, and some one whom you love very much, surely she would be kind, and let you stay—at least, while my father is so ill. If he were well, it would all be different."

"Hettie," he said, "I will trust you as I have never trusted even my own heart yet. I will say to you what I have never admitted even to my own thoughts. I—ah ! how shall I tell you ? My engagement was less my own voluntary seeking than the consequence of circumstances. I can never explain. I did not understand the nature or the power of love—I knew nothing of it ; but she whom I am to marry loves me. Every arrangement is made for our marriage ; and—oh, Hettie, listen to me !—she loves me, and, if we were parted, she would die. She could not grieve over it and recover ; she would die. I must marry her ; I am bound in honor and in conscience. And let me tell you my mad folly. I have learned to love you. I do love you. I may say it for the first and last time in my life. I love you with the whole love of my life, with the one love of my manhood. I may live many years, but I shall never love any other woman. If Heaven helps me, I will do my duty ; but my happiness dies in the hour I leave you. Now you see that I must go."

Her head drooped until it lay upon his shoulder, and she whispered something there—words that were both life and death to him.

"Yes, you must go," she said ; "I see it plainly. There is no help for it ; you must go."

He wished that he were lying under the gray water, dead ; the pain seemed greater than he could bear. Then her soft whispered words came to him again.

"It will be the one dream, the one memory of my life,"

she said. "On the shore of this sweet southern sea I have lived and died. Do many people throw away their lives like this?"

"I cannot tell," he replied, drearily, "nor can I tell why Fate has treated us so cruelly. If I had been free when I met you, Hettie, you are the one woman I should have chosen to be my wife."

"And I," she said, in a voice sweeter than the cooing of dove—"I should have loved you."

"It seems to me," went on Sir Basil, "as though we stood on either side of an open grave."

"That which divides us is deeper than a grave," he said, with a slight shudder. "I shall never hear the sound of the waves again without thinking of this."

"Nor shall I. A man should be ashamed to confess cowardice; but I own to you, Hettie, I hardly know how to take up the burden of life again."

The sweet whispered words gave him strength.

"We shall pass out of each other's life," she said. "Even that will be better than meeting always to suffer pain. After to-night, we shall see each other no more."

"It seems hard," he cried, bitterly, setting his teeth with the air of a desperate man, "though it is better for you and better for me that it should be so."

Then, as he was leaving her for ever, the temptation became too great. He clasped his arms round her, and gathered her to his heart. Once, twice, thrice he kissed her pale, sweet face, as one kisses the face of the best-beloved before the coffin-lid is closed. In silence then he put her away from him; in silence she sat where he had left her; and he went away over the great hill, which rose like a huge barrier between himself and that which was dearest to him on earth.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE party at Dene Abbey broke up. Sir Basil went home to Glen, where he resolved to devote himself to work, in order to drive far from him all memories of the night that stood out, a clear and distinct picture, from the remainder of his life. The other guests departed to different parts of the kingdom. The duke and duchess went on the Continent ; Sir Arthur Hatton and his beautiful niece returned to Brentwood.

The duchess, who had a warm and sincere affection for Leah, was troubled about her. She could not help suspecting that something was wrong between the lovers, for she had seen Sir Basil, on the evening before he left, with such a strange expression on his face. But then Leah seemed happy. The duchess, than whom no more kindly woman ever lived, decided that, if she were in the general's place, she should hurry on the marriage. She had an uncomfortable feeling that something unpleasant would happen if this were not done.

As for Leah, her fears and forebodings had vanished. Basil, of his own free will, had returned to Glen in order to hasten the preparations for their marriage. That being the case, she could hardly charge him with want of love ; she had made herself unhappy with fancies. When the Duchess of Rosedene had said good-by to her, she had added : " I shall be back for your marriage, Leah, in the spring ; not all the lions of Europe would keep me from that." Leah's lovely face had brightened at the words.

The time was drawing near now in which she would be united for evermore to the one man whom she loved so passionately. A few more weeks of the changing autumn,

and then would come winter; the spring would soon follow, and then there would be no more parting, no more sorrow. They would be together until Death divided them.

During these days the memory of her sister grew less clear and distinct to Leah; the past was like a dream to her—she lived entirely in the present, father, sisters, the many places she had called home, the troubles and humiliations of her early life, had faded away. Leah Ray, who was to have been a “female lecturer,” “a prophetess among the people,” and Leah Hatton, the famous beauty and heiress, were two very different people.

The general had told her to spare no expense. She was to have a *trousseau* fit for a queen. The fortune that Sir Arthur had given to her was to be made her own by marriage deeds and settlements. From all these splendors Leah would steal away to look at what was most precious to her—the golden wedding-ring lying in the little morocco case; the ring that had been taken from so many dead fingers, that had held so many living hopes, and that she was to wear for the rest of her life. She cared more for that solitary treasure than for all else that belonged to her.

As they journeyed home from Dene to Brentwood, Sir Arthur saw more clearly than ever how entirely his niece's heart was given to Sir Basil. He was even amused, although he did his best to hide his amusement. No matter on what subject the conversation began, it turned always to Sir Basil. He might discuss the autumn woods, the old gray churches, the pretty homesteads, anything and every thing but she managed always to bring Sir Basil in at the end. He laughed quietly to himself, thinking the ways of lovers very wonderful ways.

“Do you think Sir Basil will come over to Brentwood to-night?” was the most eager question she asked.

“ How long has he been away ! ” said the general.

“ Four days,” replied Leah.

“ Then I should say most decidedly that we shall find him waiting for us at the station.”

He was right. Sir Basil had ridden over to the station at Arley, intending to go back with them to Brentwood.

There is surely nothing so pathetic as a great love—nothing so beautiful or so sad. Leah’s face was a picture to see when her eyes fell on her lover.

Sir Basil had resolved to do his best. There should be no more loitering in the pleasant paths of temptation for him. He would honestly try to make the girl who loved him happy. When between her brilliant, beautiful face and his own there rose the shadow of a pale, sweet face drowned in tears, he turned resolutely away ; he would not see it.

Leah thought that he looked very ill, pale, worn, and exhausted.

“ You wanted me to take care of you,” she said. “ What have you been doing to yourself, Basil ? I shall not let you leave us again. You look as though you had been ill.

“ I am well enough, Leah ; you need not be anxious about me, I have been busy. I find that it does not do to be long from home. My land-steward is one of the best men I could have for my purpose ; but there is no man living can take the whole responsibility of an estate from its owner. I am glad you have returned, Leah ; now we shall have some weeks, at least, of peace.”

He spoke in the tone and with the manner of one tried beyond endurance ; and again it struck Leah how strangely and sadly he was altered.

There was a warm welcome for the travellers at Brentwood ; every one seemed delighted. The household were all in grand array, ready to receive them ; the fine old

mansion seemed to have put on its brightest look to welcome them. Then Sir Arthur, Leah, and Sir Basil sat down to dinner. They found it a great change from the large party that had gathered round the dinner-table at Dene Abbey.

"After all," said the general, "it is impossible to live in a crowd. One requires quiet every now and then."

On this occasion Leah looked more lovely, in Sir Arthur's eyes, than she had ever looked in her magnificent toilets at Dene. She wore a dress of rich, white lace, with ribbons of pale lemon color, a magnificent pomegranate blossom in her dark hair, and in the bodice of her dress—a toilet that suited her to perfection. She had never looked happier. The sense of being at home again, the fact of having Basil with her, of knowing that he had been working hard so as to bring the time of their marriage nearer, the recollection that she should not leave Brentwood again until she left it as his wife—all these things made her wonderfully and unutterably happy.

Sir Basil's heart was moved when he looked at her; she so well deserved the greatest love that any man could give her. And he? Ah, if Heaven would but take from him the memory of the pale sweet face drowned in tears! If he could forget that for one half-hour in his life he had known what true happiness was!

After dinner, under the pretense of looking at an accumulation of business letters, but in reality to indulge in ten minutes' slumber, the general went for half an hour to his study, and Leah and Sir Basil were left together. A sense of the cruel wrong that a loveless marriage would be to her, came over the baronet; and he vowed to himself that he would make amends to her by increased kindness, by studying her wishes in every way. He little dreamed how keenly and clearly the eyes of love saw. He would put an end to all doubts at once; better a thousand

times to fix his chain so tightly that he could not even move it.

Leah was standing against the carved mantel-piece in the drawing-room ; a bright fire burned in the grate, the lamps were lighted, and a half-golden radiance from them filled the room and fell on the queenly head with its crown of rich dark hair, on the beautiful face that was transfigured with love and happiness, and on the white graceful throat and rounded arms. The fine white lace swept the floor. A prince might have been proud to woo this girl for his wife ; her beauty and grace would have charmed any man. Perhaps, out of the whole wide world, this man who was to marry her was the only one who would have looked on her loveliness without emotion.

He went up to her, and put his arm round her waist. He was not given to caressing, and Leah raised her face with an expression of half-amused wonder.

" I want to ask you a question, Leah," he said, gently, " What day shall we choose for our wedding-day ? I shall leave it entirely to you, dear," he continued. " We arranged that the wedding should take place in the spring—in what month shall it be ? "

Something in his tone arrested her attention ; his voice was not musical with love, but earnest, as though he weighed each syllable. She looked at him keenly ; he was calm, with a thoughtful expression on his face ; there was no rapture, no warmth. She could not tell why, but in that moment her heart chilled ; then she reproached herself for it. He could give her no greater proof of love than this—that he asked her to be his wife. Why should she find fault with the manner of his asking ? Yet she wished that there had been more passion in his words.

" May marriages are unlucky, so people say," he continued. " The violets bloom and the trees begin to bud in April. Shall it be in April, Leah ? "

She put her arms around his neck and raised her face to his ; the love that shone in her eyes might have melted a heart of stone.

“Are you quite sure that you wish it then, Basil ?” she asked, anxiously.

“I am quite sure,” he replied, with more firmness and greater tenderness.

“Then it shall be just as you will,” she replied ; and they parted that night with the distinct understanding that the marriage was to take place in April.

“You have the wedding-ring, Leah ?” said Sir Basil.

“Yes, I have it in safe-keeping,” she replied, with a happy smile.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

So the wedding-day was fixed, and in Leah's future there did not seem to be one cloud. Any one, on hearing of what awaited her, would have pronounced her to be one of the happiest girls on whom the sun shone. Beauty, riches, honor, love—every gift with which life and fortune can crown their favorites was hers.

There were times when she forgot all her troubles, both past and present, when the faint shadows died, and the sun of her love and happiness shone out in full and perfect day ; then again the clouds of doubt gathered, and her disturbing fancies took tangible shape.

But in April, with the snowdrops and violets, with the springing leaves and the song of the birds, would come her wedding-day, she said to herself. Sir Basil must love her, or he would not ask her to be his wife. He was not marrying her for beauty ; he had seen fairer women. It was

not for her wealth; he was rich enough himself. It could be for nothing but love. To her own heart she said that she would be happy; she would trample under foot all her fancies and thoughts, "vague ideas that knew no form," and give herself up to happiness which should have in it no alloy.

A week later Sir Basil drove over to Brentwood to consult Leah about the colors and decorations for her boudoir. In every detail he showed the strongest desire to please her. What he did not give her in devoted or passionate love, he gave her in unremitting attention.

Glen was in the hands of the decorators. It was many years since the interior had been renovated, and Sir Basil had determined that it should be a fitting shrine for the beautiful woman who was to be its mistress. The room that was to be so essentially her own, her boudoir, he was interested in above all. He had laughed when the manager from the well-known firm of Clough & Hewson had waited upon him, and, after some little preliminaries had said that he should be grateful if he could see the portrait or have some slight description of the lady who was to preside over the room.

"No matter how beautiful the coloring of a room may be," he said, "if it does not harmonize with the lady for whose use it is, all the beauty is in vain. With walls of the most delicate amber, a blonde lady would be out of harmony altogether."

Sir Basil smiled and nodded approvingly.

"The lady who is to inhabit this particular room is a brunette," he said.

The manager bowed with a gratified air.

"You see, sir," he said, "the coloring of a room is like the background of a picture." And Sir Basil had been so struck with the words that he had driven over to see Leah upon the point.

It was a fine morning, and he found his *fiancee* in the large conservatory, to which an aviary was attached. She was feeding some favorite birds of hers—birds of bright-hued plumage. He was a lover of beauty, and he felt that it would scarcely be possible to find a fairer picture than this peerless girl in her simple morning dress of white. The background of rich flowers and foliage threw into bold relief the faultless lines of the graceful figure, even as the white hands looked like snow among the bright-colored hues. He could not help admiring her and telling himself that this peerless woman was his. There was more tenderness in the kiss he gave her than there had ever been in any caress of his before.

At any sign of love from him Leah's heart thrilled with happiness; and now her face brightened suddenly, as a gray landscape becomes golden under the light of the sun.

"I have ridden over this morning," he said, "on very important business. The decorators are awaiting instructions concerning your boudoir. I want you to choose the colors yourself; I will have no other taste consulted but your own."

"I saw a very pretty boudoir at Lady Daventry's last year," she answered. "It was all white, and paneled in gold. The hangings were of white satin with heavy gold fringe and tassels; the carpet was of thick white velvet, and the couches and chairs were covered with white satin. If you wish me to consult my own taste, Basil, I should like the same."

"Nothing could be more beautiful," he said. "How rooms after a time, seem to partake of the characters of those who live in them! I was looking round Glen this morning, and trying to picture you as you will be when you are mistress there. I could fancy you sweeping through the broad corridors and up the marble staircase—that

staircase, by the way, is the most precious thing we have at Glen; I fancied you standing in the drawing-room, receiving visitors with the same grace as here. I went purposely into the breakfast-room that I might try to imagine what it would be like when your dear face shone there, when, morning after morning, I should see you there opposite to me. I thought of the months and years that would pass while we should be together. I wondered what life would bring to us, Leah. There is no limit to thought," he continued. "I tried to foresee what the coming years would be like, Leah—if ever, as they passed we should have little quarrels, little coolnesses, as other people do."

"Never my love—never!" she said. "My will must always submit to yours."

"I wondered if we should like the same people, make the same friends, share the same tastes. A whole life seemed to pass in review before me. Then I wondered if either one or the other would be stricken down by dangerous illness, and which would die first."

"I have often wondered which of us would die first, Basil," she said, clinging to him as though not even death should take him away.

"Leah," he said suddenly, "have you seen a beautiful little poem called 'An Untimely Thought?' It is supposed to be written by a husband waiting at the foot of the stairs while his wife puts the last finishing stroke to her toilet. He wonders when and where he shall die.

" 'I wonder what day of the week?
I wonder what month of the year?
Will it be midnight or morning?
And who will bend over my bier?"

" 'What a hideous fancy to come
As I wait at the foot of the stair,
While Lillian gives the last touch
To her robe or the rose in her hair!"

“Do I like your new dress—Pompadour?
And do I like you? On my life,
You are eighteen, and not a day more,
And have not been six years my wife!

“Those two rosy boys in the crib
Upstairs are not ours to be sure!
You are just a sweet bride in her bloom,
All sunshine and snowy and pure,

“As the carriage rolls down the dark street,
The little wife laughs and makes cheer;
But . . . I wonder what day of the week?
I wonder what month of the year?”

Leah listened attentively.

“It is very sad and very sweet, Basil, Ah, it is a terrible thing—death! To think that nothing in the world can save one from it, neither wealth, nor love, nor——”

“Are you afraid of death?” he interrupted.

“Yes, I am—perhaps more than most people. When I was a little child, I was taken to Westminster Abbey, and was left alone amid the monuments until my friend came back for me. One struck me so much, Basil. I forget the name of the persons in memory of whom it has been erected; I remember only the subject—a young and beautiful wife clasped in her husband’s arms, and Death, in terrible guise, trying to snatch her from him and drag her into his hideous den. I was greatly impressed with it. Child as I was, I thought how horrible, how strong death must be, when even the love of her husband could not keep a wife safe in his arms. I think that was the first time I ever felt afraid of death. Oh, Basil, now that I am so happy, I do not want to die!”

“My dearest Leah, I hope there is no question of it. What makes you think and speak of death, when I have come purposely to tell you about our home?”

“It is your fault,” she replied, half laughingly. “You would recite those lines, and you wondered which would die first.”

“Well, if I am to blame, I will soon make amends by changing the conversation.”

She was looking at him with grave sweet eyes.

“Basil,” she said, “you tell me that in your fancy you saw me moving about the rooms at Glen, and taking my place in them. One strange thing with me is that I can never do that—I can never imagine myself at Glen. I never go beyond my wedding-day; the life that lies beyond it is all dark and blank. I think of you, and of being with you; but I see no further. I never behold a future in which we are both here at Brentwood or at Glen. Do you not think it strange?”

“You are fanciful, Leah,” he replied. Yet her words touched him.

“Is that it? I have often wondered in my own mind how it was. You are sure it is fancy, Basil—not presentiment?”

He laughed at the idea that possessed her.

“I do not believe in presentiments, Leah,” he said; “fancy and presentiment are to my mind the same thing.”

“I do not think so,” she replied. “I have heard of so many forebodings that have been realized.”

“Has one of your own ever been realized?” he asked.

And she was compelled to answer “No.”

“Before I met you, Basil,” she said, “I did dream at times of the future; now I have a weird sensation that the end of everything comes with the evening of the day, and the morning begins a new life.”

“I was much amused, remarked Sir Basil, “at hearing that Lady Drummond had cured her youngest daughter of a terrible love-fever by the simple expedient of giving her a very difficult piece of needlework to do. I must follow her example in this respect, Leah. I must give you some problems in Euclid to solve; some chapters of history

to study—anything to clear these cobwebs from your brain.”

“There is one thing that I would much rather you gave me,” she said, shyly.

“What is it, Leah?” she asked.

There was no answer.

“Leah, what is it?” he repeated.

And she looked up at him with a beautiful flush on her face.

“I honestly believe you mean this,” he replied, bending over her, and kissing her lips. “Did you mean that, dear?”

“It is better than history or Euclid,” she replied, laughingly.

And then the bright-hued birds and the fragrant blossoms were witnesses of a pretty little scene in which sweet sunny laughter and tenderly-whispered words were intermingled.

It was one of the happiest hours in Leah’s life. Her proud beauty, her picturesque surroundings, the love-light in her dark eyes, the subtle fragrance, the devotion to himself with which each word of hers was instinct, all charmed Sir Basil for a few passing minutes. The phantom of his love with the pale face and the golden hair was forgotten; he was carried away by Leah’s passionate devotion.

He left her standing there amidst the birds and the blossoms, her eyes full of love, her face all tenderness; and as he saw her in that moment he never saw her again.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE last autumn flower had died, and over the earth had fallen the white robe of winter. Glen was still in the hands of the workpeople, and Sir Basil was busied with the coming election, his marriage, and his estate. Leah was also engrossed in preparations; while the general rejoiced to see his niece so active and happy.

A sudden interruption came to this state of things.

One morning the general came down full of bright plans and anticipations. His favorite beverage was a cup of coffee, made from the fragrant freshly-ground berries; Leah, on the contrary, preferred drinking orange pekoe from a cup of priceless Sevres. Sir Arthur discussed his breakfast, talked about the party of visitors whom he would like to gather under his roof for Christmas, about Sir Basil, and how much better he had seemed to be on the previous evening, and finally walked to a table in another part of the room, on which the post-bag was lying.

It was one of the rules of the household at Brentwood that the letters should never be opened until after breakfast, the general's idea being that, if they contained bad news, it was better to delay it, if good, it would be the better for keeping. He took the bag in his hands, all unconscious that it held for him and for others a certain doom.

"We have numerous correspondents this morning," he said, turning out the contents.

Some of the letters contained invitations and news from friends; others were circulars and charitable appeals. At last the general came to one envelope that seemed to puzzle him. He looked at the post-mark, and saw the

word "Southwood." Who could have written to him from Southwood? That was the little town on the slope of the great green hill near Dene Abbey. He had driven through it once or twice; but he was not aware that he knew any one living there.

"Leah," he cried, "here is a strange thing—a letter from Southwood? That is the place by the sea, is it not?"

"Yes," she replied; "but I have never been there. I did not know that you had any correspondents in that part of the country, uncle."

"Nor did I," he said. "This letter is written by a lady, I am sure. It is an easy, elegant, flowing hand."

"The quickest way to see from whom it comes is to open it and look at the signature," laughed Leah. "You do not seem to have thought of that, uncle."

He joined in her laughter, then opened the envelope, drew out the letter, and read it. As he did so, all the color died from his face and the smile from his lips. He perused it slowly and carefully, then looked at Leah. Alarmed by the expression of his eyes, she rose from her seat by the fire and went over to him.

"This concerns you, Leah," he said. "It is written by your sister Hettie."

"By Hettie!" she cried. "Oh, uncle, what is it? May I read it?"

But, when she held the letter in her hands, her agitation was so great that she could not see the words.

"Tell me what it is about!" she cried, in distress. "I cannot read—I cannot see! What is it about, uncle?"

The general looked at her with pitying eyes.

"Let me keep it until you can read it, Leah. Carry your mind back, my dear, to the afternoon when I first saw you—to the little gloomy room where the bars of yellow sunlight fell upon the floor. Do you remember it, Leah?"

"Yes," she cried, with a shudder; "but why do you speak of it—why remind me of it?"

"You will hear, my dear. This letter is from Hettie; and she says that your father is very ill, and wishes to see you."

Leah clasped her hands in dismay.

"Oh, uncle," she cried, "I had so nearly forgotten that terrible past, that dreadful life!"

"I know, my dear," he said, soothingly. "We have kept to our compact well; the name of Ray has not been mentioned between us. But this letter is the result of my words. I said—Heaven forgive me if I spoke too harshly!—that in life I would have nothing to do with him, but that, if, when he came to die, he wanted you, you should go to him. You remember?"

"Yes," she replied, shuddering, "I remember it. You said: 'If you are dying, and send for her, she shall come.'"

"Those were my words," said the general, "and I must carry them out. Your father is dying, Leah, and he wants to see you."

She hid her face in her hands, and he saw that she trembled.

"You shall not go unless you wish," he said.

"I must go," she replied, looking up at him in troubled despair. "Duty, conscience, honor, all tell me I must go; but I shrink from it. Oh, uncle, I hated that old life so much!"

"You need not think of it. You will never go back to it, Leah; and you shall not go to Southwood now unless you wish it."

"I must go," she said, more to herself than to him. "He is my father—I must go. Let me see what Hettie says, uncle. I have longed to speak of her. It eases my heart even to utter her name."

Silently the general placed the letter in her hands, and watched her face as she read.

Simple and pathetic were the words addressed by Hettie to the general. She seemed to think that the presence of death levelled all distinctions. She addressed him as "Dear Uncle," and went on to say that all through the summer her father had been very ill, but that lately he had been much worse. Ten days since the doctor had thought him dying. Since then he had been in a terrible state—dying, yet could not die. "Last night" he had called her to him, and told her that he could not die until he had seen Leah once more. "I cursed her, Hettie, when she left me," he had said, "and I want to take the curse from her. I cannot die until I have seen her. Write to the general, and ask him to bring her hither."

"I must go," Leah repeated, with white lips, turning to the general. "How horrible, uncle! My poor father did curse me, but they were only words. I have never been frightened about it; have you?"

"I have never liked even to think of it, my dear," he replied. "If any one was to blame in that terrible business, it was myself. I was too harsh, but I thought I was carrying out my dead sister's wish—that was all. Everything looks different in the presence of death; and yet I do not see how I could have acted otherwise. Will you go at once, Leah?"

"Do you really believe that he is dying?" she asked.

"Yes," replied the general; "I see no reason for doubting what Hettie says. I do not think he would ask to see you, Leah, if he had any chance of life."

"Then we must go at once," she said. "But was there ever anything so strange, uncle? It looks to me more than a coincidence that they should have lived at Southwood and we at Dene Abbey, so near them, yet never once have met. Is it fate or Providence?"

"Providence," replied the brave old soldier. "I do not believe in fate. I remember, when we were at Dene, hearing the duke speak of some worn-out old politician who lived at Southwood. I need hardly say that I never for one moment dreamed that it was Martin Ray."

Leah shrank back with a shudder at the sound of the name.

"Do not think me unfeeling, uncle," she said, "but I suffered so terribly in my early life that I cannot bear even to recall it. And to think that I have been so near Hettie and never knew it!"

Sir Arthur took out his watch and looked at it.

"We can catch the midday express," he said; "if we lose no time."

But Leah seemed hardly conscious of his words.

"Uncle," she said, "there was a time when Hettie and I had but one heart and one life between us. How strange that we were so near, with only the great green hill dividing us! I wonder what Hettie is like."

"She was a very sweet girl," said the general. "I wish she had chosen to come with us; but I admired then, as I do now, the faithful, tender heart. We must not lose time, Leah," he added.

But there was something in his niece's face that made him stop and draw her closer to him, that made him kiss her again and again, while he said,—

"You are the child of my heart, Leah; and you, who came with me, are the one I shall always love best in this world. Go now to your room to dress, and I will get ready at once. Stay—we must think of Basil. Write a note to him—one of the grooms shall take it over—and tell him that we have been sent for quite suddenly to the sick-bed of a relative, but that we expect to return in a day or two. Do not say where we are going. I will tell him the whole story on my return. I intended to tell him in the course

of a few days ; it is time he knew. How surprised he will be ! ”

So they parted ; but, for the first time since he had adopted Leah, there was in the general's mind a slight sense of disappointment—he could hardly tell why or wherefor. He would have felt happier had she shown more pity, more affection for Martin Ray, more anxiety to be with him ; and yet it was by his wish that she had left him. And in Leah's heart there was something like a feeling of resentment or jealousy. It seemed to her that he admired Hettie for staying with her father quite as much as he had admired her for coming away.

“ Perhaps,” said Leah to herself, “ he thinks Hettie the more noble of the two. He does not know. There are many ways of showing true nobility. I may find one some day.”

They reached the station just in time to catch the mid-day express that would enable them to arrive at Southwood long before night.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The sullen, gray light of a dull November sky fell over land and sea. The great hill that lay between the wide woodlands and Southwood looked brown and arid. The tide was high, and the huge waves boomed at the foot of the rocks. It was a chill, uncomfortable evening, with a cold wind blowing, the clouds falling lower and lower and threatening rain, a mist spreading from sea to land, clinging to the trees and hedges, and lying like soft clouds on the grass. There was no sound of a bird's song, no glimpse of a flower. Even the pretty little town of Southwood looked dull and gloomy. All around it was still and silent ex-

cept for the sullen roar of the waves and the wailing of the wind. All the sweet summer sounds and scents were dead; autumn reigned supreme.

Inside Martin Ray's cottage the scene was even more dreary than without. There is no room so sad as that in which a man has lain day after day, week after week, dying. When there is any hope in the nursing, it is not so dreary. There is the prospect of a pleasant termination; there is the looking forward to a time when all the paraphernalia of medicine will be done away with. But in this case there was no such hope. The long illness must end in death, and death was long in coming. It seemed at times as though nothing but the fierceness of hate kept life in Martin Ray; all that he had disliked, scorned, denounced in his youth and his strength, was more odious than ever to him now. More than once his doctor, looking at the stern, vindictive face, said to himself,—

“It is strong feeling that keeps him alive.”

That Hettie was a model nurse, as she had always been a model daughter, surprised no one. She never seemed to think of herself; she scarcely slept or rested, for the dying man was afraid to be left alone.

“You must never leave me, Hettie,” he said to her one day. “While you are in the room some of my old thoughts of the angels come to me; the moment you go I have a horrible fancy.”

“What is it?” she asked, touching the gray hair with her white fingers.

“When you leave the room, it fills with huge black dogs, their flaming eyes all fixed on me. I know it is fancy, because they only bark. They never touch me.”

She could only bend over him in loving pity, and murmur sweet words of comfort.

It was a terrible death-bed to Hettie. It would have been terrible to any girl, but it was more so to her, for she

was so sensitive, so spiritual, and the man dying there so sadly the reverse. She never forgot those long night-watches. It was horrible to turn from the lines of light that lay upon the sea to the gray head tossing and turning on the pillow, to the pallid lips whose utterances were at times so terrible

One night Martin called her to him.

"Send for Leah," he said; "I cursed her, and I cannot die."

He knew nothing of the beauty of patience, of the value of suffering; all that he knew was that his time was come, and yet he could not die.

The doctor had wondered at his prolonged life; and once—ah! would Hettie ever forget that terrible day?—the kind-hearted rector of Southwood had made his way to the sick man's room. Hettie never knew all that passed; but, when he was leaving the house, the good clergyman, with a shocked, horrified expression on his face, said,—

"Pray for your father. He wants all the mercy Heaven can give him. It is nothing but hatred that keeps him alive."

It was a lonely and terrible task, nursing that stern, cynical man. Hettie grew paler and thinner every day, Deep in her heart lay the secret of her lost love. She had put it out of sight; there would be time enough to think of it, and mourn over it, when her father was gone. Her mind and thoughts were so much engrossed with him that she did not dwell, as she would otherwise have done, on the fact that Leah would soon be with her—Leah, whom she had seen last in all the splendor of her magnificence.

The bleak November evening wore on, the gray head and the white face turned restlessly to and fro.

"Hettie, is she come yet," was the hoarse cry from Martin's lips. "Your sister deserted me, and I cursed her, and I want to take the curse away from her."

The devoted daughter who had been so true and faithful to him, who had refused rank and wealth, and had clung to him—of her he had nothing to say. He did not thank her for the sacrifice of so much of her fair young life to him; he accepted all as his due. But in death, as in life, his heart was with his beautiful Leah, whom he had meant to succeed him.

The dull, leaden hours passed on. He had no strength; for many hours he had taken no nourishment. He called Hettie to him.

“Does a righteous man’s blessing ever do any good?” he asked, in a thick, hoarse whisper.

“Yes,” she answered.

There was no time to stop and think, with those dying eyes fixed on her face.

“Then a bad man’s curse must do harm!” he moaned; and Hettie had no answer for him.

The evening deepened, silence crept over the land, and the shadow of death grew darker over the cottage. The grim king had drawn one step nearer, and Martin Ray had gathered all his energies together to do battle with him. He spoke to himself, not to Hettie.

“I will not die until I have seen Leah. What is it I have laid upon her? Something heavy, and black, and bitter. I must take it off. I will not die until she comes.”

In this the hour of her distress, friends and neighbors were good to Hettie. She was never left alone. But Martin Ray would have no strange women in his room—no nurses, no friendly helpers for him; and he gave no thought to the terror that his lonely child must feel.

As this world fell from him and the light of another grew clearer to him, he saw more distinctly the face of his lost daughter.

“Leah,” he cried, incessantly. “Leah, I want you

Leah, come to me! Leah, I cannot die! O, Heaven, I cannot die!"

Hettie had borne so much that she did not even cry out when he turned his angry, despairing, dying face to hers, and said,—

"Why did you not go? Since one must leave me, why did you not go and leave her with me?"

They were cruel words that her tender heart did not resent even then. She excused him even to herself, saying that he did not know what he was uttering, he did not understand. The cold hand of Death pressed him more closely. There was something of dignity in the way in which Martin Ray threw out his arms in despair.

"I will not die until I have seen Leah!" he cried. "I know—I have read—what the curse of a father brings to a child. She did not merit it. I must take it away. If I do not, her life will be spoiled. Hettie, give me something that I may live until she comes. I can hear horses galloping up the hill—I hear carriage-wheels! I hear the rush of the wind, the roar of the sea; I can hear—oh, Leah, make haste!"

But Hettie knew that no carriage could drive up to their cottage, and she tried her best to tranquillize him. His cries grew feebler; the incessant beating of his hand on the pillow stopped; there was a curious look on his face, gray, livid, and startled.

She knelt down by his side and took one of the numbed hands in hers, and laid it upon her head.

"I have loved you and served you faithfully, father," she said; "have you no blessing for me?"

The hand lay there like lead; the dying eyes looked into hers, and in them she read a terrible craving.

"I want Leah!" he muttered.

Suddenly the gray shades changed into darkness; and Hettie, seeing a new and terribly strange expression on

the worn face, rose from her knees with a startled cry. The women waiting below came running up; and as they did so the sound of some unusual stir below told that Sir Arthur and Leah had arrived. At the same moment something like a shudder passed over the dying man. The next instant a soul had gone forth to meet its Judge, and the Angel of Death sheathed his sword. Martin Ray was dead.

It was little wonder that Hettie, dazed and stunned, fell forward upon the quiet heart that was to love and to hate no more.

When she opened her eyes again, it was Leah who held her in her arms. One minute had passed, yet to Hettie it seemed many hours.

“Too late!” she heard some one say. Then Leah placed her gently in the chair, and went over to her father. she knelt down by his side, and a bitter cry came from her lips.

“I am too late,” she said—“too late! Oh, Hettie, he has never taken that cruel curse from me! I am too late!”

She took the cold, motionless hand in hers, and the silence in the room was broken only by her sobs. All the past, with its great dread, and her great horror of it, passed over her as she looked at his face—the face that would never smile or frown upon her again.

The general, watching the scene, assured himself that it was better father and daughter had not met. There could have been nothing pleasant in the words they would have exchanged; there would have been no real affection. Yet he had a lingering, half-supersitious wish that the terrible curse Martin Ray had hurled at Leah when they parted had been taken back.

“I am too late!” sobbed Leah. “Oh, Hettie, if I had but spoken to him once? I have often thought of him,

often been sorry ; and now I am too late ! Tell me if he spoke about me, if he said anything, if he wished to see me ? He was my own father, after all.

Sir Arthur withdrew, signing to the women to follow him. It was better to leave the sisters alone with their dead.

An hour afterward, when he went back, he found them locked in each other's arms, and he vowed to himself that they should not be parted again. Death had softened his heart, and had inclined it to the fair and devoted child of his dead sister. He resolved that, if she would, she should come away with him, and leave him no more.

CHAPTER XL.

DEATH has a majesty of its own ; and General Sir Arthur Hatton, who had shown scant courtesy to Martin Ray when alive, who had indeed detested him, now that he was dead, showed due honor and respect to his memory. He remained at the cottage with Leah and Hettie, he attended the funeral, and then the little council was held which decided the fate of so many.

There was no sensation when the quiet funeral procession wound its way down the green hill to the pretty churchyard. Few knew that the once popular "Voice of the People" was laid to rest here, that the man who had taught sedition and treason, whose voice had been as a flame of fire, slept his last long sleep in the quiet churchyard. The waves sang his requiem.

Martin Ray had left nothing but his name, In one sense his daughters were pleased that it was so. It disproved, they thought, most conclusively many of the

charges brought against him. He had not made money out of his starving admirers.

The funeral was over, and the general and his two nieces sat in the little parlor, where the blinds were still drawn and the gloom of death still lingered. Now that the last solemn rites had been performed, the general was anxious to return home; it was of no use spending even another hour in Southwood. But he wanted to take Hettie back with him.

At their first interview he had been so entirely captivated by Leah that he had not taken much notice of Hettie. He remembered only that she was fair, sweet, and winsome, and that although he was angry and irritated with her, he could not help admiring her faithful love and devotion to one of the most unprepossessing of men. He had taken her sister away, and had forbidden all mention of her name; but his anger had been against the girl's father, and not against herself. Now that her father was dead, it seemed to him the most natural thing in the world that he should adopt her.

He asked her to return with him, to live with him as his daughter, and not to leave them again. He liked her all the better because she was in no hurry to accept the invitation. The girl's heart was still sore with the old pain. She could not forget all at once that this man who was willing now to make her his adopted daughter had denounced her father in most unmeasured terms; she could not forget the scene in the gloomy little house in Manchester. In death, as in life, her heart was faithful to her father. Had he lived, she would have refused every overture from Sir Arthur; as it was, she was with difficulty persuaded even to listen to him.

On the day of the funeral he asked her what she intended to do. She told him that she should live on there at the cottage and continue her teaching. She could al-

ways earn enough money for her maintenance. Sir Arthur looked at her, so young, so fair, so refined, and he vowed to himself that it should never be. Then he talked to Leah. He would do nothing without consulting her. Her eyes filled with tears when she heard of his generous proposal.

"It is the only thing wanting to make my life perfectly happy," she said. "I love Hettie so dearly! No one will ever know what it cost me to leave her."

Yet it did not seem sure that Hettie would consent. To live in grand houses, to wear costly jewels and rich dresses, to have every luxury that the world can give, was not much to Hettie. The world could really give her nothing, for she knew it had nothing to give. The general's offer would have been no temptation to her but for her great love for Leah. Sir Arthur was perfectly frank.

"Leah," he said, "I look upon as my adopted child, as my own daughter. From the moment she turned to me, acknowledging her mother's wish—from that moment she has been to me my own. You, Hettie, can never take her place, nor even stand near her in my affections!"

To which Hettie, with a slight flush on her fair face, said that she had not the least wish to rival Leah, that she had clung to her father, and that, if the choice were offered to her again, she should do the same thing.

Sir Arthur was not in the least offended at her words; he seemed to like her all the better for them. He kissed her, and her face flushed a little at his caress.

"Come with me, Hettie," he said. "You shall be my daughter. Leah is my heiress; but I will give you a fortune."

"I do not wish any fortune," she answered, simply; "I have no use for money. But I do want Leah, I would be Leah's maid in order that I might be near her."

And Sir Arthur thought, as he saw the two sisters em-

brace each other, that it would be a thousand pities ever to part them again. They were in perfect contrast, yet there was something similar in the two faces. Leah's was proud, Hettie's was tender. Leah was brilliant with the dark beauty of her face, the statuesque grace of her magnificent neck and shoulders; Hettie was all that was most sweet and winsome. Men would probably admire Leah more, but love Hettie best.

Sir Arthur wished with all his heart that his sister had lived, that she might have seen these two fair women. How proud she would have been of them! How she would have loved them! And now they were both alone in the world and quite dependent on him. In her way, Hettie was as deserving as Leah. He would give her a handsome fortune; he could do that without injury to Leah's interests. She might marry well; or, when Leah had married Sir Basil, this girl, who had been so true and so loving to her father, might prove a comfort to him. Had it been the general's wish alone to make her home at Brentwood, Hettie would have refused; but she could refuse nothing to the beloved sister whom she had loved so well and had lost so long.

The general said all he had to say, and then went out to smoke a cigar by the sea-wall where Martin Ray and Sir Basil had often stood, leaving the sisters to finish the debate alone. When he had gone, golden-haired Hettie went up to her stately sister.

"Oh, Leah," she cried, "is there no other way in which we could be together? After all he said to our poor father I feel that I shall hate to live under his roof and eat his bread. If you would come and live with me, I would work so hard to keep you, and you should never work at all."

Leah laughed. How little this good sister of hers knew

to what luxury she was accustomed! She kissed the sweet face.

"You must not forget, Hettie," she said, "all about our mother. Remember that Sir Arthur represents her. If she were living, if she could speak to us, I am quite sure that she would tell us both that he stood in her place. I can never leave him. Instead of asking me to do that, make up your mind to come and live with me. He is so kind; we shall be very happy. Oh, Hettie, can you understand how much I have always wanted you?"

"Yes, I can, for I was never happy without you."

And then Hettie told her sister how she had watched Harbury House, and how she had seen her once at the theatre, and how she had purchased from the footman the bouquet that she had held in her hands.

Leah's face softened and brightened.

"Did you really love me so much?" she asked. "I wish I had known you were so near to me, Hettie; I should have risked a great deal to speak to you. How strange we should be parted as we were! I could not have stayed. I could never have been what my father desired. Oh, Hettie, do as Sir Arthur wishes—come home with us! You must have suffered terribly. I will make it all up to you." She caressed the golden head that lay upon her breast; she kissed the flower-like face. "You are so fair, Hettie," she said "so graceful, so sweet! I long to see you dressed in handsome silks and laces. You will be a queen of beauty. I know few women in London so fair as you."

"I do not care for that; I want only to be near you, Leah, where I can see you in the morning and at night, where I can listen to your voice and hear what people say of you. I could never live away from you again, now that I have found you, Leah."

"There is no need for it, Hettie, if you will but listen to reason." said Leah.

It was touching to see those two fair women, the lovely faces so near together, the slender arms entwined, the dark head bending over the fair one. Hettie looked up at Leah.

"I should not like," she said, "to interfere with your prospects, Leah. You are Sir Arthur's heiress, and it is quite right. I would much sooner have shared my father's poverty than my uncle's wealth. I had my choice, and it does not seem fair for me to interfere with you."

"Our uncle is rich enough, Hettie darling, to adopt half a dozen nieces," her sister replied, tranquilly. "There can be no question of interference with me. Even if there were, and I had to share my fortune with you, believe me, I should be only too happy. You are more to me than any money, Hettie. I imagine that, because you saw me leave a poor father and transfer my affections to a rich uncle, you argue I love money. You are wrong. Had my uncle been poor and my father rich, I should have done just the same, I do not want to speak of it; but it was the teaching, the life that I disliked. I would have done anything to escape from it. It seems to me, Hettie, that Heaven has befriended us. Last year we had no hope, no thought of ever seeing each other again; now we are offered the same home if you, Hettie, will but lower your pride. I am sure that, if you knew Sir Arthur, you would like him. He has the bravest, truest heart, the noblest soul——"

"He hated my father," interrupted Hettie, "and he took you from me."

"I went of my own free will," said Leah. "I should have run away, Hettie, if I had not accepted his offer; and, remember, it was not my father, but his teaching and his belief, that Sir Arthur hated. O, Hettie! now that we

have found each other, do not let us part! I will bury the past; you do the same. We are alone in the world; let us live for each other. There is nothing but pride between us. Hettie, if you love me, you will let that pride die."

"It is not pride, Leah. Do you not understand? It seems to me that if I go to Sir Arthur, I am disloyal to my father."

"That is only a fancy—a morbid fancy. Your path seems to me clear enough."

"But, Leah"—and the blue eyes anxiously sought the dark ones—"I have not had your advantages. I do not see how I can. You and I are quite different now. You are a lady of fashion and rank; I am only a poor music teacher."

"What nonsense, Hettie! We are sisters! Can anything undo that? If you come to regard the matter in its true light, which of us two has led the nobler life—you or I? If there is any unworthiness, it is on my side, not on yours. My pretty Hettie, for months after I had left you, I dreamed of those golden ripples of hair. How strange it was—our uncle coming so suddenly and putting before us so terrible a choice!"

"I have never repented mine," said Hettie.

"Nor have I mine," declared Leah. "But now the time has come when we may be happy together, if you are willing Hettie."

She prevailed at length, but it was after a long struggle. Hettie promised to make her home with Sir Arthur and her sister; and Leah knew that she would keep her word.

It was arranged that they should go first to London, where a fitting *trousseau* and mourning could be provided; and the two sisters left Southwood with their hearts full of love for each other, but each keeping her secret. Leah

had not told Hettie of her passionate love, her approaching marriage, or the pain which weighed at times so heavily upon her ; nor did Hettie tell Leah of that episode in her life which was to her like a fair sweet dream.

CHAPTER XLI.

THERE was a long animated discussion between the general and Hettie. She was so firmly resolved not to relinquish her name, and Sir Arthur was as fully determined that the name of Ray should never be heard in his house. It was Leah who decided the matter. She represented to Hettie that, if she lived in her uncle's house, if she accepted a fortune at his hands, she was bound in honor to accept it on his conditions. Again Hettie would have held out, and have left him ; but Leah prevailed. Hettie could not resist her "for my sake." She could refuse nothing to the beloved sister from whom she had been parted so long.

There was nothing of obstinacy in the tender heart of Hettie, but there was always a quick loving sense that she must do nothing that would seem disloyal to the dead. Had she met the brave, simple old soldier elsewhere, had he been any one except her uncle, she would have liked him at once ; but between her and Sir Arthur stood the memory of the father whom she had loved and he had denounced.

The more the general saw of Hettie the more he liked her. He thought she was possessed of an extraordinary combination of brilliant qualities. She was loving, gentle and tender of heart, without being weak and undecided ; she was firm and self-reliant, without obstinacy. She lack-

ed the touch of genius which Leah had, but she was the very ideal of true womanhood. Every hour the general grew more charmed with her. There was no restlessness, no passion in her fair, calm face.

"Any one on seeing you would think, my dear," said the general to her, "that you had gone through a great deal of trouble."

"Why?" she asked, with a smile—they were driving then from the station home to Brentwood.

"I should be puzzled, Hettie, to say why; but your eyes have a strangely calm expression."

Leah's dark eyes were fixed anxiously on her. Hettie's thoughts went back to the hour when, under the twinkling stars, she had bidden her lover good-by—back to that pain which had been so great that it had stunned her. Now she would have time to realize it all.

The lovely face grew a shade paler as she answered:

"My life has been like all other lives, I suppose, uncle," she replied, evasively.

"All the happiness has to come," interrupted Leah.

And the general, looking at the fair face, wondered whether, if Hettie had come to him first, he would have loved her best, at present he thought that he should never in this world care for any one as he did for his beautiful Leah.

They had been two days in London, and had been so incessantly occupied that there had been but few opportunities for conversation,

The general was strictly just. Leah was his heiress; for her there were rare jewels, Indian spoils, all that was most costly and magnificent. For Hettie there was position, and there was luxury, but her fortune would by no means be so extensive. Sir Arthur had soon made up his mind as to what he would be able to give Hettie for her dower; and the interest on it was to be her own, to

spend as she liked. All these arrangements were made in detail during their stay in London. It was evident to all who knew them that the general did not intend the two sisters to be on an equal footing. Leah was to be mistress and heiress; Hettie, the newcomer, was to be subordinate to her. It was evident to all that he loved Leah best.

Before they left London for Brentwood a better understanding was arrived at between Hettie and her uncle. They were alike in many respects—in simple honesty and sincerity, in a certain unworldliness of character that was beautiful in itself, in a certain sense of honor and loyalty that both held most sacred. When Hettie recovered her spirits, and began to talk more freely to the general, he was charmed with her sweet, quaint wisdom; she knew so much, she was so helpful, so self-reliant, and she excused herself so simply when he taxed her with much learning or scholarship. She had been obliged to read, she said, in order to converse with her father. Such was the love this girl had borne him, so tender, so devoted so true, that the general could not forbid all mention of his name; and, though Hettie seldom referred to her father, when she did so she was listened to in silence, if not with respect.

Leah seemed much happier. Her love and her lover were to her far too sacred to be lightly discussed as they drove from shop to shop in search of elegancies and novelties in the way of dress.

“Hettie,” she said, one morning, “I cannot tell you much while we are here, amid the noise and bustle of London, but when we reach Brentwood I shall have something to say to you.”

In the mean time, they were most happy together. Leah was far too noble for jealousy. She delighted to see her uncle lavish kindness, valuable presents, and attentions on Hettie. She was far more pleased than when

the like were lavished on herself; and Sir Arthur was proud of her generosity. During these ten days she had heard repeatedly from Sir Basil. Why she said nothing about him she could scarcely have explained, except on the ground that she intended to tell Hettie all the story of her love when they were at Brentwood. The general had said to her one day, that it would be better for her to say nothing of Hettie to Sir Basil at present; she could tell him, however, that he would find another inmate at Brentwood, one whom he would be compelled to like very much, and that Sir Arthur had a communication to make to him when they met again.

“He will think I am married,” laughed the general. “How surprised he will be!”

“Uncle,” asked Leah suddenly, “do you think that Basil will like Hettie?”

He looked at her uneasily for a short time, and then he replied,—

“I should think that he is sure to like her. I do not see how he can help it. The difference between you two sisters is this—you take one’s heart by storm; Hettie creeps into it unawares.”

“The real question,” laughed Leah, “is, which is likely to remain the longer?”

“You would. Loving you, Leah, would be a fever which no man could shake off. Make yourself quite easy about that. Basil is sure to like Hettie.”

But for a few minutes after he had spoken the words the general did not seem quite like himself.

They returned to Brentwood; but Sir Basil was not there to meet them. He had gone to Glasgow on some sudden and unforeseen business, and was uncertain as to the precise day of his return. He had written to Leah, and professed to be most curious about the “new inmate” and the communication that Sir Arthur had to make. It

was a very kind, affectionate letter, and Leah read it with a flush on her face and tears in her eyes. She kissed it when she had mastered every word in it, and thought, with a glow of warmth in her heart, what a happy life lay before them. And Basil would be sure to like Hettie. Had not her uncle said so?—and he was clear of sight and keen of judgment. She had no fear; the happy future for which she had longed and hoped was sure to be hers. What of that curse, the memory of which had haunted her and frightened her? It meant nothing; it could mean nothing; and after all, her father had wished every word unsaid. Why need the memory of it pain her now? There came to her mind a sudden resolution; she would try to atone to her father by double love and goodness to Hettie. She determined that when they reached Brentwood she would tell Hettie her love-story before she saw Basil, and afterward they would be such good friends, such dear friends.

The weather had changed on the day they left London for Brentwood. There was something like a gleam of warmth and brightness in the winter sun; the air was clear, the sky blue.

Leah was proud of Brentwood. She saw Hettie's fair face flush and her eyes open wide as they drove through the magnificent avenue, and the first view of the grand old mansion burst upon them.

"Is that Brentwood?" she asked. "O, Leah! I never thought it was like that. It is a palace!"

"There is many a palace not half so beautiful," said the general.

But Hettie was thinking that Leah would one day be mistress of it, and her wonder grew. She was honestly pleased that Leah, and not herself was to be so favored.

"I should not know what to do with such wealth," she thought to herself, and her eyes wandered from the

grand old mansion to the beautiful face of her stately sister. What a perfect queen she would make for that perfect home!

She liked the general more because of his warm welcome to her. He kissed her, and bade her welcome to Brentwood, his heart full of honest emotion, his eyes full of tears. Surely, if the little sister whom he had loved and lost years before, knew how fully he had carried out her wishes, she would be pleased with him.

To Leah's eyes Brentwood had never looked so beautiful as it did in the gold and gray of this November day. She was supremely happy. She had chosen her sister's rooms—they were to be next to her own—and they had been prettily arranged for her. Leah showed her all over the house—the music-room, with its magnificent carvings; the grand picture gallery, with its fine collection of paintings; the large drawing-room, with its beautiful decorations; and whenever Hettie interrupted her sister, it was to say how well suited she was to the home over which she was to reign as mistress.

"We will go through the grounds and gardens tomorrow," said Leah. "I am tired now."

"What would my father have thought of all this splendor, Leah?" remarked Hettie, wonderingly.

"He would have enjoyed it," was the quiet reply; and Hettie said no more.

It was late that night before either sister slept—the happiness of being together was so intense.

"It is like reaching a safe harbor after sailing on a stormy sea," thought Leah. But she did not hear "the moaning of the harbor bar."

CHAPTER XLII.

A CLEAR frosty day in November, the first after Hettie's arrival at Brentwood, the sun shining brightly and the crisp air full of new life. Leah said that the lovely weather was sent for her sister's benefit, that she might see Brentwood at its best.

Hettie was made to feel perfectly at home. Her costly outfit was all packed away in the fine old oaken wardrobes; she had arranged her rooms according to her own idea of what was best, and her favorite books were all in their places. The sisters had enjoyed making these arrangements, and the general was happier than he had ever been in his life before. He rejoiced when he heard the sound of the two voices. The happy, sunny laughter was music in his ears; and, after a day's shooting, he was never so happy in the drawing-room, when dinner was over, as when comparing the two faces, each so beautiful in its own way.

The general and his nieces were at breakfast together, and an argument arose as to whether three in a family, or in ordinary life, were not better than two. Hettie solved the question at once,—

“Two persons may have the same ideas, the same opinions and thought, and thus may agree perfectly; but no three persons could possibly be alike. I should think, uncle,” she continued, gayly, “that in our case it would be Leah and yourself who would agree about everything, and I who should naturally oppose both.”

By this time Sir Arthur and his niece were close friends. They paid due respect and did homage to the fine and noble qualities they saw in each other. Hettie

had all the gentle, graceful tact of a well-bred, refined gentlewoman; she never touched on topics which she knew annoyed Sir Arthur or irritated him. Once having become friends, they could have lived together forever without one word or shadow of disagreement. Sir Arthur realized that his happiness was decidedly increased. He looked forward with pleasure to the fact that Hettie would be always with them. At first, remembering the long and pleasant conversations that he had had with Leah, he had fancied the new-comer might be in the way. He found that it was just the reverse—indeed that she added to their happiness.

The general had determined that, as soon as they were settled, he would give a series of entertainments, and that Hettie should be introduced to the great world. There need be no concealment, no mystery; she was Leah's sister, and she had been living with a relative who now was dead. He was still desirous, if it could be managed, that it should not be known to the world in general that they were the daughters of Martin Ray.

"I must have a long talk with Leah this morning," he said to himself, "and later on I must see Basil. I have much to say to him; but the chances are that he will not return to-day. I must wait."

When breakfast was over, the general went to his study, where the *Times* and various other newspapers awaited him. There was no fear of his meeting with any more strong articles denouncing Martin Ray. He could open a newspaper now without hesitation. He was soon engrossed in some article on British rule in India, while the two sisters went out of doors. The morning was too bright and too sunny to be lost.

"I will show you some of my favorite nooks, Hettie," said Leah. "I like this terrace better than any other part. See what a magnificent view there is of hill and

dale, stream and meadow, rich farm-land and picturesque woods. All that belongs to my uncle."

"And will one day belong to you, Leah," returned her sister. "Ah! my darling, you were born to be a great lady! Nothing else would have suited you."

"I should like it all the better if you were to share it," she said, quickly; and Hettie knew that she was speaking sincerely.

"I was never intended to be a great lady," declared Hettie. "If I had had my choice in life, I should have preferred a pretty home, neither very luxurious nor very poor—a house among flowers and trees—and some one to love me—to love me very much, more than all the world. I envy no one wealth or fortune or fame, but I envy every one who is blessed with love."

For a moment the two girls looked at each other in silence, and then Leah spoke,—

"Come to the end of the terrace, Hettie," she said; "from that trellis-work you will see all down the avenue and drive. Sit down in this sunny nook and let us talk here. The morning is not too cold. Do you see all this tangle of faded green and dried branches?"

"Yes," replied Hettie, wondering.

"In the summer that presents the finest show of passion-flowers in England; they grow all over the trellis-work, and even spread down to the terrace below. They are of all colors—brown, purple and the one I love best, rich scarlet; they spread like a great vine. Do you like passion-flowers, Hettie?"

"Yes, but not so well as roses and lilies. They are too sad and too mystical for me."

"And I like them best of any flowers. I wonder, Hettie, what there is in me which inclines me always to like what is sad better than what is bright and happy? I wonder if ever I should be perfectly happy?"

“Are you not perfectly happy now, Leah—so beautiful, so rich, so gifted, so beloved?”

Leah, thinking of the shadow that she saw at times on her lover's face, answered,—

“No, not perfectly. I do not know why. I have not a tangible sorrow, I have not even a very defined shadow of trouble; yet I could not from my heart say that I am perfectly happy.”

“How strange!” said simple Hettie. “Perhaps, Leah, you have one of those natures that nothing on earth can render content. They are so noble, so lofty, the little loves and little cares of this world do not satisfy them, and never will.”

“How strange it seems to me to hear you, Hettie, talk in that fashion!” said Leah, with a smile; but she sighed as she thought that, if Basil loved her with the same worshipping love she gave to him, she would be perfectly happy.

“I have read of people,” continued Hettie, “who are never quite happy, who always want something better than they have, who are filled with an indefinite longing, yet who have no idea what they long for. Do you know, Leah, that even when you were quite a child I noticed something in your face—a story, a shadow, a something quite different from the expression in other faces. You have it now—a shadow in your eyes. I cannot express in words just what I mean. You always looked restless, as though you were expecting something which never came.”

“I ought not to have that now,” said Leah, “for I have found what I wanted—that for which I hungered.”

“Have you, Leah?”—and the blue eyes looked wistfully into the dark ones, “I have thought so.”

“I brought you here, Hettie, to tell you about it. I would not tell you until I could show you the very spot where I saw him first. I want to tell you, Hettie, because you must love him too. I was sitting here one lovely

summer morning, a morning that stands quite apart from the rest of my life. The sun was shining; the river in the distance there was like a line of silver; the sweet morning air stirred the leaves and flowers; the exquisite passion-flowers were all in bloom, and I stood here among them, looking over this beautiful scene that has scarcely an equal. In the distance I saw my uncle walking up the avenue with a stranger. I looked in the stranger's face and met my fate. Do you understand a swift, keen, subtle love like that, Hettie?

"Yes," was the whispered reply.

"He came on my life as the sun breaks upon the flowers—suddenly, swiftly—and changed it all. What you say of me is quite true, Hettie; I had a restless fever on me. My life was all longing—nothing satisfied or contented me; but when I saw him, an exquisite calm came over me, like the full shining of the noonday sun on a broad, quiet sea. My life grew suddenly complete. Ah, Hettie, how good it is to be able to talk to you! I had always thought that I should meet my lover in this way—that some day I should come face to face with him, and recognize him. I did so. You will think me strange, I am afraid Hettie; but, before I had spoken to him, I had said to myself, 'This is my love come from land or sea.' I stood just where you are sitting, Hettie, and I had a cluster of passion flowers in my hand. A great love is like a great wave of the sea; it sweeps over all before it, and bears everything away. A wave of love swept over me. I believe that, had any one asked me, I could not have told my own name."

Hettie's fair face grew paler and more wistful.

"Ah! Leah," said she, "such a great love could never be a happy one; it could not end happily!"

Leah smiled, a gentle, tender smile, which spread from her eyes to her lips.

"In most cases I grant that that is the case," she replied; "but in mine—mine—— Ah! Heaven be thanked, mine is a happy love, and will have a happy ending! I was going to tell you, Hettie, that we shall be married soon."

Hettie threw her arms around her sister's neck and kissed the expressive face.

"Is it true? I am so glad—O, Leah! I am so glad; for, of all things in the world, love is best! I am so glad! Then I have found you only to lose you again?"

"You will never lose me, nor shall I lose you," said Leah, "I am sure that you will love him, first for my sake, then for his own; he is so noble, so good. Ah! Hettie, I see such a happy life stretching out before me! I can hardly speak of it without tears;" and into the dark eyes came a mist, while the proud curves of the beautiful mouth softened. "We are like two sisters in a fairy tale," she continued. "How strange, Hettie, that we should be together again! I have told you my little love story; tell me yours, if you have one."

Over the fair face of the younger girl there fell a shadow

"Mine is not like yours;" she said. "It was not a great love that came to me all at once; it crept into my heart little by little, and was there before I knew anything about it; and then, when I found it, I knew that it must die. It has no happy ending, my love story. Yours will end in marriage; mine has ended in parting and sorrow."

"Is it so, Hettie? I am grieved. How was it? Will this change in your life make any difference?"

"No; it was all over, dead and buried, before the change came. Nothing can make any difference. There never was any hope. We did not know, either of us; it came upon us unconsciously,"

"Hettie," whispered Leah, "will you tell me about it?"

Not unless you like—not if it distresses you. But, if I knew, perhaps I could help you.”

“I should like to tell you, Leah; but I have always been afraid it would distress you.”

“Never mind that, Hettie; tell me about it. No one can understand it better than I.”

“There is so little to tell,” replied Hettie, “that I am almost ashamed to call it a love-story. It is more like a dream, only it ended more quickly than most dreams do.” As she spoke her eyes, with a far-away look, were fixed on the winding river and the dark masses of wood. “I was so busy all my life, Leah,” she said, “that I had no time to think about love. I do not believe that during the last two years of my father’s life I had one leisure hour. Yet within me must have been the longing for love and a loving heart. Quite by accident I met some one. He came to see my father; and I and my father liked him. We saw each other not only every day, but sometimes twice in the day. My life was so hard, and he was so kind to me, that I looked forward to seeing him as the only gleam of happiness I had. When he went away, he left the music of his voice with me. Ah, Leah, I was mad! All love is madness. I grew to love him with my whole heart, and did not know it. When I closed my eyes at night, it was to dream of him; when I opened them in the daylight, it was to see his face. One day he came to say good-by to me. He was pale as death, and his voice shook with pain. ‘I must go,’ he said to me; but I—oh, Leah, how could I do it?—I clung to his arm. We were both standing watching the waves break upon the shore, and I cried to him not to go. My father was ill and my life so gloomy; I felt that, if he went away, I must die, I could not live. He seemed sadly distressed. ‘I cannot stay with you,’ he said; ‘it is impossible.’ I should not like to tell any one but you, Leah. I clung to him, still weeping. He

was all the world to me—all the world. ‘Stay with me—at least until my father is better, and the darkest hour of my trouble is past.’ Oh, Leah, much as I love you, I am ashamed to tell you the rest!”

Hettie buried her face in her hands and wept aloud; while Leah wondered why her fate should be so much better, brighter, and happier than her sister’s.

CHAPTER XLIII.

IT was some comfort to Hettie to have her tears kissed away, to feel loving hands take hers, and loving lips touch her forehead.

“Tell me all about it, dear, and then we will forget it. I will try all I can for the remainder of your life and mine to make you happy, and to atone to you for this unhappy love.”

“I have so little to tell you,” said Hettie, “and I am so much ashamed of it. I asked him to stay just a little with me, but he said ‘No,’ he must go; and I asked him why. It all came out then, Leah. He did love me; he loved me with all his heart. Ah me, if you could have seen his face—the sorrow on it which no words could describe. He did love me—living and dying, it will comfort me to remember that. I shall never know love again; but he loved me; there was love unutterable in his eyes when he looked at me. Only think, Leah, I have had but ten minutes’ real happiness in my life, and that was when I first found out that he loved me—before I knew what stood between us. Leah, the great sea lay before us; the wind brought the brine of the ocean and the fragrance from the meadows. I would go through a lifetime of tor-

ture for one such hour again. He told me why he must go. What, of all the reasons in the world, should you think it was?"

"Was it that he was rich and you were poor, Hettie?" asked Leah.

"No; he cared nothing about that."

"Was it"—and Leah lowered her voice—"anything about our father, Hettie?"

"No; he liked my father; he respected his peculiar ideas, and—would you believe it, Leah?—came often to discuss matters with him. No, it was nothing about my father. You would never guess, Leah; it is too cruel to guess. He did love me; and he told me that because he loved me he must go away and never see my face again. Even while he said it all his great love was shining in his eyes. And the reason was this—that he was engaged to marry some one whom I am sure he did not love. He told me that a certain train of circumstances had led to his engagement, and that he himself, mistaking the friendly, kindly admiration he had for the lady for love, had asked her to be his wife. Ah, Leah, how much unhappy love there is in the world! He told me that this girl whom he was engaged to marry would die if he left her, and that unknown to himself he had learned to love me with all his heart; it was for that reason—it was because he loved me and could not ask me to be his wife—that we parted, never in this world to meet again."

"What a sad story, Hettie!" cried Leah.

If she had but known, if she had but guessed who it was that had thus loved Hettie, she might have died then and there.

"You must not think," said Hettie, "that he was wanting in loyalty and honor; he was engaged, promised, pledged to this other, and he had no thought of loving me. Neither of us knew or thought of it until all at once the

truth came upon us like a great blinding light; then honor told him that he must go."

"I think he was cruel to you, Hettie," said Leah, all unconscious whom she was judging.

"No; he did not intend to be cruel; he did not know. It came on us all at once, just as when people think they are wading through a shallow brook and suddenly find themselves in a deep stream. He could never have been cruel; he was the most gentle, the most chivalrous——"

"He should have thought more of the danger that you ran; the fact that you were lonely and friendless should have made him all the more cautious for you."

"I do not think that love often reasons," said Hettie. "There was not much harm done."

"Only two lives spoiled," put in Leah, sadly.

"I will not call mine spoiled," said Hettie. "I would rather have loved him, and loved him unhappily, than have been the beloved wife of any other man. Mine will be a life apart; but I will not call it spoiled. That night, Leah, he kissed me. No man had kissed me before; no man shall ever kiss me again. On that night, Leah, just for one minute, he took me in his arms and held me there; and until I die no arms shall clasp me again. I suffer pain; yet even my pain is sweet and pleasant to me. Sometimes I think that we quiet women can suffer deeper pain than women of more passionate natures. That other, whom my love will marry, said she should die if she lost him. I love him as much, but it will not kill me."

"Would you wish that it might, Hettie?" asked Leah.

"No. I love you, and I shall find out many pleasures in life; but I shall be true as steel to my lost love. I wish you could have seen him, Leah. To have loved one such, even if unhappily, is joy enough for a lifetime. I have told you my love story, dear, and you will now know why as I go through life, all men will be to me but as shadows."

"I hope it will not be so, Hettie. As the years go on you will forget this incident, which is but a dream, and meet with some one who will make you happy."

Hettie shook her golden head. Could any other man have such a face as the man who had kissed her by the sea? Could any one ever replace him? She laughed the idea to scorn.

"How strange, Leah," she said, "that we two sisters have a fate so different! To you—mind, darling I do not envy you—I am not even ever so slightly jealous of you—to you everything has come, even love."

"You forget one thing," remarked Leah. "You had your father's blessing. I had his curse; although no harm has followed it, still it lies upon me."

"I have wondered," said Hettie, with a sad smile, "whether it has not fallen on me by mistake."

"No, I am quite sure it has not," declared Leah, warmly. "You deserve every blessing. My life is not finished; it may overtake me yet"—words which she afterwards remembered as prophetic.

Just at that moment the general came down the terrace to them.

"In your favorite spot, Leah?" he said. "Do you know how long you girls have been talking? More than an hour. What is it about? Neither bonnets nor lovers, of that I am sure."

Neither sister spoke; and then Sir Arthur saw that each face was pale and grave. He thought to himself that they had probably been speaking of their father.

"Leah, I want you," he said. "I will not keep you very long; but I should like to talk to you before Basil comes."

Hettie heard the name, and repeated it to herself. "Basil?" It was an unusual name, and one she had hardly heard before.

“That must be Leah’s lover,” she said. “Happy Leah! Heaven bless her!”

No knight would ride down the avenue to woo her. She wondered if many women gave their lives for love.

“Come to the library, Leah,” said the general. “I like bracing, clear, frosty weather like this; but I felt a twinge in my right arm this morning, and I must not neglect it.” Seeing that Hettie looked at him inquiringly, he continued: “An old wound is like an old friend. I received a sword-cut on this arm more than twenty years ago, and sometimes on very cold days it teases me even now; the moral of which is that it is easier to give a wound than to cure a wound. Do not leave your cozy corner, Hettie; I will send Leah back to you in ten minutes.”

As they walked down the terrace together, Hettie wondered if the time would ever come when they would discuss matters before her, if she would ever be really one of themselves, if, when Leah was married, she would take her place in her uncle’s confidence.

Not caring to watch Leah and her uncle, Hettie looked down the avenue, and saw a gentleman walking up to the house. She drew back, thinking that it was some visitor for the general, and the next minute had forgotten all about the occurrence.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SIR BASIL walked slowly up the avenue; he looked tired and pale—not at all like a gay bridegroom. Shadows in his eyes told of sleepless nights, of weary days, of sad thoughts. Yet he had in his manner something of the man who has fought a good fight and has overcome. He re-

flected, as he walked between the long lines of leafless trees, that after all he was more fortunate than many men. He had known the rapture of true love, even though it had lasted so short a time. Many men lived and died without ever knowing one such hour as had fallen to his lot by the sweet southern sea. The glow of it, the warmth of it, would last him through life, even through the chill of long years.

How well he remembered the first morning that he came to Brentwood, and the beautiful face shining in the midst of the passion-flowers! What a fatal morning it had been for him! He could recall the peculiar expression of Leah's face the first moment her eyes met his; and she had told him since, that in that first moment she had loved him. How loving and faithful she had been to him ever since! How many men would give their lives for the love she lavished on him—and he was so cold! He made many good resolutions as he walked up the avenue, where the November sun shone brightly through the bare branches. He would be more loving to her. Never again should his thoughts rove to the fair, pale face that had lain on his breast for five minutes, never to lie there again. He would forget it, and think of the beautiful face that had smiles only for him. He would be loving and loyal to her, and in time Heaven would send him peace. No man was either great or wise, or truly noble until he had suffered pain. It was the lot of every man; some live without pleasure, happiness, or love, but no one lives without pain.

“I will make it all up to her,” he thought; and then through the leafless trees he saw the terraces and the pretty balustrade where the great clusters of passion-flowers grew in summer—the very spot in which he had first seen her; and, unless he was mistaken, she was there now. Yes, he could see the folds of a long black dress on the white stone of the terrace; he could see one white hand

lying idly on the ledge where the brown tendrils looked withered and dead. She was surely there; she had told him she loved that spot best, because it was there she had seen him first. She was looking toward the house. He would go to her noiselessly and take her in his arms; he would kiss her and say loving words to her.

He went quietly up the great white steps, where the marble statues stood and the huge vases were filled with evergreens, round the great clusters of almond-trees to the corner that Leah loved best. He smiled to himself. Ah, he was not mistaken!

A tall, slender figure stood there, with a black dress trailing on the steps, a white hand resting on the balustrade. He could not see her face or head, for she was looking toward the house. Should he call her name? If he uttered but one word, she would turn to him with her face all bright with glad and happy love. No; he would go up to her and clasp her in his arms and kiss her, while he made her guess who he was.

One arm was half round her, and his dark handsome head bent over her before he perceived that the beautiful masses of hair were of gold. The next moment the fair face seemed to flash into his own, a cry came from the pale lips, a great shock overwhelmed them.

There was a terrible moment of fear and pain, of bewilderment and surprise, followed by a deep silence that was full of agony. Then faintly from him came the name "Hettie!"—so tremulously spoken that it was like a sigh.

"Hettie," he repeated, "is it you?"

She shrank back with a little wailing cry, which seemed to go straight to his heart.

Could it be Hettie? Was that the golden head which had lain for a few happy minutes on his breast? Was that the fair pale face which he had covered with kisses

and tears? Could it be the girl whom he had left by the sea, never to meet again?

"It is really Hettie," he said; and he laid his hand upon hers, as though he half fancied she would melt into thin air. "I cannot trust my own eyes. Speak one word to me. Are you really Hettie Ray?"

He had seen her last in her homely dress, plainly made of plain material, in the midst of her homely surroundings. Now she stood arrayed in costly silk, with great folds of crape, with an air of distinction and elegance, a certain subtle change—more fair and lovely than ever in his eyes—Hettie still, but a very different Hettie from the simply-dressed maiden he had known at Southwood.

She raised her blue eyes and looked at him.

"Do you not know me?" she said reproachfully. "Surely I am Hettie Ray, just as surely as I am the most miserable girl in the wide world."

"Hettie, Hettie what brought you here?" He made no attempt to caress her. He drew back from her, and looked at her with wild, troubled eyes. "What brought you here?" he repeated. "I have tried my best; I have fought a fiercer fight with my heart than any man ever fought; and now, when I had begun to hope for peace, you rise from the very ground, as it were before me. Hettie, in Heaven's name, tell me what brings you here?"

The face before him was miserable enough; there was the very anguish of woe in the blue eyes.

"Do you not know," she said slowly, "who I am?"

"You are Hettie Ray," he replied.

"Alas, alas!" she cried, wringing her hands. "I begin to see now; I begin to understand. What have I done that Heaven should punish me so? What have I done?"

"Hettie," he said, gently, "I do not understand. What is the matter?"

“Who are you?” she cried. She stood before him, with her hands clasped, her pale face raised, hanging as it were on the words that were to fall from his lips. “Who are you?” she repeated. “Do not keep me in suspense. Tell me quickly.”

Still no glimmer of the truth came to him. He wondered at the intense anxiety of her manner.

“I forgot,” he said; “you never knew my name. I am Sir Basil Carlton of Glen.”

She repeated the words after him, her white lips trembling. They brought no memory to her.

“Sir Basil Carlton!” she repeated. “I do not mean that. Who are you? Tell me for Heaven’s sake, are you Leah’s *fiance*? They said he was coming to-day. Heaven cannot be so cruel—you are not Leah’s *fiance*!”

“I am Leah’s lover, my poor darling,” he said, sadly.

“And she loves you so! Oh! how has it happened? We were talking about you the other day—no, this morning; it seems to me long since she told me about her lover, and how she loved him. O, Heaven, how it all comes back to me! I told her such a great love could never be a happy one; but how little I thought——” She paused, and then, after a minute’s silence, she looked at him again. “You,” she said—“you are Leah’s lover. She loves you so dearly, she said she should die if she were parted from you. And you—I remember you told me that you did not love her, that it was circumstances which had led to the engagement. And she loves you so! Oh, hapless Leah, oh, miserable, thrice-wretched me!”

She shrank back, crouching against the withered sprays of the passion-flowers. All her strength and youth seemed to leave her; her white face and wild eyes were terrible to see.

Half frightened because of her despair, he drew nearer to her.

"Hettie," he said, "what is Leah to you? Tell me who you are."

"Do you not know?" she said. "Have they not told you?"

"Told me what?" he cried. "What is it?"

A sickening sense of insecurity came to her. If neither Leah nor Sir Arthur had said anything to him, what could she say? Was he to know all about her? If she told him that she was Leah's sister, and that they were both daughters of Martin Ray, what would happen?

Her heart grew faint with dread and pain. She held out her hands to him with an imploring gesture.

"Do you not know?" she said. "Can you not guess who I am?"

"How can I? Why, Hettie, what need is there for mystery? You can have nothing to fear in telling me. What brings you, Martin Ray's daughter, here to Brentwood, and what are you to Leah?"

"You cannot guess?" she said. "You have no idea?"

"None. I cannot guess. What are you keeping from me, Hettie?"

"My story and Leah's," she replied; "and I cannot tell it to you. You must ask them to tell it."

In his sudden surprise and complete bewilderment he never thought of what Martin Ray had told him of his two daughters; all power of thought and memory had gone from him.

"Hettie, you have lost faith in me!" he said.

"No; it is not that. I—— See, there is some one coming. Do not let me be seen."

The quick footstep of one of the men-servants was heard on the terrace. Without a word, Sir Basil went to meet him.

"Sir Arthur would be glad to see you in the library at

once, Sir Basil," said the man. If he felt any curiosity about the figure crouching against the balustrade, he gave no sign.

"Say that I will be there in a few minutes," was the reply ; and the man went away.

Sir Basil turned to Hettie.

"Let me take you to the house. Hettie," he said. "You must not remain here."

"I cannot go. You must leave me here. I cannot walk," she said ; "I cannot stand. Do you not see how I tremble ? You must leave me."

He looked terribly distressed.

"My darling !" he began.

But she held up her hand.

"Hush, Basil !" she said. "Remember, you are Leah's lover."

"I will not leave, you, Hettie," he said. "You will faint."

"No ; do not fear ; listen to me. It will be all for the best. You go now. No one will know that you have seen me, and they will tell you the story. We must meet after that as strangers. Go."

"Heaven knows that no man was ever more puzzled or more unhappy than I," he said.

Her eyes were dim with tears as she watched him—Leah's lover ; and then, as he went slowly down the terrace, a mist seemed to rise before her ; she swayed to and fro, staggered, and, helpless, fell suddenly to the ground.

CHAPTER XLV.

As he passed quickly through one of the side-halls of Brentwood, Sir Basil caught a glimpse of his face in a mirror, and started back, almost frightened, by his own reflection. Was that haggard face his? He stood still for a few minutes before he went to the library, to endeavor to collect himself, to drive the weird shadows from his face and eyes, to clear his brain. Then, when he was in some measure himself, he went at once to the room where the general awaited him.

Sir Arthur was alone, and so preoccupied with his own thoughts that he did notice the pallor and agitation of Leah's lover. He shook hands with him, and welcomed him home most heartily.

"I am glad to see you, Basil," he said. "I assure you that some of us have found the past ten days very long ones. We have had a very unpleasant, anxious time of it since we parted. I am thankful it is over. There remains a duty perhaps even more disagreeable, and that is to tell you a story which I would fain have buried in oblivion."

"A story!" repeated Sir Basil. This, then, was what Hettie meant when she said "they" had something to tell him.

"You will always remember, Basil, that it is I who have kept this secret from you. It was by my desire, my wish that nothing was said. Leah would have had it otherwise, if I had let her have her own way. The fault, if there be any fault, lies with me. You can judge when I have told you. Let me add this—if anything which I tell you should be adverse to your tastes and opinions, you

are as free as air, Leah would not bind you. You have but to say the word."

"Nothing can free me from Leah," he said; and, Sir Arthur, in his satisfaction at the words, did not notice the tone of the speaker's voice.

"Thank Heaven for that! Now listen to my story, Basil. I will begin from my earliest recollection of the one being I loved then better than the whole world—my little sister."

He did not think it strange that Sir Basil turned his face to the window, so that no change passing over it could be seen.

At first Sir Basil seemed hardly to realize the words he heard—they passed over him as it were; then they began to strike on his brain. Some faint glimmer of the truth came to him when he heard the name of Martin Ray—enough to turn him faint and dizzy, to make his heart beat wildly.

He never forgot that hour. From the window he saw the sunshine on the distant hills and woods, on the bare branches of the trees, on the white stone terraces and the evergreens; a little robin redbreast flew up and down: the wind blew the brown branches of a dead guelder-rose against the window-panes. He never forgot one detail.

The general's voice went on in dull monotone; and presently Sir Basil's attention was caught and riveted by the names of Leah and Hettie, the two fair sisters. He listened intently as the general told him, with some dramatic skill, the story of the choice they made. He was back again with Martin Ray in fancy, listening to this same relation, but told in so different a fashion; and he remembered with a bitter pang that when Martin Ray recited the story he (Sir Basil) had condemned Leah—he had judged her cold and selfish; he had admired Hettie, the daughter who clung to her father, a thousand times more than her

who had left him. And now the girl whom in his own mind he had considered selfish and heartless was she whom he was to make his wife. He blamed himself that he had not discovered the truth ; it all seemed now so easy to understand. He could not even imagine how he had been so blind, save that it had never occurred to him to connect Martin Ray and his family with the general's household.

While these thoughts ran riot through his brain, the general went on with his story, and Sir Basil listened in silence to the end.

It was true then ; he the most unfortunate of men, stood between these two loving sisters. He loved one with his whole heart, and he was bound in honor to marry the other, and both loved him. Was there ever such a misfortune such a fate ? He was silent from sheer excess of despair. Who could have thought that the beautiful, queenly woman and the fair, winsome girl were sisters—one the very queen of beauty and fashion, the other earning her living and supporting her father by teaching ? Fate must have been laughing at them when it led him to Southwood.

The general wondered at his silence, and, when he had finished his story, waited for his young companion to speak. Still, Sir Basil sat with his face to the window, silent and still.

“ You will understand,” said Sir Arthur, “ that it was no question of social inequality. If my sister had married one greatly her inferior in rank, and he had been a loyal, honest man, I should have respected him ; but a man like Martin Ray I could not tolerate. There is no use in speaking ill of the dead ; but my sister would never have written to me without due reason to ask me to save her children. However it may be, whether I did right or wrong, it cannot be altered now. If you find any reason,

Basil, in what I have told you for bringing your engagement to an end, you will be justified in doing so."

The general was struck by the pain and the pallor of the face turned to him.

"I do not complain," said Sir Basil, "though I wish that I had known the truth from the first. I understand your motives and respect them. I, in your place, should probably have done the same thing; but I think better of Martin Ray than you do; and the fact that he was the father of the girl I loved would never have made the slightest difference to me. I hope you will not be annoyed when I say that Martin Ray's daughters would have been the same to me as daughters of your own."

"I am delighted to hear it," returned Sir Arthur. "Affairs have changed considerably of late years. Martin has been like a lion with his teeth drawn; but, when my poor sister ran away with him, he was a power in the land."

Sir Basil was thinking deeply. He decided that it would be much better for him not to mention that he had ever seen or known Martin Ray—much better, that the whole sad story should be buried and done with forever. Yet, as he framed these thoughts, he was dazed and blind with his great misery. What manner of life lay before him—loving one sister, marrying the other, and the one he loved always near him?

CHAPTER XLVI.

LEAH had been terribly shocked at finding Hettie lying unconscious on the ground. While she had been talking to Sir Arthur in the library, one of the men-servants, who had been told to watch for Sir Basil's arrival, had come to say that he had arrived, and the general had at once sent for him.

"I will leave you, uncle," she said. "You will be more at ease if I am not here."

She went up to him before she quitted the room, and put one arm round his neck, half hiding her face on his shoulder.

"Uncle," she whispered, "you do not really think that what you have to say will make any difference as regards Basil, do you?"

With one hand she clutched the lace on her bosom, and he saw that her very soul was on her lips. How well she loved Sir Basil, this beautiful niece of his!

"I am quite sure not," he replied. "You may rest happy, content, and assured. I know him so well. I think myself that he rather believes a rabid politician to be a great patriot. You need not have the shadow of a fear, Leah."

"I shall know," said the girl, "by my first glance at his face whether the story has vexed him or not. If I thought that it would, or that his love for me would grow less, I should die now and here."

"Have no fear, Leah; trust to me."

She quitted the room, and went back to the terrace where she had left Hettie. No tall figure stood by the balustrade; but she saw an inanimate form stretched on the ground. Full of alarm she hastened to the spot. It was Hettie, white, cold, senseless, her golden hair lying like a veil over her shoulders—Hettie, whom she had left so short a time before well and smiling! What was wrong? She raised the golden head and looked into the white face. Was it death? Was it sudden illness? In a paroxysm of terror she kissed the sweet face. "Some one has broken her heart," thought Leah. She remembered the pathetic little love-story her sister had told her. It was that had caused her to faint. Finding it impossible to restore her

to consciousness Leah summoned aid, and Hettie was carried to her room.

There was a look of intense pain in the blue eyes when they unclosed at last, and when they rested on Leah a cry escaped her. She opened her arms and folded her in them. "Leah! Leah!" she cried; and then she checked herself. She must not betray her secret. Leah must not know that her lover had swerved, even though unconsciously. She must not stand like a shadow between Leah and the full sunshine and gladness of her love.

Leah was very loving to her.

"Close your eyes and sleep; you will be better then," she said. "And I want you to come down to dinner; I have a surprise for you."

She little dreamed that it was the "surprise" which had almost killed her sister.

Leah stole away gently then. Her lover would be waiting for her—the lover who now knew her story, and from whose face she would learn at the first glance whether he cared less for her. She went to the library, but it was empty, and a deadly chill made her tremble. Had he resented the disclosure and gone away? She went to the drawing-room. He was not there; but from the window she saw him walking slowly up and down the terrace, his face pale and agitated. Better to know her fate at once. She hastened out to him and touched his arm gently with her hand.

"Basil," she said—and there was a world of piteous entreaty in her voice—"let me see your face."

He turned to her, and her heart gave one great bound of relief, which was quickly followed by a smart of pain. There was no trace of anger or annoyance on the face she loved so well, but there was unutterable pain.

"Basil," she said, "my uncle has told you all. Has it vexed or grieved you?"

He gazed at her with a vacant wonder in his eyes, and then came a gleam of recollection.

"It can never be," she thought, "that he has forgotten so momentous a conversation,"

"Grieved me? No, Leah, not in the least." The pathos of her face troubled him. "It has neither grieved nor vexed me in the least. I assure you honestly that I shall not be ashamed of the whole world's knowing that I married the daughter of Martin Ray. After all, though some of his ideas were strangely mistaken, he was a patriot at heart, was he not, Leah?"

"Do not ask me," she cried, with a shudder. Even to her lover she could not speak of her father. "My uncle has told you the whole story, and you say that it has not vexed or grieved you, that you do not love me one whit the less for it. Now, grant me one favor, Basil; promise me that you will never speak of my past life to me. It was horrible. I had not, as I grew older, one thought or idea in common with my poor father. I wake now sometimes, heart-sick with horrible dreams, fancying myself once more listening with a rebellious heart to doctrines and teachings I hated. I say no word against my poor father; but I can never bear to think of the past, dream of it, recall it. You know that I am Martin Ray's daughter; you love me none the less for that; I am content. You are very good to me, Basil," she said; "I will try to repay you. My uncle felt sure of your good faith; he understands you well. He told you all about my dear sister." Her face was transfigured in its tenderness as she spoke of Hettie. "You will love her, Basil, I know; she is so fair, so sweet and good. I think her most beautiful, too. But you love dark-haired women best, do you not?"

"I love one dark-haired woman," said Sir Basil. "I shall not plead guilty to more than that."

She laughed the happy, quiet laugh he was not often to hear again, and looked at him with brightening eyes.

"How happy we shall be together!" she said. "I could not have believed that so much happiness existed on earth. Ah! Basil, how much I missed my sister I could never tell you! In spite of all the luxury and magnificence that surrounded me, I was desolate in heart until you came. I have known no desolation since."

He would have given worlds to return her kind, loving words, but he could not. His lips trembled, his voice faltered, as he tried to frame some question about Hettie.

"I was sorry to hear," he said, "that your sister is ill. Is it true?"

"She fainted. I was talking to her on the terrace when my uncle came for me; he wanted to speak to me. I left her well enough. When I went back, she was lying with her face to the ground."

He strangled the bitter cry that rose to his lips.

"She has had a great trouble in her life," said unconscious Leah, "and I am afraid it will be some time before she will get over it."

The words smote him like a blow. It was impossible that she could have told Leah. Yet what did this mean?

"Trouble?" he said. "I am sorry to hear it. What trouble is it?"

"I cannot tell you," she replied, gravely. "I do not know much about it; but it is a sorrow that has spoiled her life, and we must be doubly kind and gentle to her because of it: Out of the greatness of our own happiness we must be most loving to her."

"Heaven be merciful to me!" he cried to himself. "I am sorely tried!"

"I know you will be like a kind elder brother to Hettie; will you not, Basil? And in time I hope she will forget this trouble and love some one very much—some one

who will marry her, she is so sweet and beautiful. I look forward to such a happy future, Basil."

"And she shall have one," he vowed to himself. "I would rather die than see her made wretched!"

He could not by word or look destroy the happiness that shone in Leah's face; yet the other face, more loving, if less fair, was a thousand times dearer to him.

"Hettie will be down to dinner," continued the unconscious girl, "and then I shall introduce the two people I love best to each other. You will be all that is most kind and loving to her, Basil, will you not, for my sake?"

"I will do everything you wish," he replied.

He knew how well she loved him, and he knew also that, if ever she guessed at the truth, her life would end with her happiness. She was looking up at him with glad eyes in which tears were shining.

"I will be so good," she said. "Those whom Heaven blesses should always be good—and Heaven has blessed me. Sometimes I think I might have been selfish had I been less happy."

He could not help thinking how, without knowing that it was her story he had heard, he had judged her selfish.

Strangely enough, her thoughts went in the same direction.

"Basil," she said, gently, "there is one more question I should like to ask you—only one. When you heard my story—when you were told of my choice—did you think me selfish? It was as though I had to choose between poverty and wealth, between my love and duty to my father and the luxury of a fashionable life. It was not so. Had my uncle been poor and my father rich, I should have done the same. It was the life sketched out for me that frightened me. Did you think me selfish? Tell me."

He was silent for some minutes. He could not say

"No," for had he not already condemned her? He could not say "Yes," because he could not wound her.

"I think," he replied, "that the circumstances were unusual, and that no person but yourself can comprehend them."

"Thank you," she said gently. "I wish it were in my power to prove to you now that I am not selfish. I wish there were some grand sacrifice I could make for you sake; you would see that I should embrace it as some would a gain or a pleasure. You would say to yourself then that I was not to be judged by this one action of my life."

"I do not think so now, Leah," he remarked.

"But you would know it then, Basil"—and the light of heroism was on her face as she spoke. "I wish I could prove it. If any one attempted your life, I would cast myself before you and receive the death blow instead."

"No one is likely to put you to the test, dear," he said with a faint laugh.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"TEN minutes more, and it will be over," said Sir Basil to himself—he was in the drawing-room alone, waiting for Sir Arthur and the ladies.

The room was brilliantly lighted, and he saw there for the first time a magnificent picture that Sir Arthur had purchased that year at the Royal Academy. It was called "CEnone." It was terribly, tragically beautiful.

"There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills."

Hither came the beautiful-browed CEnone, she whom Paris

had worshipped so wildly, then deserted for golden-haired Aphrodite—Cenone, whose despairing cry will ring through all ages—

“ Oh mother Ida, many-fountained Ida.
Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die!
I am the daughter of a river-god.
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song.”

The beautiful face, with its restless passion of misery, was turned to the fair valley where the cicala slept; “ the purple flowers droop, the golden bee is lily-cradled.” On her face was all the pathos of her words—

“ My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all a weary of my life.”

The despair shown in her face, in the clasp of her folded hands, in the droop of the beautiful head, was grand in its tragedy. Cenone was leaning against a rock; the wind seemed to stir the white folds of her robe and the dark unbound masses of her hair, No one who saw the eyes in the picture could ever forget them—they were so dark and lustrous, so full of burning passion and despair.

Sir Basil was engrossed in it. He did not hear Sir Arthur enter the room, for he was in the land which human sounds never reach. Sir Arthur laid his hand upon the young baronet’s shoulder.

“ You are absorbed in my new purchase,” he said. “ Was there ever anything finer than the tragic sorrow and desolation of that face? That long flowing black hair so beautifully painted that one can almost see the wind stirring it. I value that picture most highly.”

“ I have never seen such sorrow in any human face,” said Sir Basil.

Before he had finished the words the door opened, and

he knew that he was in the presence of both sisters. Never did man utter a more vehement, passionate prayer for strength and calmness than he. One terrible moment passed. He heard the rustle of soft silken robes as they crossed the room. Then, with a desperate effort, he raised his head, and looked at them—first at her whom he had loved and lost, her sweet face white as the leaf of a lily, her golden hair shining like an aureole round her head—the woman to whom his heart flew, at whose feet he would have laid his life, the only woman who had ever stirred his soul with the fire and fever and ecstasy of passionate love. Tall slender and graceful, her dark rich dress trailing, her rich laces “falling in a fairy shower,” she seemed to float toward him. Her eyes did not meet his; and no gleam of recognition came into the sweet colorless face. He looked from her to the radiant girl by her side, “in whose dark eyes was the light of the setting sun,” her face bright with beauty and love, her color vivid and exquisite as that of a wild rose, her every movement replete with grace and harmony. They differed as does a tall white lily from a queenly red rose; yet there was something of a resemblance—they were alike in grace and subtle elegance of figure, and in the queenly carriage of the head.

Leah led Hettie by the hand. She brought her to where *Cænone*, in her eternal sorrow, bewailed a faithless lover, where the exquisite tragic face looked out in its unchanging despair. Leah had never appeared nor felt so happy as when she laid Hettie’s white hand in that of her lover. She did not notice that one was cold as death and the other burned like fire. She did notice that, when she, with happy eyes and smiling lips, went through the ceremony of introduction, those two shrank from each other as though the cold and darkness of a grave lay between them.

“Hettie is so shy,” said the elder sister, looking with

a smile at her lover. "She has been ill to-day; that makes her quiet. Hettie, look at the picture. I persuaded Sir Arthur to buy it. I think the last lines in Tennyson's poem of 'Ænone' are the finest ever written, and they are expressed in her face—that beautiful young face which is never to smile again."

"I do not remember them. What are they?" said Hettie, more to gain time than anything else.

"A sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoer I am by night and day,
All earth and air seems only burning fire.'"

Hettie turned away with a shudder which she could not control.

"I can understand those words," Leah added, musingly; "a passionate misery must be a burning pain."

The dinner-bell rang, and the general offered his arm to Leah.

"We will leave these two to make friends," he said. And Basil in silence went to Hettie.

"We shall never be able to bear it," he thought. "I must retire, or she."

Hettie laid her hand timidly upon his arm. He seized it with a vehement, passionate grasp—his very heart was on fire—and then as suddenly let it go.

How many hours of this torture would there be to pass? he thought. The blood ran like fire through his veins; every nerve and pulse thrilled with the sense of her presence; yet he must sit there as the happy lover of Leah, smile and talk and laugh unconcernedly.

"What, in Heaven's name, shall I do with my life," he cried to himself, "if I find one day so hard to bear?"

Hetti was excused from all effort, and her pale face was accounted for by the fact that she had been ill.

The dinner passed, and Leah was dimly conscious of something being wrong, something she did not understand. She was just a little disappointed that Sir Basil was not warmer in his manner to Hettie. He spoke to her but seldom, and it was always with averted eyes. She wondered if it were his great love for her which made him so indifferent to the charms of her sister.

The ordeal was over at last. When the two girls had left the dining-room, Sir Arthur turned with a laughing face to his companion.

"It is not of much use for you to remain here," he said. "Your heart has gone into the drawing-room, and you may as well follow it."

"That is true," assented Sir Basil.

"I told you," continued the general, "what a difference it makes to have two nieces instead of one, though Hettie looks ill. I suspect her life has been harder than we know."

"If ever a man felt inclined to cast himself headlong into a fathomless abyss, I am that man," said Sir Basil to himself, as he walked along the hall to the drawing-room. "There never was so cruel a fate. Why did not some good spirit warn me not to go near Southwood? I feel like a murderer when I think of those two girls."

He found them standing side by side before the new picture. Hettie did not look at him; but Leah, with a glance, invited him to join them.

"I am fascinated with CEnone," she said. "How well she loved Paris! Do you think he made the wisest choice in giving the golden apple to Aphrodite?"

"Not perhaps the wisest," he replied. "One goddess offered unlimited power, god-like supremacy, rest in a happy place, and absolute sovereignty. The second offered him calmest wisdom, soundest judgment,

“ Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

The third, Idalian Aphrodite, beautiful,

“ Fresh as the foam, new bathed in Paphian wells.

offered him love. ‘I promise thee,’ she said, ‘the fairest and most loving wife in Greece.’ Love conquered.”

“How could that be,” said Leah, quickly, “when Paris loved CEnone first.”

Over Sir Basil’s handsome face swept a great scorching blush. Ah! how indeed? How can a man understand his own heart, or the great mystery of love?

“I suppose,” he said, “that the gods of old, like men of all time, have been inconstant in love. So all poetry and all mythology say.”

“Oh, Basil, you do not mean it!”—and the light of Leah’s eyes flashed right into his. “Some men are surely faithful?”

Hettie moved away from the picture; she went to the other end of the room and took up a book. He looked after her with haggard, wistful eyes; every step of hers seemed to draw his heart with it; he did not know that life could hold such torture.

“Basil,” said the musical voice “you do not mean that! I thought constancy was the gift of the gods.”

“I have read that inconstancy is the pleasure of the gods,” he answered, laughing somewhat bitterly. “It may be the scourge of men.”

There was a minute’s silence, and then a warm, white hand stole into his, a dark head drooped near him, and a voice that was sweet as the cooing of a dove, said,—

“No matter who is false, you are true, Basil. You have truth in your eyes and on your lips. If all the world proved false, you would be the one true man in it.” The dark eyes were full of love, the beautiful lips seemed to woo

him. What could he do? "You will always be true to me, will you not, Basil? You will always love me, my love, better than all the world beside?"

On the other side of the room was the girl he loved, her fair face averted; near him was the despairing face of CEnone, nearer still the brilliant face of the girl who loved him with her whole heart. It was like a scene from a tragedy to him. He half wondered if the lights would go out and a curtain fall. If only the picture had been away, and the desolation of unhappy love out of his sight, he would have felt less distressed.

"Better than all the world!" continued Leah. "How weak and worthless a half love is! I would sooner have hate. When CEnone's love was over, her life was ended, No half love is worth having—is it, Basil?"

"Heaven knows that it is not," he said, with a great sigh. He saw the golden head move with a gesture of weariness. "How hard it must be for her to bear this!" he thought; and his mind went back to that one hour by the sea, when mad hope, love and despair had mingled. He whispered some words that comforted Leah—she was so easily made happy by him—and then he said to her: "Let us do something to amuse your sister; she looks quite lonely there."

And Leah, full of regret for her momentary forgetfulness, hastened to her. The face that Hettie raised to her sister was ghastly in its pallor.

"You are ill, Hettie!" said Leah. "Oh, my dear, what is wrong? I will get a glass of water for you"—and she hastened away.

"I cannot bear it, Basil," said Hettie, looking at him with miserable eyes. "I have not strength."

"Oh, my darling, I would give my life to undo it, to save you from the consequences of my fault, my wretched, miserable fault!"

“What shall we do?” asked the girl despairingly. “What will become of us? Leah loves you so. Help me to be true to her and true to myself, Basil. How can I turn traitress to the sweetest of sisters, the kindest and the dearest? I must go away; I cannot stay here!”

Was it fancy? When Leah returned with the water in her hand, it seemed to her that Sir Basil suddenly drew back from Hettie. Was it fancy? And, as she opened the door, she thought she heard the words, uttered in a soft, murmuring sigh, “I cannot bear it!” She must have been mistaken. She smiled as she thought what an absurd fancy it was.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SIR BASIL'S thoughts were gloomy ones as he walked home to Glen. What was he to do? This state of things could not last. Even if he could control himself, Leah was so quick that she would soon perceive what it was that was amiss with Hettie and then—— Well he thought it would be far easier to meet death in any shape than to meet Leah after she knew his secret. He could not witness Hettie's suffering, nor could he bear to think of Leah's despair. He could not understand the difficulties by which he was encompassed; he was like one groping in the dark. He determined that he would rest his brain and his thoughts, and then decide.

It was easier to plan than to do. No rest, no sleep came to him that night. The sisters seemed to stand on either side of his pillow—Hettie whom he worshiped, Leah who loved him. He told himself that, if this lasted much longer, he should go mad.

The morning brought him sad intelligence—a note

from Leah saying that Hettie was ill, and that the doctor, for whom they had sent in all haste pronounced it a dangerous case of brain fever.

“Come over as soon as you can and comfort me, Basil. I cannot endure to think that I have found my sister only to lose her.”

“If she dies, I have murdered her,” he said to himself bitterly.

He went over at once and found the whole household in despair. The general met him with outstretched hand and grave face.

“Brain-fever!” he said, “Basil, what can have caused brain-fever! I cannot understand it. And she is in danger—really in danger? Poor pretty Hetty! What is to be done?”

There was no need for Sir Basil to express his sympathy. If anything could have comforted Sir Arthur in this hour of his distress, it would have been the hearty, honest, evident grief of his young companion.

“I have seen and known very little of illness,” continued the general. “I can tell a case of jungle-fever, and I understand ague; but brain-fever—it is positively awful, Basil! I thought brain-fever was the result of trouble, worry, sorrow, or some great mental anxiety.”

“So I have always understood,” said Sir Basil; “but then you tell me she has had a troubled life.”

“So she has, poor child; I am sure of that. This is one of the evils of life that we must bear with patience. We have done all that is possible. I have telegraphed to London for two experienced nurses—I cannot have Leah always in the sick room—and now we must await the result.”

“Does the doctor think there is danger?” asked Sir Basil, with white lips.

“Yes the fever runs high, and she is very weak. Y

hope for Leah's sake, you will spend as much time here as possible. The days will be dreadfully depressing for her, poor child."

"You may rely upon me," said Sir Basil. "Indeed, the difficulty would be for me to keep away. My world is here."

It was indeed a melancholy time. For many days the shadow of death lay over the household. There were hushed voices, silent footsteps, and fervent prayers for the beautiful young girl who lay quite unconscious of all that passed. Everything that skill and love could suggest was but done, for many days the issue was doubtful. It was Leah's first experience of illness or physical suffering and it impressed her greatly. The house was put under a discipline. No visitors came; there was no sound heard. Piano, harp, singing—all were tabooed. Leah would have shut out if she could the southing of the wind and the creaking of the great bare boughs. It was the strange death like silence that made the place seem so unearthly. Not even the barking of a dog was allowed near the mansion. The poor tortured brain could not endure the least sound. It was a piteous sight to see the fair head tossing restlessly to and fro on the white pillow; it was never still—from one side to the other it turned with unwearied motion; and the muttering—which is perhaps the most awful accompaniment of brain-fever—never ceased. None of the sufferer's words were intelligible; her utterance was only an inarticulate murmur vague and terrible. Once or twice, when Leah was with her, she thought she overheard the word "Glen," but she concluded it must have been fancy. It brought no meaning to her, although it was the name of her lover's home.

During those long weeks of weary suffering no man could have been more miserable than Sir Basil. He wandered round the house like a shadow. He could not bear

to leave it, nor could he bear to be left alone. He seemed to spend the greater part of the day in asking but one question from different people: "How is she now?" He grew thin, pale and haggard, years seemed to have fallen on him.

Leah was troubled about him, and warned him to be careful, for he looked as though he were about to have a severe illness himself.

One day, while the general and Sir Basil were walking along the high-road that led to Arley, they met a huge lumbering wagon on its way to the hall. When they drew near to it, they found that it was from the railway. The driver stopped when he saw Sir Arthur, and asked if he was to drive through the park.

"What have you there?" asked the general, in wonder.

"Ten packages," answered the burly driver. "Would you like to see the book, Sir Arthur?"

The general looked at it, and found that there were ten packages from Southwood. Then he remembered that, when leaving there, several things in the cottage were packed up, and left at the railway-station to be forwarded to Brentwood—Martin Ray's writing-desk, his favorite books, one or two things that the girls prized, Hettie's music, and what few mementoes remained of the dear dead mother. It occurred to Sir Arthur that any knowledge of the arrival of these things would be hurtful to Hettie; so he tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and on it wrote a note to Leah, telling her that the packages were from Southwood and that they had better be put away in some remote corner of the house until Hettie had quite recovered, and the sight of them would not hurt her. He gave directions that the wagon should not go near the hall.

"No one can tell," he said, "what harm the sound might do to Hettie;" and Basil was struck by his kindly consideration.

Leah read the note and hastened to give the necessary orders. The packages were stowed away in one of the unused rooms of the western wing. One of them, a square packet, attracted Leah's attention. She unfastened the canvas in which it was folded, and found that it was her father's writing-case. Heaven only knew what burning, bitter words had been written on it ! How well she remembered the case ! How often she had seen her father seated at it, with frowning brows and flashing eyes ! It lay open before him on the day that she had left him—the day he had cursed her. She thought of Hettie's words, that the curse must have fallen on her by mistake, and she reflected that it was indeed true that everything had gone wrong with her hapless sister. If Leah could but have known what the desk contained, she would not have looked at it with such careless eyes.

She forgot all about the packages. Hettie, though weak as a little child, hardly able to see or hear, was out of danger, and the doctors agreed that she had taken the critical turn which leads to health. The terrible strain of anxiety was ended, the great mental stress over. Every one in the house breathed more freely. During her illness Hettie had endeared herself to all. Her sweetness and patience, the severity of her sufferings, her thought for others, her loving gratitude, were things to be remembered ; and, when it seemed certain that she would not die of this terrible fever, the rejoicing was great.

Once more the cheerful sound of merry voices was heard. Hettie, half amused, half alarmed at her own feebleness, slowly traced the path that leads from sickness to health. It would be some weeks yet, the doctor said, before she could be taken downstairs or allowed to see any one—even the general. It was five weeks since the evening when she had cried out to Sir Basil that she could not bear her pain, and the overwrought brain had suddenly given

way; it would be some weeks more before she saw him again. When she was strong, when her brain was clear, and she could think without a hundred fancies weaving themselves in her thoughts, she would make up her mind with regard to her future.

Once or twice, when she had so far recovered as to be able to take notice of what was passing around her, Sir Basil had sent her, by Leah, a few flowers. She took them without a word, and laid them down languidly. She did not show the least desire to take care of them, and made no remonstrance when they were removed.

CHAPTER XLIX.

“WHAT shall I do to rouse her?” said Leah to herself, one morning, after her usual conversation with the doctor. “She is sweet-tempered, loving, and grateful; but she seems to have lost all desire to live.”

Suddenly Leah bethought herself of the packages from Southwood. Surely among them she would find something that, by memory or association, would startle her mind into activity.

Leah went to the unused room in the western wing where the packages lay, and the writing-case was the first thing that caught her attention. It was probable there would be among her father's papers something which would remind Hettie of her old home and rouse her into a more active state of mind. She opened the case and found it filled with documents. Martin Ray had evidently arranged it before his death. There, all yellow with age, the thin edges all worn with folding, were her mother's love-letters, written many years before! They were tied with blue

ribbon, and with them were fastened flowers that had soon died. He had loved her fair young mother well to have preserved these with such loving care. She would not open them; they were sacred to her, these letters written by the hand so long dead. She kissed them with reverence, wondering as she did so whether, if she died young, Basil would keep her love-letters. She found certificates of her parent's marriage, of her mother's death and of her birth and Hettie's. She found a life insurance policy for one hundred pounds, which had evidently been intended for Hettie. There were numerous other papers—invitations to political meetings, reviews of her father's books, articles written in his favor, and articles that held him up to ridicule and contempt. She found some letters which she placed aside for destruction—letters the contents of which she well knew and shuddered to remember. There were account books showing how Martin Ray had spent the people's money: she turned from them with loathing. Ah, what was this? A letter in a square envelope, on which was written, "For my daughter Leah, written now that I know I am dying, to be sent or given to her after my death." She looked at it again, mistrusting her eyes while she read the words.

A letter from her father, written when he knew that he was dying! How was it that it had never been given to her? Plainly no one had known anything about it. He had written it, meaning, without doubt, to give it to Hettie, had put it in his desk, and had either forgotten it or his sudden relapse into danger had put it out of his mind. She recognized the bold, free hand-writing that had been so characteristic of Martin Ray. She never doubted but that it would be a loving letter, written to take from her the horrible curse which had preyed so heavily on her mind. She put it into the pocket of her dress; she would read it when she had finished her search. She would be

all the happier if that letter were a kind and loving one. It had been a sore trouble to her that she had reached her father's side too late, and that he had died calling for her, and she was not there.

A few minutes later she had gone back to Hettie's room, with many little mementoes of home that she thought would interest her. Then a visitor arrived, one of the ladies of the neighborhood, to make special inquiries after Hettie. Leah went to the drawing-room to receive her, and found that the general and the young baronet had driven over to Glen. She was slightly disappointed. She would have enjoyed a few minutes with Sir Basil; it was her one source of pleasure when she could leave Hettie. She entertained her visitor, Lady Drake, with all the charm of manner natural to her. Then, when she left, more charmed than ever with the beautiful *chatelaine* of Brentwood, Leah remembered the letter.

It was rather early to have the lamps lighted, though the rooms were gloomy with a miserable yellow light. The drawing-room was bright and gay with flowers. A fire burned in the grate; the vivid flames rose and fell with a dazzling light. The ruddy glow almost overpowered the pale yellow light; it fell with a weird effect on the beautiful picture of "Ænone," and Leah was irresistibly attracted to it. She drew an easy-chair between the fire and the picture, and looked at it with wistful eyes. The firelight fell on the vale of Ida, on the desolate figure, and the beautiful face so full of despair. Then she bethought herself that she would read her letter. She rose and stirred the fire, rousing it into a yet deeper glare; then she drew her chair nearer to the picture, watching the ruddy glow as it lighted up the despairing face of Ænone. As she looked then, with rest and repose in her dark eyes, with tranquillity on her beautiful face, she never looked again.

She opened the envelope ; it was a long letter, and she half wondered what her father had to say to her. She was lost to everything when she had read a few lines. Her letter ran as follows,—

“ MY DEAR LEAH : I had sworn an oath that I would never look at you, speak to you, or address you again. I cursed you—you, the child of my heart, whom I loved better than all the world. You disappointed me in my dearest hopes. The refusal to fulfil the mission for which I had always intended you, has been the bane and the blight of my life. In my rage and anger I cursed you. I give you the opportunity of evading that curse by the noblest act of self-denial any woman can perform. Years ago, when the choice was given you between a wealthy stranger and your poor father, you gave up father, sister, home, and clung to the stranger. It was a selfish and mercenary proceeding. I will give you a chance of redeeming it by an heroic act of self-sacrifice. You left your young sister in a desolate home ; you left her motherless, friendless, almost helpless ; you went to a brilliant, luxurious life. You can atone for it now by giving up for her sake that which you value most in the wide world.

“ I have a story to tell you, Leah—one that no one in the world knows but myself, one that gives you a chance to redeem yourself, to return sacrifice for sacrifice. I do not demand it, I do not even ask it. When you have read what I have to write, the issue must lie in your hands entirely.

“ In the summer-time I was standing before the cottage, looking over the wall at the sea which washes the foot of the green hill. There came upon me, quite suddenly and silently, the handsomest young man I had ever beheld in my life. Handsome is not the word ; he had a grand, noble beauty, the like of which I had never seen. He came to me and said that he was looking for the house of Martin Ray. He was a frank, princely young fellow, and he

spoke as though he rather admired Martin Ray. I talked to him. It was infinite pleasure to converse once more with one who believed in me. I spent a pleasant hour with him. He told me that he had been educated abroad, and had but just returned to England, where he was anxiously studying politics, and that he wanted to understand my political views.

“ ‘ If you desire it,’ I said to him, ‘ I will expound them to you. If you are an aristocrat, do not say so, for I should hate you ;’ and he never told me his name.

“ He came once when I was out, and I, returning home, found him talking to Hettie. He said that he was waiting for me ; but, if ever I read passionate love in a man’s face, it was in his. And then only did I begin to care about who he was, for Hettie was changed, and I knew that her heart had gone out to the stranger. I made inquiries, silently, cleverly, and I soon knew all. I found that his name was Sir Basil Carlton, and that he was staying at Dene Abbey with my foe, the Duke of Rosedene. I found that my mortal enemy, Sir Arthur Hatton, with the girl who had disowned me, was with him ; and once, in all your magnificence, I saw you, Leah. You passed me on the high-road ; you were in a carriage with the duke and duchess, smiling, proud, beautiful. I was on foot, and you did not know that you had whirled past your father, without sign of recognition, without even the paling of your face or the trembling of your lips. I heard, too, that Sir Basil was your lover ; it was whispered to me, whether truly or falsely I could not tell, that you cared much more for the young baronet than he did for you, my proud, disdainful child. I decided that I would watch events and see for myself if that were true.

“ One day, when we were talking—I was growing languid and feeble then—I told Sir Basil the outlines of our history—how the aristocrat, boasting of his birth and his wealth,

had come to take my child from me. I told him of the choice which the two sisters made—how one had gone to the stranger, giving up home, sister, me—her father, how the other, loving and faithful, had clung to me. I uttered no name, I said no word which could lead him to think of you. Then I asked him frankly what he thought of the daughter who had deserted me and given up her sister. He did not know of whom I was speaking, he had no clue; he simply heard the story, and he judged you from his own heart. He said the daughter who had so deserted me, who had abandoned her sister, was ‘selfish;’ that was his word—‘selfish.’ Is it true, Leah? If it be so, I give you an opportunity of retrieving yourself, of making a sacrifice that will prove you are not selfish.”

Suddenly the blaze of the fire seemed to die out, and the light faded. Leah could not see the letters; they swam in a mist before her eyes. She rose mechanically and went to the fire; she stirred it again. The flames flickered this time on a face white as the face of the dead; and she sat down again where, when she raised her eyes, they must fall on the dreary desolation and beauty of *Cenone*.

CHAPTER L.

THE firelight fell on the passages of the letter when Leah opened it again, and it seemed to her as though the words were written in blood, the scarlet flames leaping and playing in mockery over it. It was a death-warrant that she held in her hands. She went on reading:—

“I cannot tell what steps I should have taken or what I should have done but that I was seized then with a serious

illness. Hettie was most devoted to me ; she nursed me by day and night. No man had ever a more devoted child. I contrasted my two daughters—the one living at the great house away over the green hill, in the midst of luxury and magnificence, beautiful, dainty, and proud, ignoring my existence, not knowing, caring, or inquiring whether I was living or dead, the other working for me by day and by night, devoting her whole life to me. The contrast was not in your favor, Leah. I was ill for many days, but I know that he came. I slept in the front of the cottage ; and during the summer nights, when the window was open, I could hear the murmur of their voices, and I knew by the sound of his, musical with love, how matters stood.

“ Sometimes Hettie would tell me that the ‘ strange gentleman ’ had been, and that he had left a message for me. She always turned from me, lest I should read the secret of her face. She never knew his real name ; if ever we called him by name, we spoke of ‘ Glen,’ which I knew to be the title of his place. I was very ill during those few days ; my thoughts were not clear. But there came a summer night when I felt better and stronger. I told Hettie that I should get up and go down to the garden in the cool of the evening. She objected very strongly.

“ It would do me great harm, she said. And she seemed so miserable about it that I lay still ; but afterward, when she had gone downstairs, believing that I might sleep for hours, I could not bear it.

“ The summer wind came in at the open window the birds were singing their even-song, the low chanting of the waves sounded musical in the distance. I could not rest. I rose, dressed myself, and stole quietly down the stairs and out into the garden and round among the trees, where I should be hidden from sight, and could enjoy the^osweet evening air at my will. I was very weak, very ill. The fresh-scented air, for which I had longed so in-

tensely, sent me to sleep. I do not know how long I slept there ; but when I awoke the moon was shining, and I heard the sound of a woman's voice sobbing in great distress. I raised my head, and I saw a scene that has haunted me until the memory of it has driven me to write this. I did not listen purposely but I could not get away ; it was to me as though I were present at a death-bed. The sobs were Hettie's and she was bidding farewell to your lover, Leah—Basil Carlton. She loved him—ah, me, how well ! And he spoke up like the honest, frank, noble young fellow he is. He told her how he had drifted unconsciously into love for her, that he was bound in honor to marry some one else, and therefore he must go.

“ Leah, give heed to my words. I do not know why Sir Basil asked you to marry him. I am sure that it was not because he loved you. I am sure, too, that he acted in all loyalty. He came down to Southwood and saw your sister quite accidentally ; he fell in love with her without knowing it. Hettie loves him with her whole heart, and will love no one else while she lives. They parted in sorrow and tears, both loyal, both honest, both true. Whether they will meet again I know not—I leave that with you. The doctor has told me to-day that I have not many weeks to live, and that nothing can change my fate. Leah, I cursed you ; do this which I ask, and that curse will fall harmless to the ground. When I am dying, I shall send for you, and may be able to tell you this. When I am dead, ask Sir Arthur Hatton to take Hettie home ; it will be safer, far better for her : I can see it now. And, Leah, if you would be truly noble, truly generous, if you would make a glorious atonement for your selfish choice, if you would rise far above the level of ordinary womanhood, if you would change a curse into a blessing, if you would do that which will bring music, and beauty, and brightness into two lives, give up your lover to Hettie, and let her wed him.

“Do not think I am heartless ; but, when I look at Hettie, when I think of her devotion and love, when I think of her tenderness, and remember that those are qualities you can live without, I urge upon you to resign your lover, and let him marry Hettie.

“If—and my heart does not deceive me as to what you will do—if you decide upon this, you must act wisely ; for, if either of them suspect, the suspecting one will not accept the sacrifice, however much you may desire to make it. Your desire in this world is to shine ; you prefer brilliancy to love. Love counted as nothing to you when a stranger offered you wealth. Hettie would shun the brilliant glare of your life, and would care only for love. You will wonder, Leah, when you have read this, whether I have written it from motives of love or hate. From love ! I alway thought you had something of the heroine in your nature—now I give you a chance of revealing it. If I may map out your life, I should say, ‘Marry for wealth and position, where your beauty and grace will be appreciated, where your pride will be looked on as an additional ornament. Do not even seek the sweeter, softer consolations of life ; they will be of no use to you.’ ”

She had reached the end of the letter, but her senses were confused. Her brain was dazed ; she could not think or realize her position. Her whole soul was steeped in the horror of dull despair. Slowly she again turned to the letter and re-read it line by line, word by word. The fire-light, with its, red, flickering flame, fell on the white pages as she did so, and on the desolate face of Ænone.

It was her sentence of death ; it was the warrant that cut her off from all that was bright and beautiful in life. The two whom she had loved and trusted had betrayed her. Granted that Basil’s betrayal had been unconscious—that he had fallen in love without knowing it—he should

have told her. He should have trusted her, and have let her decide.

“ I should have given him his freedom,” she said, with a great tearless sob. “ I should have set him free.”

And Hettie, the fair young sister whom she had nursed back from the very arms of death? Ah, well she could not say that Hettie had betrayed her, for she had learned to love him without the faintest suspicion as to who he was ; but, when she saw him there, when she knew that it was Leah’s lover for whom she had learned to care, she might surely have trusted her then ! Lover and sister had betrayed her ; lover and sister were both untrue to her. Her head drooped ; the fire-flame died ; the desolate face of *Ænone* faded. It seemed to Leah as though her soul was leaving her body ; a cold chill and sense of darkness came over her.

“ If it be death, welcome death ! ” she said as the shadows closed around her.

CHAPTER LI.

It was not death that came to Leah Hatton, only a merciful insensibility. She woke to find all her nerves tingling with pain, to find the crushed pages of her father’s letter in her hand, the firelight shining on her, and the face in the picture looking down upon her in its calm, grand despair. She woke with a pain worse than the thrust of a sharp dagger, with a low moan on her lips.

A faint glimpse of hope came to her. The story might not be true. Her father did not like her, and he had perhaps taken this method of punishing her. The very hope, faint as it was, seemed to gladden her and startle her into sudden brightness. The story might not be true. Let

her think, let her go back in mind to the past, and see if anything in it bore out or contradicted it. She thought of Dene Abbey first, and she remembered the great green hill that rose between the estate and the town of Southwood. It was on the other side of the hill that her father and sister had lived. She could not find that the faintest notion of being near them had ever dawned upon her. No one had spoken in her presence of a worn-out political agitator who had come to Southwood to rest and die ; but she remembered that Sir Basil had been very strange when at Dene. She thought of the long rambles, when, without seeming reason, he had left her alone. They had puzzled her at the time ; she understood them now. He had spent those hours at the cottage with Hettie or with Martin Ray. She remembered, his abstraction, his gloom, and her anxiety about him.

It seemed to her as though her brain were reeling. Strange words rang through it, strange sounds came to her, and a voice deeper and sweeter than any she had known sang :

“ Sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers that blow.
And sweeter far is death than life to me that long to go.”

There would be no sweet release of death for her. She would have to suffer through the long years alone.

The firelight played on the beautiful face of Ænone, whose sorrows she had sympathized with only yesterday. Now a whole age seemed to part her from that time. She tried to rise from the chair that she had drawn near the picture, but there was no strength in her limbs. She could not stand ; she must wait until the first shock of her pain had passed. It seemed to her almost as though Ænone were living and was the only one who understood her trouble. Great Heaven, how hard it was to bear !

So, through all this time, Basil had never loved her ! Why had he asked her to marry him ? He had probably

mistaken fancy for love, and only when he met Hettie knew what love was. She (Leah) had worshipped him ; had made no secret of it ; she had told him often, with kisses and tears, that life held nothing for her but his love ! Oh, bitter sorrow, bitter shame ! He had kissed her, listened to her loving words, spoken to her of the future they should pass together, He had prepared his house to be her home ; he had given her a wedding-ring ; he had discussed his future with her ; she had thought of herself as his wife. He had allowed her to tell him the deepest secrets of her heart ; to make her life one with his : he had let her believe in his truth and his affection—and all this time he had no love for herself !

Hettie had won him—Hettie, with her fair face and wealth of golden hair, Hettie, whom years ago she had forsaken ! It was Hettie whom he had loved, and not herself !

“ I will judge him myself,” she said ; and then slowly in her own mind she went over the past, beginning with the first hour that she had met him and ending with the previous evening, when he had parted from her with a pale, worn face, as though life had little brightness for him. Not one circumstance escaped her memory, She recalled the little incident at the Royal Academy, when, referring to the face that she had thought like Hettie’s, he had said, “ It has the tenderness that yours lacks.” Time went by unheeded. She forgot everything in the world but the task she had set herself ; and each fact, each memory, as it came home to her, brought with it confirmation of the truth.

At last, with white, tearless face and with clinched hands, she fell upon her knees with a bitter cry,

“ It is all true,” she moaned ; “ every word is true ! ”

How long she knelt in the glow of the firelight she never knew ; but it was the sound of the dressing-bell that

at length aroused her. She stood up then, with a scared look on her face.

“ I must live through it ! ” she said. “ I must meet my uncle, and smile as though nothing were wrong ; I must dress, talk, meet him who was my lover ; I must go to see Hettie, with this sharp, bitter pain at my heart.”

CHAPTER LII.

A month had elapsed since the fatal day on which Leah had read her father's letter. She had made up her mind now how to act. The doctors had agreed that Hettie would not recover until she had had change of air, and it was arranged that, when the first breath of warm weather came, the family were to go to the south of France. The Duke and Duchess of Rosedene were already settled there, so that there would be a “ home party ” after all. There had been some mention of the wedding. Leah's beautiful face had paled, and a wistful look had come into her eyes. She said that the wedding must be delayed ; there could be no thought of marriage when Hettie was in such a fragile state of health. She spokẽ calmly, and smiled when she remembered how little any one knew of the pain at her heart.

The general had demurred slightly when she refused to hear of the marriage taking place, as had been settled, in the spring.

“ Delayed marriages are always unlucky, Leah,” he said to her.

“ Mine will not be so,” she replied ; and he wondered at the strange smile on her face.

He had thought a great deal lately about his favorite

niece—she was so terribly changed. He tried to believe that it was due to her anxiety concerning Hettie ; but that was hardly possible. She had such a strange expression on her face. He could not understand it, though he watched her keenly. One thing in particular struck him. She never spoke of the future, and her interest in everything seemed dead. She laughed and talked ; but, to his eyes, there was always more or less of effort when she did so. Her face would flush, and the light in her eyes was too bright.

Hettie noticed nothing ; her one great relief and source of gratitude was that she would not have to go through the trial of seeing Sir Basil again. The doctor had said that she must go to Mentone as soon as possible, and that in the meantime she must be kept perfectly free from all excitement and must see no one.

Sir Basil and Hettie could never suspect that their secret was known to Martin Ray : much less could they imagine that it had been revealed to Leah by her father. Whatever she did, they must believe it to be the expression of her own feeling, the result of her own thoughts ; they could not attribute it to any influence brought to bear upon her. Her life just then was very quiet, owing to Hettie's illness ; there was neither visiting nor the receiving of visitors, Had it been otherwise, the strain upon her would have been too great, and she would have given way. She lived through it, longing at morn for night, longing at night for morning. Her heart was dead within her she scarcely ate or slept. There were days when she scarcely left her room ; when she sat there stunned, dazed, bewildered with the weight of her own sorrow, the grief piercing ever and ever deeper into her heart.

No one guessed her secret or imagined that, though heiress of the vast wealth of Sir Arthur Hatton, and acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful women in Eng-

land, she was, nevertheless, one of the most miserable and desolate of human beings. There were times when she reflected that she had read of the agonies of death, of people lingering in torture, unable to die ; but surely no agony had ever been so prolonged as hers. She saw every day the man whom she loved so well, yet who had preferred another to her. She had to meet him, to appear as usual with him, the horrible pain of wounded love and jealousy gnawing like a hidden cancer in her breast. And every day she had to minister to the sister who had supplanted her, to cheer and soothe her. When she was consulted about the decorations and improvements at Glen, which she knew well she would never see, she gave her answer plainly and clearly. Without a break in her voice, she chose colors and ornaments, and talked of harmonious arrangements, and then went silently to her room to undergo the agonies of despair. And when Sir Arthur talked about the future, about next year, when she would be at Glen, she always replied to him with a smile—but that smile was sadder than any tears.

As the days passed, she grew thinner and paler, and her eyes brighter. She never sang. She had never touched her piano since the reading of the fatal letter. Her interest in everything was dead.—She spent more time before the picture of *Cenone* than in any other place. The terrible repression told upon her. If she could have spoken of her loss, if she could have eased her heart by a flow of passionate tears, it would have been better. But there was no such relief : it was all speechless, dark, unchanging sorrow. Great, silent woe looked out of the dark eyes.

“I wonder,” she said to herself, “if I have accurately measured my strength.

All the arrangements were made for the journey ; the Duke and Duchess of Rosedene were awaiting anxiously the arrival of the sisters, when a complication arose. The

member for the county had died suddenly, and this brought about the very opening for which Sir Basil had longed. He was determined to contest the election, to secure his seat in Parliament, and then to make for himself fame and the name of a statesman. He was born for it; politics were his vocation. This was an opportunity not to be lost. With some exertion, and the help of Sir Arthur Hatton, he felt sure of success. Of course he could not accompany the sisters, as had been arranged, to France, so it was decided that Sir Arthur should take them thither and remain for a day or two, and then return at once to help with his canvass.

The news affected the sisters differently. Hettie had dreaded the journey with Sir Basil, yet had not liked to raise any objection. Leah had told herself that she should take her last look at his beloved face on English soil. She made no remark when Sir Arthur told her of the change in their plans; and he was blind enough to think that her silence arose from some little resentment against her lover—so little idea had any one of the true facts of the case. They thought Leah very quiet for some days after that. Who could guess that in her own mind she was bidding adieu to the place she loved so well?

Once she asked Sir Arthur to drive her over to Glen—Sir Basil had gone to London on business. The general was delighted at the request; he rejoiced to think that Leah took so great an interest in the improvements.

As he drove her along the road he jested with her and teased her, he did not notice that she sat by his side, cold and pale as a marble statue with such an expression of bitter pain on her face as would have startled even a stranger. She was going to say good-by to the beautiful house that would never be her home now. She wanted to look once more on the lavish decorations, at the rooms prepared for her, which she would never use. She tried to picture Het-

tie there—Hettie, with her sweet face and golden hair, who would be so well suited to this dainty, picturesque home; and she wondered as she went through the rooms, whether, when Basil was established there, with Hettie as his wife, he would think of her; whether he would remember her and her great love; whether any idea would come to him of her suffering or of her broken heart.

“You look very tired and ill, Leah,” said the general, in deep concern.

He had caught a sight of her as she came from the room that was to have been her boudoir, and she was off her guard. He was shocked at the white face and the dark, haggard eyes. He kissed her lovingly.

“My dear Leah, what is the matter? Is there anything more than fatigue?”

She raised her brave face to his—he never forgot the look or the voice, and said,—

“No, there is nothing wrong; and I have done nothing which could tire me.”

She looked round for the last time upon a scene that she was never to see again; and, as she drove back, she felt that the pain at her heart could never be sharper.

CHAPTER LIII.

“THERE is something strange in Miss Hatton’s face to-day,” said Leah’s maid to her confidante, the housekeeper. “No one seems to notice anything wrong about her; but I am very anxious. She is so thin that I can never make her dresses to fit her now; and she is often so colorless that I have to use *poudre de rose* to make her presentable—she who had the loveliest bloom in the world.”

"I see the change," returned the housekeeper, gloomily. "She thinks too much of other people. There is nothing like taking care of one's self. She has studied everything for Miss Hettie's comfort, but I have never heard her speak of herself."

"I cannot make it out," said the maid. "I am sure she has not been to sleep all night; she has sat up. I saw death in her face when I went into the room."

"I should think there is nothing wrong between her and Sir Basil," remarked the housekeeper.

"No, I am sure there is not," was the reply. "They are to be married when she comes back from France. Still I am unhappy about her; there is something the matter, I am quite sure. One night I had to go to her room, and she was moaning in her sleep like a dying child: and I have never seen such a face as she had when I went into her room this morning.

For the day and the hour were come. Sir Basil was to go with them as far as Dover, and see them safely on board. They were all four to start by the midday train from Arley to London.

Leah had measured her strength that morning, and found it rapidly failing.

"I could not live through two more days of it," she said. "Thank Heaven, it is almost over?"

She was passive, while her maid took all the pains she could to hide the shrinking of the graceful figure, the pallor of the beautiful face. She must keep up appearances while she was in England, among those who knew her; but, when she was across the sea, she could give way, she could droop and die as she would—but not here.

She bade farewell to the grand old home where she had been so utterly, but so falsely happy. She stood for some time on the terrace where the passion-flowers grew—the spot where she had seen her lover first, and where

her heart had gone out to him. She kissed the bare brown branches. They would live again ; they would be covered with green leaves and starry flowers when leaves and flowers should gladden her eyes no more. She kissed the pictured face of Ænone, recalling every word that had been spoken between Sir Basil and herself on that day when they had stood in front of it. It was like parting with a living friend. She stretched out her hands with a great cry when she took her last look round the room where she had spent such happy hours. All earth and air seemed burning fire. Oh for rest, for change, for the coldness even of the grave ?

Those who saw Miss Hatton's face when she left Brentwood never forgot it.

It was a strange journey to Dover. Sir Arthur was the only one who talked. Hettie avoided either looking at or speaking to Sir Basil, and Leah could have laughed in bitter amusement at the scene. Sir Arthur spoke of his nieces's return, of the marriage, of Glen. of Basil in Parliament, and saw nothing wrong.

They stood together on deck at last, a blue sky above them, the sun shining on the white cliffs of Dover and on the sea, which was almost as smooth as a mirror.

Sir Arthur took Hettie to the other side of the vessel.

" They will have so much to say to each other ; lovers always have. We will leave them alone, Hettie."

So they stood side by side, the deathly pallor of Leah's face bidden by her veil. A terrible calm had fallen over her. She loved Sir Basil still with her whole heart ; she could have knelt down there, and have covered his hands with burning kisses and burning tears. She held them for a moment in a close grasp, while she looked in his face for the last time. The solemn shadow of eternity lay over her.

He was telling her something about Glen and about

Parliament. She did not hear the words. To her the moment was solemn, as though her soul were on her lips, and her eyes were fixed on his with a strained, lingering gaze. How well she had loved him! And he had cared nothing for her; he had preferred some one else. He was asking her if she was sorry to leave him, and she was unable to answer him. The white lips were quite stiff and cold.

Then there came a shout from the sailors. All was in readiness; those who were for shore must leave. The moments were numbered; her eyes never left him, her hand still held his.

"I must go," he said. "Good-by, Leah."

He bent down and kissed her lips. He started to find them so cold.

"Good-by," he repeated. "A pleasant, prosperous journey, Leah, and a happy return."

"Good-by, Basil; good-by my love," she said: and the next moment she was looking over the waters alone.

The rest of the journey was like a dream to her, and she never awoke from it until she stood in the *salon* of the villa at Mentone, and saw the duchess regarding her with tearful eyes.

"Great Heaven," she cried, "this is not Leah; this is a shadow! I thought it was Hettie who had been ill!"

"So it was. I have not been ill," said a voice which the duchess hardly recognized as Leah's. "I am well; but my journey has tired me."

"What can be the matter? What has gone wrong in the girl's life?" thought the kindly woman. "The only thing that she reminds me of is a flower broken by a tempest."

When chance gave her a few minutes alone with the general, she turned to him with an anxious face.

“Sir Arthur,” she said, abruptly, “What has happened to Leah?”

“To Leah? Nothing,” he replied.

“Nothing!” said the duchess. “Are you blind, that you cannot see? She has death in her face.”

“My dear duchess, you exaggerate,” answered Sir Arthur, laughing. “She has not been well lately; she has tired herself by nursing Hettie. Besides, the journey has been a trying one.”

“Nonsense!” said the duchess. “That will not account for the change. Tell me—for I am her best friend—is all right between Leah and Sir Basil?”

“Yes. The wedding has been delayed on account of Hettie’s illness, but Leah does not mind it. Basil would have been with us now but for the Parliamentary business.”

“And you are quite certain that there has been no misunderstanding between them?” pursued the duchess.

“Certain? Most assuredly! Basil came with us as far as Dover; and you should have seen the lovers parting! All is right there.”

“Beautiful Leah Hatton is going to die,” said the duchess to herself; “and nothing will persuade me that all is well between her and her lover.”

The general did not feel quite so sure that all was right when he parted from his niece. She was not looking well, certainly, and the way in which she hung round his neck with kisses, and murmured words of gratitude struck him.

The duchess made one effort to win the girl’s confidence. The family had been a week at Mentone, and Hettie was already much better.

“Leah,” she said, gently, one day, taking her hand, “you know I have always been your best friend. I love you with a great affection, and I am more than distressed about you. You are not happy; will you tell me why?”

Leah bent her head and kissed the kindly hand that rested in her own.

"I am as happy as it is my nature to be," she replied, gently.

"Tell me, Leah, is all well with you and Sir Basil?"

"All is well," she answered. "Dear duchess, I have nothing to tell. If I had, it would be told to you, my best friend."

Her Grace of Rosedene was not satisfied.

"If there is nothing to cause you any unhappiness then I am convinced that you are altogether out of health. No girl could look as you do without some reason for it. You have completely changed. Every one is asking me what is wrong with you."

After that Leah took a sudden resolution.

There was in Mentone a celebrated English physician, Dr. Evan Griffiths—a skilful, prosperous man, very popular among the invalids and the English at Mentone. He lived with his mother in a pretty little villa. Popular as he was, he had never married. It was said that he had no time for wooing.

One evening, as Dr. Griffiths sat alone in his study, the servant announced a young lady. She had sent no card and had given no name, but looked very ill.

At first the doctor felt annoyed. He had no liking for mysterious patients, and felt it hard that he could not have one cigar in peace over the *Lancet*.

"Show the lady in here," he said, impatiently.

But his impatience died away when a tall, closely veiled woman came in and stood silently before him.

She did not speak until the servant had closed the door, then she raised her veil so that he could see her face and he was startled by its delicacy and wonderful beauty.

"I know that I am calling at an unusual time," she

said. "I thank you much for seeing me. I have a question to ask—a question of life or death. Will you answer it?"

"If I can," said the doctor. "Does it concern yourself?"

"Yes," she replied.

And then he felt that death and not life would be the answer, if he could judge from her face.

CHAPTER LIV.

DR. GRIFFITH placed a chair for his beautiful young patient, and, standing by the table, waited until she spoke.

"Do people," she said abruptly, "ever die of a broken heart?"

"I have never known a case," answered the doctor, "though I have heard and read of such a thing."

"Some months since," she said, looking at him with calm, grave eyes, "I was as strong as any one could wish to be. I had splendid health and a perfect constitution. Now I have hardly strength to live, and every one thinks I am in danger."

"There must be a reason for it," remarked the doctor, quietly.

"There is a reason, which I will tell you, and I want you to judge if it will kill me. I have had within the last two months a trouble—a terrible trouble—one that I have had to bury in the depths of my heart. I could not speak of it, or hint it, or place confidence in any living creature concerning it, I have shut my secret in my heart, and it has been preying upon it, It has eaten my heart

away. The constant repression, the desperate efforts I have made to seem as usual, have been too much for me; and now I feel sure that I have some affection of the heart which will soon put an end to my life."

He began to understand something of the case.

"Do you want to live?" he asked briefly.

"No I want to die," she answered.

Then came a string of questions, all which she answered candidly enough. The doctor knit his brows, and was silent for some time: then he listened to the action of the heart, and grew graver still.

"I think," he said, "that you have always had a great tendency to heart-disease; and now, I am sorry to say, it is a confirmed case."

Her face brightened, and she murmured a few words to herself which he did not hear.

"I wish," she said gravely, "to hear the plain truth. It will not frighten me. I prefer death to life."

"It is a hard truth which I have to tell you," he answered, gently.

"I am ready to hear it," she said.

"It is this. I think it probable that you have always had a tendency to heart disease. Perhaps, had your life been happy and without trouble, it might never have developed itself; but the pain you have suffered and the repression have made it fatal. You understand the word fatal?"

"Yes, I understand,"—she said, "and I thank Heaven! I am very ill. At times my heart seems to stand still, it ceases almost to beat. A cold perspiration comes; my face, my hands, and lips grow cold; it seems to me that in another moment I shall die. Again it beats until I cannot bear the trembling of my own body and my blood is all on fire."

"Yes; those are symptoms of disease," he said.

"Tell me doctor," she asked "how long do you think I have to live?"

"Not long," was the grave reply. "In a great measure it lies in your own hands. If you could get rid of this care, if you could prevent yourself from brooding over it, if you could rouse yourself, you might live a little longer."

"I could not," she said: "the restraint has been too great and too persistent. Will you tell me what the end will be like?"

"I wish you would not ask me," he answered, looking pitifully at the fair face.

"It will be the greatest service you can render me," she said. "It matters so little to me. If I have some months to live, I shall carry out an intention which I have formed: if not, I shall forego it! Tell me, doctor."

"You will not live for months," he said—"the greater the pity."

"The greater the joy!" she cried. "Will it be weeks?"

"Weeks in all probability," he replied.

"And the end?" she asked again.

"The end will be sudden and peaceful," he answered. "It may be at any time. Any sudden sorrow or joy might prove fatal. Calmness, peace, resignation, are your greatest helps. Poor child," he said, in an outburst of sudden, tender pity—"poor child! Life has been hard for you!"

"Very hard," she declared.

"I wish," he said, "that you would follow my advice. I could not save your life, but I might prolong it."

"No," she replied. "I am staying here at Mentone; I shall die here, and, when I die, they will be sure to send for you. You will not say that you have seen me?"

"I will not," he promised.

"Accept my best thanks," she said, holding out her hand to him. "I knew there was something radically

wrong ; I am happier and easier, now that I understand what it is. You have done me a service. Farewell !”

He thought of her a hundred times. He wished that he had detained her, that he had forced her to send for her friends. He reproached himself until the end of his life, and yet he had not been to blame.

“ You look better to-night, Leah,” said the duchess. The deadly pallor had left the fair face, and there was a smile in the dark eyes. “ I feel more at ease about you.”

Leah smiled to herself. She was better because she was drawing nearer to the golden shore.

There followed two quiet, peaceful, and happy weeks, of which Hettie liked to think afterward. It struck her at times that Leah looked weak and ill, but she made no complaint.

News came from England that Sir Basil had been returned member for the county. The duke and duchess were delighted. Hettie was pleased, and talked more about it than she talked of anything else.

Leah went to her room ; the sun shone bright and warm, and the air was full of the perfume of flowers. She was tired, with a peculiar feeling of longing for rest which was new to her, and her senses had been suddenly sharpened. She could see further ; she could hear with almost painful distinctness. She had a letter to write, but the feeling of fatigue was so strong upon her that she was hardly inclined to commence her task. “ I will do it at once, and then it will not trouble me,” she said to herself. She went to one of her jewel-cases which was kept locked, and which opened only with a peculiar key. From it she took the small ring case that Sir Basil had given her, and drew from it the old-fashioned wedding-ring with which she was to have been married. But, as she lifted it from the case, it snapped and fell in two in her hands. Whether it had been put away in some awkward fashion, or whether some one,

in looking over the jewel-case, had taken the ring out, accidentally broken it, and replaced it without mentioning the fact, she could not tell. She was not superstitious, she did not think it an omen or augury of evil ; but it gave her a terrible shock. She trembled as though some great disaster had occurred. She had intended to write to Sir Basil, and return him the ring, leaving the letter to be handed to him. Now it lay broken in two—the ring that had been worn by so many faithful wives, that had been given by so many loving husbands—the ring that she had received with such loving trust and confidence—the ring that she had hoped to wear until she lay dead and Basil took it from her.

It was broken now, like her love, her heart, her life. What would Basil do ? she wondered. Would he have it mended ? Would Hettie ever wear it ? She had never shed a tear since she had found that Basil did not love her, but her eyes grew dim as she looked at the broken ring. She kissed it as though it had been a living thing and understood her action.

A broken wedding-ring is never a pleasant sight, and is always supposed to be an omen of misfortune, but there was something unutterably sad about this. It signified so much : the heart of the girl to whom it belonged was broken as surely as the wedding-ring which lay before her snapped in two. She took the two halves and folded them in a sheet of paper, sealed it, and addressed it to Sir Basil, then she drew towards her a sheet of paper to write the letter which she felt was to be the last she would ever pen.

CHAPTER LV.

LEAH looked out at the golden sunshine and the bright blue sky. How fair the earth was ! It seemed hard that every one could not be happy, that hopes must perish, love be wrecked, life all spoiled. Then she began to write. That moment presented the supreme temptation of her life. She longed so intensely to tell him that she knew all, to reproach him that he had preferred another, to tell him that it was the knowledge of this fact which had killed her. She longed to say this to him. It seemed so hard to die and make no sign. He would live and be happy, and no one would ever know what she had suffered or why she had died.

She sat for some time with the pen in her hand. It was the one great temptation of her life. Should she tell him or not ? When she came to die, should she feel any the happier that she had left him with this sting in his breast, this memory which would always be to him one of bitter pain ? It would be ample vengeance. If he knew that her unhappiness had killed her, he could never be happy again. He was honorable and sensitive ; the chances were that if he knew the truth he would never marry Hettie. He was not one to build his happiness on the grave of the woman who had loved him so well. She judged him rightly. If ever he knew or suspected the truth, he would never have another happy moment. It was a great temptation. Her heart throbbed with it, her whole frame trembled ; and then with a supreme effort she conquered it. They—nay, even he whom she loved, when he heard her story—had pronounced her selfish. She could prove now that that was untrue. She could make the greatest sac-

rifice that any woman could make, all the more noble that it would remain for ever a secret between Heaven and herself. She would not tell him one word. If in that past life of hers she had been selfish, her selfishness would be atoned for now. She could write a simple letter, saying nothing of love or reproach, nothing of life or death, but telling him that she had found the wedding-ring broken. "My very dear Basil: To my surprise this morning, on opening my jewel-case, I found the wedding-ring broken. I inclose it. You know better what to do with it than I——"

Swiftly, suddenly, as had been foretold, death came to her, without pain, without bitterness, without agony. The pen dropped from the white fingers; her head fell upon the paper. She died with a smile on her lips. There was not even a spasm of pain, no faint murmur or cry. The throbbing, laboring, broken heart had stopped at last. With the wind that chanted a requiem among the great trees her soul rose to heaven, and the body left behind grew cold and beautiful in the embrace of death.

* * * * *

So they found her, dead, with the half-written letter and the broken wedding-ring.

The duchess was almost frantic. She refused to believe that Leah was dead, it was utterly impossible, she declared. She called for brandy, wine, hot water—every possible restorative. She would not see the mark of death on the beautiful face. She sent for doctors, and one of the first was Dr. Evan Griffiths.

He recognized her at once. This was the despairing girl who had come to him longing with her whole heart to die; and the longing had been granted. He was accustomed to many a sad sight and scene, to every kind of sickness and distress; but he had seen nothing which touched

him more than the dead face of this hapless girl. Tears came into his eyes.

The duchess told him of the broken wedding-ring; she thought it a most marvellous coincidence. And the little story conveyed to the doctor almost all that he wanted to know. Of course there was nothing to be done. Dr. Griffiths said that there was no need for any inquiry; the cause of death was heart disease—there was no doubt of it.

The duchess raised her hands in astonishment.

“Heart disease!” she cried. “I have never heard her complain of her heart!”

“I have,” sobbed Hettie. “I have frequently heard her complain of a sharp, strange pain, and of her heart beating slowly.”

“She must have suffered for years,” said Dr. Griffiths, but he did not add that the disease had been aggravated by some terrible shock. He respected the secret that he had kept so well.

The duchess would not allow anything to be touched in the room until the general and Sir Basil came. The unfinished letter lay upon the table, and the broken wedding-ring was in the folded paper.

They had telegraphed at once for Sir Arthur and Sir Basil. Fast as steam could carry them, they went to Mentone, and found the terrible news true that Leah was dead.

All the calm, imperial beauty of her youth came back to her as she lay sleeping after her long fever and pain. There was no pain on the beautiful face; the thick, dark eyelashes lay like fringe on the white cheeks; there was a strange beauty on the marble brow; and the proud curves of the perfect lips were set in a smile. The duchess had covered the couch on which she lay with lovely white

blossoms ; and so Sir Basil, who had parted from her on board the steamer, saw her again. He kissed the pale lips that had murmured so many loving words to him, weeping like a child, and regretting that he had not loved her more.

The duchess gave him the letter and the ring. He received them in silence. What had he to say ?

But that night, when all was still, he crept back to the room, and laid the two halves of the broken wedding-ring on the cold, white breast. No one else should ever wear it ; it was buried with her.

Early the next morning he went out and procured some scarlet passion-flowers. Sir Arthur liked him all the better because he cried like a child when he placed them in the dead, white hands. One could have fancied that a smile passed over the dead face. Her secret was safe for ever now, and no one knew why she had died. No suspicion of the truth came to any one of them.

So they mourned her, and no sting of bitter memories increased their pain. Hettie and the general learned to love each other in the midst of their trouble more than they would ever have done in prosperity. They mourned long and sincerely for Leah. The general for a long time was quite unlike himself—he seemed unable to recover from the blow ; and there were times when every one thought that Hettie must follow her sister.

There was a great outburst of sorrow in England when the papers told that Leah, the beloved niece of General Sir Arthur Hatton, had died suddenly at Mentone, of heart-disease.

English visitors go now to see her grave ; none leave it without tears. They tell each other how soon she was to have been married to some one whom she loved dearly, and how she was writing to her lover when the summons came. Leah's grave is the most beautiful in the cemetery.

A tall, white marble cross bears her name, and masses of superb scarlet passion-flowers creep up it and overhang the grave.

* * * * *

Five years have passed since Leah's death, but her memory lives bright and beautiful among those who loved her best. Sir Basil and Hettie have been three years married, and they live entirely at Brentwood. Sir Arthur implored them to let it be so. He could not bear to live alone again. So they had consented to make Brentwood their home; leaving it at times to go to Glen, when the general always accompanied them. He loved Hettie, and as the years rolled on, he looked to her for all the comfort and brightness of his life. But those who knew him best said that she had never occupied the same place in his heart which Leah had.

One spot of Brentwood was sacred to Sir Basil—he would never allow it to be touched or changed—and that was the nook on the terrace where the passion-flowers grew. He would not have them cut or pruned: they grew in luxuriant profusion, and he allowed no one to gather them. He loved his fair young wife Hettie with all his heart, yet he never once walked up the avenue without thinking of the beautiful face among the flowers which had brightened into new and sudden life at his approach.

He was very happy. Life had been one long success with him. His fame was ever growing: the time was coming when his name would be honored wherever the English language was spoken. No one ever knew that a woman had died for love of him.

There is no fear that Leah will be forgotten at Brentwood. The beautiful picture of her shown at the Royal Academy and called "The Passion-flower," hangs in the drawing-room there. Every one who sees it stops and looks

with wonder at the lovely face and dark eyes that seem to follow one.

Lady Carlton has a fine, handsome boy, whom she has named Arthur, who inherits her blue eyes and golden hair. She thinks that there is no boy in England like him, and Sir Basil is of the same opinion, though perhaps in his heart he loves best the baby girl called Leah, whose dark eyes and lovely face bring so vividly back to him the one buried forever from the sight of men.

One morning Lady Carlton, at play with her baby-girl, caught her in her arms and held her up in front of the picture of "The Passion-Flower."

"See, Basil," she cried—"little Leah will be the very image of her aunt."

Sir Basil crossed over to his wife.

"She will resemble her," he said, quietly; "but I hope baby's face will not have the shadow of melancholy that lies on this one."

"I hope not," returned Hettie. "Leah always had that look, even when her face was most radiant it was there. Oh, Basil, how young and beautiful she was to die!"

"I often wonder," said Sir Basil, "what would have happened had she lived, Hettie. I never like to think that our happiness—and we are happy, sweet wife—comes from Leah's death."

Hettie looked at him thoughtfully.

"It is not so, Basil," she said. "If Leah had lived, you would have married her, but she never would have been happy. I think she wanted something more than one finds in this world. Her nature was noble and lofty; I do not think any human love would have satisfied her. Do you remember the restless longing on her beautiful face? See—it is there, even in this picture. She would never have been happy."

"Perhaps not," allowed Sir Basil, thinking of the broken wedding-ring and the letter over which she had died -- "perhaps not, Hettie. I think you are right," he said, as they moved slowly away from the beautiful, passionate face.

That was how they judged her

THE END.

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