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HESBA STRETTON

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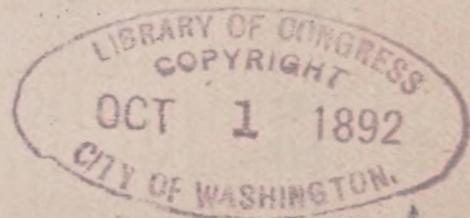


HALF BROTHERS

BY

HESBA STRETTON

AUTHOR OF "COBWEBS AND CABLES," "CAROLA," "JESSICA'S
FIRST PRAYER," ETC.



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HALF BROTHERS.

CHAPTER I.

IN A STRANGE LAND.

It will be a terrible thing to be ill here, among strangers, to have my little child born, and no one with me, if Sidney does not come back. I have been looking for him every day for the last three weeks. Every morning I feel sure he will come, and every night I lie listening for any sound out of doors which might mean he is come. Out on the clock tower the watchmen strike the time on the bell every quarter of an hour, and I know how the night is slipping away. Sometimes I get up and look through the window at the stars sparkling brighter than they ever sparkle on frosty nights in England, and the keen, keen air makes me shiver; but I never see him in the village street, never hear him calling softly, so as not to wake other people, "Sophy!"

And I wonder what Aunt Rachel is thinking of me in England. I know she is troubled about me; yes, and father will be half crazy about me. How dreadful it must be for those you love to disappear! I did not think of that when I stole

away, and left them. And now, O God! what would I give to have Aunt Rachel with me!—especially if he does not come back in time.

It is so lonely here, and I am growing frightened and homesick. I wish I was at home in my little room, in the bed with white curtains round it, and the window darkened to keep the sun out, as it used to be when Aunt Rachel nursed me through the fever. But this room! why, it is as large as a house almost, and my little oil lamp is no better than a glowworm in it. The far corners of the room are as black as a pit, and there are four doors into it, and I cannot fasten any of them. I did not care much when he was with me; but now I am frightened. I never knew before what it was to be afraid. Then there is no landlady in this inn—only Chiara, the old servant, whom I do not like. The landlord is a widower, a rough, good man, I dare say; but I wish there had been a good mistress. Surely, surely, he will come back to me to-morrow.

And now, because I have nothing else to do, and because I want to keep my mind off from worrying about his return, which is certain to be in time, I will write quite fairly and honestly how we came to quarrel, and why he left me, disappearing from me almost as I disappeared from Aunt Rachel and father, only I left them in their own home, and he has left me all alone in a rough inn, in a strange country; and if he does not come back, what will become of me?

Aunt Rachel and father, I am writing all this for you.

We were married quite secretly, for fear of his rich uncle, who would never, never have consented to him marrying a poor saddler's daughter like me. And we left England directly under another name, and went down into Italy and wandered about; I shall have strange things to tell of when I reach home again. And he was so kind, so fond of me; only I vexed him often, because I did not care about the pictures and the music, and the old ruins, and all the things he delighted in. I wish I had pretended to care for them; but he only laughed at first, and called me an odd name—a "pretty Philistine," and took me to look in at the shop windows. So I did not guess that he cared so much, till he got tired, and used to leave me by myself while he went to picture galleries and concerts, and exploring ancient buildings. In Venice he left me all day, time after time, and I used to wander about the Piazza, and in and out of the little narrow streets, until I lost myself; and I knew nothing of Italian, and very little French, and often and often I walked up and down for hours before I found the Piazza again, and then I knew where to go. From Venice we came up here, among the mountains, and now I am in Austria. When I was a girl at school I never thought I should go to Austria. It is a very narrow valley, just wide enough to hold a village with one street, and all that is on the slope. There are fields all along

the valley—fields without any hedgerows, and only rough cart tracks through them, and wherever the tracks cross one another there is a crucifix. Yes, there are crucifixes everywhere, and most of them are so ugly I cannot bear to look at them. I like better the little shrines, where Mary sits with the child Jesus in her arms.

It is strange when I look out of the window to see the great high rocks rising up like walls far into the sky; thousands of feet, Sidney said they are. They are so steep that snow cannot rest on them, and it only lies in the niches and on the ledges and the sharp points, which shine like silver in the sun. The sky looks almost like a flat roof lying over the valley on the tops of these rocky walls. There is not a tree, or a shrub, or a blade of grass growing on them; and how bleak it looks!

I do not like to begin about our quarrel. We had fallen into a way of quarreling, and I did not think much of it. You know, Aunt Rachel, I am always ready to kiss and be friends again, and it will be so again. When he comes back I will do everything he wishes, and I'll pretend to like what he likes. I'll not be the foolish, silly girl I was again.

Nearly a mile from the village there is an old ruin, not a pretty place, only a fortress, built to guard the valley from the Italians, if they sent their soldiers this way. An ugly old place. There is a church built out of the stone, and a long flight of stone steps up to it. I felt very ill

and wretched and out of spirits that day; three weeks to-morrow it will be, and Sidney was worrying me about the ruins.

“I wish you would learn to take some interest in anything besides yourself,” he said at last.

I was sitting on the church steps, and he stood over me, with a gloomy face, and looked at me as if he despised me.

“I wish I’d never seen you!” I cried out suddenly, as if I was beside myself. “I hate the day I ever saw you. I wish I’d been struck blind or dead that day. We’re going to be miserable for ever and ever, and I was happy enough till I knew you.”

Those were bitter words; how could I say them to Sidney?

“If you say that again,” he answered, “I’ll leave you. I’ve borne your temper as long as I can bear it. Do you think you are the only one to be miserable? I curse the day when I met you. It has spoiled all my future life, fool that I was!”

“Fool! yes, that’s true,” I said in my passion, “and I’m married to a fool! And they used to think me so clever at home, poor Aunt Rachel and father did. Me! I’m married to a fool, you know,” and I looked up, and looked round, as if there were people to hear me beside him. But there was nobody. He ground the pebbles under his foot, and raised himself up and stood as if he were going away the next moment.

“Go on one minute longer, Sophy,” he said,

“and I’m off. You may follow me if you please, and be the ruin of my life, as you’re likely to be the plague of it. Oh, fool, fool that I was! But I’ll get a few days’ peace. Another word from you, and I go.”

“Go! go! go!” I cried, quite beside myself; “I shall only be too glad to see you go. Only I wish Aunt Rachel was here.”

“Sophy, will you be reasonable?” he asked, and I thought he was going to give way again, as he always did before.

“No, I won’t be reasonable; I can’t be reasonable,” I said; “how can I be reasonable when I’m married to a fool? If you’re going, go; and if you’re staying, stay. I’m so miserable, I don’t care which.”

I covered my face with my hands and rocked myself to and fro, hearing nothing but my own sobs. I expected to feel his hand on my head every moment, and to hear him say how he adored me. For we had quarreled many a time before, and he had even gone away, and sulked all day with me. But he never failed to beg me to forgive him and be friends again. I did not want to look up into his face, lest I should give way, and be friends before he said he was sorry. But he did not touch me, nor speak, though I sobbed louder and louder.

“Sidney!” I said at last, with my face still hidden from him.

But even then he did not speak; and by and by I lifted up my head, and could not see him

anywhere. There seemed to be no one near me ; but there were plenty of corners in the ruins where he could hide himself and watch me. I sat still for a long time to tire him out. Then I got up, and strolled very slowly down toward the village. There is a crucifix by the side of the narrow fort-road, larger than most of the others, and there on the cross hangs a wooden figure of Jesus Christ, so worn and weather-beaten that it looks almost a skeleton, and all bleached and pale as if it had been hanging there through thousands of years. It seemed very desolate and sad that evening, and I stood looking at it, with the tears in my eyes, making it all dim and misty. The sun was going down, and just then it passed behind the peak of one of the precipices, and a long stream of light fell across a pine forest more than a mile away, and into that forest a lonely man was passing, and he looked like Sidney. My heart sank suddenly ; it is a strange thing to feel one's heart sinking, and I felt all at once as desolate and forsaken as the image on the cross above me.

“ Sidney ! ” I called in as clear and loud a tone as I could. “ Sidney ! ”

But if that man, lost now in the pine forest, was Sidney, he was too far off to hear me, wasn't he? Still I could not give up the hope that he was hiding among the ruins, and I called and called again, louder and louder, for I began to be terrified. It was all in vain. The sun set, and the air grew chilly, and they rang the Angelus in

the clock-tower. The long twilight began, and the flowers shut up their pretty leaves. The cold was very sharp and biting, and made me shiver. So I called him once again in a despairing voice.

“Oh!” I said, looking up to the worn, white face of the Christ upon the cross, as if the wooden image could hear me, “I’m so miserable, and I am so wicked.”

That really made me feel better, and my passion went away in a moment. Yes, I would be good, I said to myself, and never vex him again. I knew I ought to be good to him, for he was so much above me, and ran such risks to marry me. Perhaps I ought to be more obedient to him than if I had married a man who kept a shop, like father. Sometimes I think I should have been happier if I had; but that is nonsense, you know. And Sidney has never been rough or rude to me, as many men would be, if I went into such tempers with them. He is always a gentleman; always.

“I told him I was passionate,” I said, half-aloud, I think; “and he ought to have believed me. And oh! to think how anxious Aunt Rachel is about me, never knowing where I am or what has happened to me for nearly nine months! It is that makes me so miserable and cross; I can’t help flying out at him; but he says I must not tell or write for his sake. Oh! I will be better, I will be good. And he’s so fond of me; I know he can’t be gone far away. I expect he’s gone

back to the inn, and will be waiting for his supper, and I'd better make haste."

But I could not walk quickly, for I felt faint and giddy. Once or twice I stumbled against a stone, and Sidney was not there to help me. When I reached the inn I looked into the room where we had our meals; but he was not there. And he was nowhere in our great barn of a bedroom. His portmanteau was there, and all his things, so I knew he could not stay long away. I made signs to Chiara, the maid, for I cannot speak Italian or German; but she did not understand me. So I went to bed and cried myself to sleep.

Now I have told exactly how it happened. It is nearly three weeks ago; and every hour I have expected to see Sidney come back. He has left most of his money behind in my care; there are nearly eighty pounds in foreign money that I do not understand. Quite plenty; I'm not vexed about that. But I want him to be here taking care of me. What am I to do if he is not here in time? Chiara is kind enough; only we cannot understand one another, and what will become of me? Oh! if Aunt Rachel could only be here!

It is a very rough place, this inn. My bedroom is paved with red tiles like our kitchen at home; and there is no fire-place, only an immense white stove in one corner, which looks like a ghost at night, when there is any moonlight. There is a big deal table, and a kind of sofa, as large as a bed, placed on one side of it. The bed itself is so

high I have to climb into it by a chair. There are four windows; and when I look out at them there is little else to be seen but the great high, awful rocks, shutting out the sky from my sight; they frighten me. Downstairs, the room below mine is the kitchen. It is like a barn, too; paved with rough slabs of stone. There is an enormous table, with benches on each side. At one end of the kitchen is a sort of little room, with six sides, almost round; and in the middle of it is a kind of platform, built of brick, about two feet high; and this is their fire-place, where all the cooking is done. There is always a huge fire of logs burning, and there are tall chairs standing round it, tall enough for people to put their feet on the high hearth. I've sat there myself, with my cold feet on the hot bricks, and very comfortable it is on a frosty night. And above it hangs an enormous, enormous extinguisher, which serves as a chimney, but which can be lowered by chains. At nights all the rough men in the village come and sit round this queer fire-place; and oh! the noises there are make me shiver with terror.

Chiara is very careful of me; too careful. She makes me go out a little every day, when I would rather stay in, and watch for Sidney. I always go as far as the old crucifix, for it seems to comfort me. I always say to it, "Oh, he must come back to-day, I can't bear it any longer. And oh! I'll never, never vex him any more." And the sad face seems to understand, and the head bows down lower as if to listen to me. It seems to

heed me, and to be very sorry for me. I wonder if it can be wicked to feel in this way. But in England I should not want any crucifix, I should have Aunt Rachel.

I am afraid Sidney forgot that I should want him near me. Suppose he does not come back till I am well and strong again, and can put my baby into his arms myself. There is a pretty shrine on the other road to the village, not the road where he left me, and in it is Mary with a sweet little child lying across her knees asleep. Suppose he should come and find us like that, and I could not wake the baby, and he knelt down before us, and put his arms round us both. Oh, I should never be in a passion again.

I have not written all this at once. Oh, no! Chiara takes the pen and ink away, and shakes her funny old head at me. She makes me laugh sometimes, even now. Whenever I hear the tramp, tramp of her wooden shoes, I fancy she is coming to say Sidney is here, and afraid to startle me; but it would not startle me, for I expect him all the time.

Some day he will drive me in a carriage and pair, along the streets at home, and all the neighbors will see, and say, "Why, there's Sophy Goldsmith come back, riding in her own carriage!" And I shall take my baby, and show him to my aunts and father, and ask them if it was not worth while to be sorry and anxious for a time to have an ending like this.

This moment I have made up my mind that

they shall not be sorry nor anxious any longer. I will send this long story I have written to Aunt Rachel; and I will send our portraits which Sidney had taken in Florence. Oh, how handsome he is! And I, don't you think I am very pretty? I did not know I looked like that. Good-by, Sidney and myself. I must make Chiara buy me ever so many postage stamps tomorrow morning.

Dearest father and Aunt Rachel, come and take care of me and my little baby. Forgive me, forgive me, for being a grief to you!

SOPHY.

CHAPTER II.

AT INNSBRUCK.

WHEN Sidney Martin turned away from his petulant young wife, and strode with long hasty strides up the mountain track which lay nearest to him, he did so simply from the impulse of passion. He was little more than a boy himself; just as she was little more than a wayward girl. It was scarcely a year since he left Oxford; and he was now spending a few months in traveling abroad as a holiday, before settling down to the serious business of life. His uncle was the head of the great firm of Martin, Swansea & Co., shipping agents, whose business lay like a vast net over the whole commercial world, bringing in golden gains from the farthest and least known of foreign markets. Sir John Martin, for he had already been knighted, and looked forward to a baronetcy, was a born Londoner, at home only in the streets of London, and unable to find pleasure or recreation elsewhere. But he was desirous that his nephew and heir should be a man of the world, finding himself unembarrassed and at home in any sphere of society; especially those above the original position of his family. To this end he had sent Sidney to Eton and Ox-

ford ; and had now given him a year's holiday to see those foreign sights presumed to be necessary to the full completion of his education.

The misfortune was, as Sidney had long since owned to himself, that he had not been content to take this holiday alone. He was in love, with a boy's passion, with Sophy Goldsmith ; and he knew his uncle would rather follow him to the grave than see him married to a girl so far beneath him in position. It was impossible to leave Sophy behind ; he had no difficulty in persuading her to consent to a secret marriage. She was a girl of the same age as himself, whose sole literary education had consisted in the reading of third-rate novels, where none of the heroines would have hesitated for a moment from stealing away, as she did, from her very commonplace home ; to which she expected some day to return in great state and glory.

But the stolen happiness had been very brief. Sidney, boy as he was, found out too soon how ignorant and empty-headed his pretty, uneducated wife was. She was in no sense a companion for him. Traveling about from place to place, with all the somewhat pedantic book-learning of his university career fresh upon him, and with enthusiastic associations for many of the spots they visited, especially in Italy and Greece, he was appalled to find that what interested him beyond words was inexpressibly wearisome to her. What was the Palace of the Cæsars to one who knew only as much of Roman history as she

had learned in Mangnall's Questions at the poor day-school she had gone to? Or Horace's farm; who was Horace? Or Pliny's villa; she knew nothing of Pliny. Why did he want to go to Tusculum? And why did he care about the Etruscan tombs? She did not want to learn. She had not married to go to school again, she declared one day, with a burst of tears; and if he had not loved her as she was he ought to have left her. There were those who would have loved her if she had not known a great A from a chest of drawers. She would not bother herself with any such things.

Sidney discovered, too, that she cared equally little for painting or music. A brass band playing dance-music in the streets and a strongly tinted oleograph was as far as her native taste in music and art would carry her; and she resented the most delicately hinted instruction on these points also. The wild and magnificent scenery which delighted him immeasurably, was dreary and unintelligible to her. She loved streets and shops, and driving amid throngs of other carriages, and going to theaters, though even there she yawned and moped because she could not understand a word the actors spoke. It was in vain he urged her to try and acquire a knowledge of the language. She was going to live in England, she argued; and it was not worth while to spend her time in learning Italian or French.

Before six months had passed, the inward conviction had eaten into Sidney's mind that his

marriage was a fatal mistake. He brooded silently over this thought until it affected strongly his temper, kind and sanguine when untried, but now falling into a somber despair. He had been guilty of a folly which his uncle would never overlook. If Sophy had been as intellectual as she was beautiful, he could have educated her, and so made a companion of her; and possibly his uncle might in time be won over to forgiveness. A brilliant, beautiful woman, able to hold her own in society, one of whom Sir John could be proud, might have conquered him; but never an ignorant, empty-headed, low-born dunce, like Sophy. A dunce and a fool, the young husband called her in the bitter intolerance of youth; for youth demands perfection in every person save self.

This inward disgust and weariness of his silly little wife had been smouldering and increasing for months. Once before he had given way to it so far as to leave her for a few days, and to wander about in what seemed a blissful and restful solitude. But he had written to her, and kept her informed of his movements, and had returned after a short absence. Now he felt he could not take up the heavy burden again; not voluntarily.

He made his way through the darkening shadows of great pine forests and narrow valleys, to Toblach, a village about twenty miles distant, at the entrance of the Ampezzo valley, through which Sophy must pass, if she continued her journey without retracing alone the route by

which they had come. And there he remained for three or four days, expecting to see her arrival hour after hour. Then he grew nettled. She was waiting for him to go back penitent, like the prodigal son. Not he! She was quite able to manage a journey alone; and he had left her plenty of money—indeed, nearly all he possessed. It was not as if she was some high-born young lady, who had never ventured out of doors unattended. Sophy had the hardy independence of a girl who had earned her own living, and had expected to manage for herself all her life. This had become one of her offenses in his eyes. She was as sharp as a needle in avoiding imposition, and taking care of money; and her generalship at the many hotels they had stayed in had at first amused, and then enraged him. She could take very good care of herself.

Still, when he went on his way, he left word with the landlord of the hotel that he was gone to the Kaiserkrone at Botzen; and at Botzen he stayed another three days, and left the same instructions as to her following him to the Goldne Sonne, at Innsbruck. Each journey made the distance between them greater, and gave to him a feeling of stronger relief at being free from her presence. There was no return of his boyish passion for her; not a spark revived in the ashes of the old flame.

He was sauntering through the Hofkirche at Innsbruck, gazing somewhat wearily at the grotesque bronze figures surrounding the tomb of

Maximilian, and thinking how Sophy would have screamed with laughter, and talked in the shrill key that had so often made him look round ashamed, in other famous churches; for he was at an age when shame is an overpowering vexation.

“Thank Heaven, she is not here,” he said half aloud, when suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a familiar voice exclaimed:

“What, Sidney! you are here—and alone!”

“Alone!” he repeated; “who did you expect to find with me, George?” he asked irritably.

It was the last word that struck him, and overbalanced the astonishment he felt at hearing his cousin’s voice. George Martin shrugged his shoulders.

“Come out of this church,” he said, in a voice toned down to quietness, “and I’ll tell you straight. I never [could manage anything, you know; there’s no diplomacy in me, and so I told Uncle John. Come; I can’t talk about it here.”

They went out into the open air, and strolled down to the river in silence. George Martin was in no hurry to tell his message, and Sidney shrank from receiving it. He had often dreaded that some rumor might reach his uncle; for Sophy had not been prudent enough in effacing herself on their travels. So the two young men stood on the bridge, gazing down at the rapid rushing of the waters below them, and for some time neither of them spoke a word.

“Old fellow,” said George at last, laying his hand affectionately on Sidney’s shoulder, “I’m so glad to see you alone. There isn’t anybody at the hotel, is there?”

“What do you mean?” asked Sidney with a parched throat.

“Anyone you would be ashamed of, you know,” he continued. “Uncle John heard somehow there was a girl traveling about with you—I don’t like to say it, Sid—and he sent me off at a moment’s notice after you. There, now the murder’s out! Uncle John said, ‘Don’t be bluff and outspoken; but find out quietly.’ But I never could be diplomatic. You are alone, Sidney, aren’t you?”

“Quite alone,” answered Sidney, looking frankly and steadily into his cousin’s face. There was always a winning straightforwardness and clearness in his gray eyes, as if the soul of honor dwelt behind them, which went right to the hearts of those who met their gaze; and George Martin’s clouded face brightened at once.

“I’m so glad, so thankful, old fellow!” he exclaimed. “I don’t mind now telling you, uncle was in an awful rage, swore he would disinherit you, and cut you off without even a shilling, you know; and sent me to find you out, because I was to be the heir in your place, if it was true. Perhaps he thought that would make me keen to find it true. But oh, how thankful I am to find it false? We are more like brothers than cousins,

Sidney ; and I'd rather lose a dozen fortunes than lose you."

Sidney grasped his hand with a firm, strong clasp, but said nothing. For the moment he was dumb ; his pulses beat too strongly for him to speak in a natural tone. Disinherited ! He who had not a penny of his own. George Martin attributed his silence and agitation to the indignation he must be feeling.

"Come home at once with me," he said, "and make it all right with Uncle John. It was a vile scandal, and just the thing to exasperate him. It's only giving up a few weeks of your holiday ; and it's worth while, I tell you, Sid. He said he had it on good authority ; but if you go back with me, he'll be satisfied."

"I don't know," answered Sidney, with some hesitation ; "it's like owning I am afraid of being disinherited. Leave me to think it over ; it is not a thing to be decided in a moment."

Yet he knew at the bottom of his heart that he had already decided. It seemed to him as if he had been saved from a fatal exposure by the drift of circumstances. But for Sophy's violent temper she would either have been with him when his cousin met him at Innsbruck, or George would have pursued his journey to the Ampezzo valley, and found them there. Then it would have been impossible to conceal the truth—the hateful truth—any longer. That would have been utter ruin for them both. He could do nothing to maintain a wife or, indeed, himself, if his uncle disin-

herited him. So far he had never earned a sixpence in his life. If he acknowledged Sophy just now, it would only be to bring her to destitution; or to make himself dependent upon her exertions.

He went back to his hotel, and wrote a long letter to his young wife, carefully worded, lest it should fall into wrong hands. He told her to make her way as directly as possible to England to her father's house; and to let him know immediately of her return there. She could reach it by tolerably easy railway journeys in about a week; and he carefully traced out her route, entering the moment of departure for each train she must take, and telling her at what hotels she must stay. It was now a week since he had left her, and he had no doubt she was on her way after him. It seemed to him as though he was taking an almost tender care for her safety and comfort, more than she deserved; and thought she ought to be very grateful to him for it. He urged the utmost prudence upon her in regard to their secret.

He left this letter with the landlord of the Goldne Sonne, doing so with considerable caution, very well concealed. It was addressed to S. Martin only, and might have been either for a man or a woman. If no person claimed it, it was to be forwarded to him intact at the end of three months, when he would send a handsome acknowledgment for it. But it would probably be asked for in the course of a few days; for Sidney

reminded himself, with self-gratulation, that at both of the hotels he had quitted lately he had left instructions for Sophy; with a careful description of her appearance, that no wrong person should receive them.

These steps set his conscience at rest; and he returned to England with no heavier burden on his spirits than the dread of discovery, which must be borne as long as he was absolutely dependent upon his uncle's favor.

CHAPTER III.

A FORSAKEN CHILD.

SOPHY finished her letter, the letter which was to be posted the next day. But before the morning came her child was born, and the young mother lay speechless and motionless, unconsciously floating down the silent sea of death. There was no one with her but Chiara, the working housekeeper of the inn; but there was no sign that the girl felt troubled or lonely. Chiara laid the baby across her chilling, heaving breast, and for a moment there flickered a smile about her pale lips, as she made a feeble effort to clasp her new-born babe in her arms. But these signs of life were gone in a moment like the passing of a fitful breeze; and her rough nurse, stooping down to look more closely at her white face, saw that the young foreigner was dead.

For some minutes Chiara stood gazing at the dead girl, and the living child on her bosom, without moving. She had dispatched a boy to fetch the nearest doctor, but he was gone to a patient some miles away, and it would be two or three hours before he could reach the inn. All the house and all the village were asleep, except the watchman in the bell-tower, who struck the

deep-toned bell every quarter. It had not occurred to her to summon any helper; she had known what was coming, and had made all necessary preparations. But she had not counted on any risk to the life of the young mother; and this made all the difference in the world.

Chiara believed she perfectly understood the position of affairs. The young Englishman who had disappeared three weeks ago had grown weary of his whim, pretty as the girl was; and would not care if he never heard of her again. That was as plain as the day.

Was there nothing to Chiara's advantage in the turn affairs had taken? The pretty Englishwoman had left boxes enough and goods enough of many kinds, and Chiara was well acquainted with their value, for Sophy was careless with her keys, excepting the key of a strong jewel-case, which the inn servant had never seen open. It was not difficult now to find the key. In a little while she opened the case, and her eyes glistened as they fell upon a roll of bank-notes and a quantity of ducats and gulden, how many she had not time to count. There were a few jewels, too; and the jewel-case was an easy thing to take away and hide. Chiara was a woman of prompt measures. Yes, she could adopt the child, and take care of this fortune for him herself. If it fell into the hands of the landlord, or the *padre*, or the mayor, there would be nothing left by the time the boy grew up. It was the best thing she could do for him; and the Eng-

lishman would be glad enough to be rid of the burden of the child, even if he ever returned to make inquiries after the girl he had deserted. He had left all this money behind him to make amends to her for his desertion, and was sure not to come back. That was as clear as day.

She left the baby lying across its dead mother, and stole away softly to her own garret to hide her treasure securely. The dawn was breaking in a soft twilight which would strengthen into the full day long before the sun could climb the high barrier of the rocks. Very soon the cocks began to crow, and the few birds under the eaves to twitter. The doctor was not yet come when Chiara thundered at her master's door, and called out in a loud voice :

“Signore, a boy is born, and the little signora is dead.”

The landlord was a man who cared for nothing if his dinner was to his liking and his wines good. Chiara had managed all domestic affairs so well for so many years that he was willing she should manage this little difficulty. The trusty woman produced enough money to defray all the expenses incurred by the English people, who had honored his hotel with their custom. No one questioned the claim of Chiara to the clothes and the few jewels left by the English lady, especially as she took upon herself the entire charge of the child. The dead mother was buried without rite or ceremony in a solitary corner of the village

cemetery, for everybody knew she was not entitled to a Christian burial, being an accursed heretic ; but the child was baptized into the Catholic Church.

It was not possible for Chiara to keep the baby herself in the bustling life of the village inn ; and she had no wish to do so. She had a sister, with children of her own, living up on the mountains, in a small group of huts where a few shepherds and goatherds lived near one another for safety and companionship during the bitter winter months, when the wolves prowled around the hovels, under whose roofs the goats and sheep were folded, as well as the men, women, and children. The children received almost less care and attention than the sheep and goats, which were worth money. The whole community led a savage and uncivilized life. Behind their little hamlet rose the huge escarpment of gray rocks, which hid the sun from them until it was high in the heavens, and in whose clefts the snow and ice lay unmelted ten months in the year. Far below them was the valley, with its church and clock-tower, from which the chiming of bells came up to their ears plainly enough ; but the distance was too great for any but the strongest among them to go down, unless it was a great festival of the church, when their eternal salvation depended upon assisting at it. Now and then a priest made his way up to this far-off corner of his parish, but it was only when one of its few inhabitants was dying. No one had the courage

to undertake the task of civilizing this little plot of almost savage barbarism.

The name of the young Englishman, the father of the little waif thrust back in this manner to a state of original savagery, had been entered in the register of the village inn as S. Martin. The child was christened Martino. Chiara agreed to pay 150 kreutzers a month for his maintenance, an enormous sum it seemed, but her sister knew how to drive a good bargain, and had a shrewd suspicion that Chiara could very well afford to pay more.

CHAPTER IV.

A REPRIEVE.

THREE months passed by, and found Sidney Martin fairly at work in his uncle's office. It had been a busy and exciting time with him, and he had had little leisure to brood over his private difficulties. It was impossible that he could forget Sophy, but he felt more willing to forget her than to rack his brains over the silence and mystery that surrounded her absence. Inherited instinct awoke within him a love of finance and commerce. The world-wide business carried on in the busy offices of his uncle's shipping agency firm in the City of London had taken possession of his mind, appealing curiously enough to his imagination, and he was throwing himself into its affairs with an ardor very satisfactory to Sir John Martin.

There was something fascinating to Sidney in the piles of letters coming in day after day bearing the postmarks of every country under the sun, and the foreign letters were generally allotted to him. But one morning, as they passed through his hands, a letter bearing the name of the Goldne Sonne, Innsbruck, lay among them, bringing his heart to his mouth as his eye fell

upon it. He glanced around at his uncle, as if he could not fail to observe it and suspect him of some secret, but Sir John was absorbed with his own share of the correspondence. The Innsbruck letter was slipped away into Sidney's pocket, and he went on opening the rest; but his brain was in a whirl, and refused to take in the import of any of them. "I've a miserable headache to-day," he said at last, with a half groan; "I cannot make anything out of these."

"Go home, my boy," answered his uncle, "and take a holiday. We can do very well without you."

Sidney was glad to get away. This unopened letter—which he had not dared to open in his uncle's presence—seemed of burning importance. Yet he felt sure it was nothing but the letter of directions he had left for Sophy when he quitted Innsbruck. All these months her fate had been a mystery to him. She had disappeared so completely out of his life, that sometimes it seemed to him positively that his marriage had been only a dream. From the moment of his return to England, he had been incessantly worried by the dread of her arrival, either at his uncle's house or at the offices in the City. More than once he had been on the point of telling his uncle all about his fatal mistake, but his courage always failed him at the right moment. Sometimes he felt angry at Sophy's obstinate silence, but more often he was glad of it. He felt so free without her. His understanding and intellect, his very

soul, seemed to have thrown off some stifling incubus. He could enjoy art and music again. There was no silly girl to be jealous of his books. The brief, boyish passion he had felt was dead, and there could be no resurrection of it. It appeared monstrous to him that his whole life should be blighted for one foolish and mad act. If he only knew once for all what had become of her, and that she would never trouble him again, no regret would burden his emancipated spirit.

Instead of going home this morning, he took the train for Apley, a small town lying between London and Oxford, where he had first seen Sophy. On the way down he read his own letter to her, giving her minute directions for her journey. Yes, he had been very thoughtful, very considerate for her; if she had obeyed him, she would now have been awaiting his visit to Apley. He felt a great throb of gladness, however, that it was not so; and then the thought crossed his mind, like a thunderbolt, that possibly she had acted in the very manner he had suggested in the letter he held in his hand, all but his final instruction of letting him know of her safe arrival. If so, his wife and his child were now dwelling in the country town which he had just entered.

This idea opened up to him a great gulf, in which all his future life would be swallowed up. He did not feel any yearning toward his unknown child; it seemed but yesterday since he was a child himself—and yet what ages since! He walked slowly down the almost deserted

High Street, and past the shop where he had first seen her. It was a small saddler's shop, with a man at work in the bow-window, and a show of bridles and reins festooned about the panes of glass. There were three steps up to the door; and he recollected well how Sophy looked as she stood, smiling and blushing, to receive his orders about the saddle he wanted repaired. He was staying then with Colonel Cleveland at Apley Hall, his uncle's oldest friend. How long ago it seemed—yet it was not three years! Oh! what a fool he had been!

He opened the closed door, and set a little bell tinkling loudly. The workman in the window took no notice of him, but a woman came forward from a back room. She was of middle age, and her face bore a strong resemblance to Sophy's. She looked at him with a faint, pleasant smile, though her eyes were sad, and her face pale. There was a gentleness and sweetness about her manner that made him feel uncomfortable and guilty.

“Can you tell me if any of the Clevelands are at home?” he inquired. He knew they were not, or he would not have ventured down to Apley.

“No, sir,” answered Rachel Goldsmith, in a clear though low voice; “Colonel Cleveland is in Germany, I believe, with Miss Cleveland.”

“I almost fancy,” continued Sidney, “that I owe you a few shillings. I ought to pay interest if I do, for the debt has run on for three years or

so. I was staying at Apley Hall, and had my saddle mended here. Do you know if it was paid for?"

"What date was it, sir?" she asked, opening a ledger that lay on a desk on the counter.

"Nearly three years ago," he replied, "as near as I can guess. A young lady took my orders; perhaps she may remember the date."

His voice trembled somewhat, but Rachel Goldsmith did not notice it. Her hands were shaking so much she could hardly turn over the leaves.

"Is she at home? Cannot you ask her?" he inquired; and his pulse seemed to stand still as he waited for her reply.

"Sir," she said, closing the ledger, "we have lost my niece."

"Lost her!" he repeated, and the blood bounded through his veins again, and the color came back to his pallid face. Sophy, then, was not here!

"Yes," she said, with quivering lips, "but not by death. I could bear that and be thankful. But when those you love disappear, oh! nobody knows what the misery is. We do not know if she is dead or alive. I loved her as if she had been my own child; but she did not feel as if she owed me the duty of a child; and, when I thwarted her, she went away, and left a letter saying she was gone to London. We have never, never heard of her since, and it is now over a year ago. She is lost in London."

Rachel Goldsmith's voice was broken with sobs.

But before Sidney spoke again, for he was slow in answering, she went on, with a glimmer of a smile at herself.

“You’ll excuse me, sir,” she said. “I tell everybody, for when you have lost anything no one knows who may come across it, or hear of it. Not that a young gentleman like you could have any chance; and my trouble cannot interest you.”

“Oh! I am more interested than you think,” he answered; “I cannot say how much.”

“I have her photo here,” she continued, “and it might chance that you should see her in London some day. And whatever she has been doing, oh! we’ll welcome her home like a lost lamb. She’s only a young, giddy girl, sir, and she’ll make a good woman by and by. Not that I’m certain she’s in London. For I’ve got a little scrap of writing from her three months after she went away, and it was posted in Rome. But she said she was only traveling, and when she came back she would live in London. I’m sorely afraid she has been deceived and led astray. But here is her likeness, sir, if you’d please to see it, and the note she wrote.”

With a hand that shook visibly, she drew from her pocket a worn and soiled envelope and handed it to Sidney. He turned his back upon her, and went to the half-glass door to look at the contents. There was a fading photograph of Sophy, her pretty features set in a simper, and her slight figure posed in an affected attitude.

But it was Sophy's face ; and a pang of remorse, and almost of a love not quite dead, shot through his heart. He would have given half the fortune he was heir to never to have seen that face.

“Please read the note, sir,” persisted Rachel Goldsmith.

It was an untidy scrawl, and there was a mistake or two in spelling ; but Sidney felt the tears smart under his eyelids as he read the words.

“Dear father,” wrote Sophy, “don't go to be fretting after me. I'm as happy as a queen all day, and living grander than you could ever think of. It has been a strange time since I saw you, but I shall come and tell you all about it as soon as ever I can. We are going to live in London when we come back ; and my husband is a gentleman you never saw, nor never knew. You'll be as glad as I am when you know all.—Your loving Sophy.”

“And that is all you know about her ?” he asked, after a long pause, when he could control himself enough to speak with no more sympathy than should be shown by a kind-hearted stranger.

“All, sir, every word,” she answered, wiping the tears from her eyes. “Of course, I shall never give up hope ; and if prayers will bring her back, my prayers shall. Her father is my brother, and has his name over the shop, ‘James Goldsmith’ ; and sometimes he's nearly mad about it, and sometimes he says she's married to surprise us all, and will come back a grand lady. Well ! thank you kindly, sir, for listening to

me ; but I tell everybody, for who knows who may come across her some day ?”

Sidney bade her good-by, and went his way. There was no trace here of Sophy ; and as he traveled back to town he came to the conclusion that it was best to let the matter rest, and wait for any chance that time might bring. He had ruined his life ; but, until the fatal moment of discovery came, he might still act as if he were not a married man. A reprieve had been granted to him, and he would live as if he were not a criminal.

CHAPTER V.

WINNING THE WORLD.

SIDNEY MARTIN kept his resolve. He blotted out that fatal mistake he had made. Above it he built a fair edifice of energy, integrity, and honor. His uncle's heart delighted in him, and he won golden opinions from all his uncle's old friends. When John Martin died, he left Sidney not only his share as head of the firm, but landed estates in Yorkshire bringing in some thousands a year—all entailed upon his next heir male.

It was a brilliant position for a man under thirty, but no one could have stepped into it with more dignity and grace than did Sidney Martin. His co-executor was his uncle's old friend, Colonel Cleveland, who had lived chiefly abroad for the last ten years, and who naturally left everything in his hands. There were a few complimentary legacies, and some pensions left to old servants. Sidney was munificent in his payment of these bequests, adding gifts of his own to them as he paid them to his uncle's poorer legatees. On his cousin, George Martin, he settled at once the sum of £10,000, and gave £5000 each to George's married sisters. Their gratitude was very moderately expressed, but George's feeling of obliga-

tion to his cousin was sincere and deep. This provision would enable him to marry without longer waiting for a living. At present he was a curate in the East of London, with the modest stipend of £100 a year.

By this time Sophy, and that boyish error of his, had almost slipped out of his memory. His life had been very full since then, and he had passed from boyhood into manhood. He had devoted himself with keen interest to his uncle's business; and, in the close emulation of a vast-reaching commerce, stretching out its hands to the farthest region of the habitable globe, he had ceased to be conscious of the peril ever hanging over his head as long as his uncle lived. Now his uncle's death altered his position, and it would no longer be ruin to him for his disastrous marriage to be discovered. But he was in no way inclined to confess his early blunder.

Sidney possessed an unusual degree of energy and ardor, and these had found ample scope in the affairs of his firm. He had traveled almost all over the known world, except in the interior of the great continents, and he had greatly enjoyed his travels. He was not merely a fortune-hunter; he was a close and interested observer both of man and nature. He lived very much outside of himself, filling his mind with impressions from without, rather than seeking to understand and deepen the principles of his own nature. There had been a consciousness of a hidden sin waiting to be dragged out and re-

pented of, which prevented him from looking too closely at himself. At eight and twenty he was a very different being from the boy, fresh from college, who had flung away his future in a rash marriage. Yet, with an instinct working almost unconsciously within him, he avoided all intimacy and close acquaintance with the women with whom he came in contact. His uncle had never married, and the establishment had been a bachelor one, but there were families and houses enough where Sidney was made effusively welcome. He gained the reputation of being a cynical woman-hater. In fact, their society was too full of peril for him to enjoy it with an ordinary degree of pleasure. That buried secret of his, over which the grass was growing, must be dug up and brought to light if he thought of marrying; and with an intuitive dread of the necessary investigations, he shrank from forming any fresh attachment. At the same time, his life hitherto had been too full of other interests for him to feel the loss of home ties.

“All the world tells me you are not a marrying man, Sidney,” said Colonel Cleveland, one evening, when they stood for a minute on the steps for their club, before parting for the night. Colonel Cleveland had come back to England soon after hearing of his old friend’s death, and several interviews had taken place between him and Sidney, but he had never invited Sidney to his home.

“Yes; I shall remain a bachelor, like my

uncle," said Sidney, with a pleasant smile, "and adopt one of George Martin's boys, as Sir John adopted me. There's less responsibility than with sons of one's own."

"If that's true, you may come and see my daughter Margaret," replied Colonel Cleveland, "and I put you on your honor. She is all I have, is Margaret, and I want to keep her to myself as long as I can. The child knows hardly anybody but me, and she is as happy as the day. All the women I know pester me to let her come out, as they call it. But I say women are best at home, and I'm not going to have my one girl made into a fashionable fool."

"Is there any risk of that?" asked Sidney, laughing.

"Not at present," he answered; "but there's no knowing what a girl of twenty might become. Leave her in my hands till she's thirty, and I'll turn her out a sensible woman. She was fond of your uncle, Sidney, and he was very fond of her. I declare, we might have done you an ill turn if we have been more worldly wise. But they had not met for years when he died."

"You have kept her too much at home," said Sidney.

"No woman can be kept too much at home," he continued. "I would have more Eastern customs in England if I could, and not suffer women to go gadding about in public, blocking up the streets, and hindering business in the shops, and sowing seeds of mischief wherever they go,

Busybodies, gossips, tattlers! 'Speaking things which they ought not,' as Paul says, in his wisdom. Margaret is none of them, I can tell you. I should keep women back—back. That is their place, well in the background, you know. Kindly treated, of course, and their rights secured, only secured by men. Come and see how my plan has worked with Margaret."

"Certainly, with pleasure," replied Sidney.

But he was in no hurry to go. There were many things to be done a hundredfold more interesting to him than an interview with an eccentric man's childish daughter. He scarcely gave Colonel Cleveland's invitation a second thought. Day after day slipped by, and the idea of going did not cross his preoccupied mind. Nor did Colonel Cleveland recur to the subject of his daughter when they met in the city to transact necessary business. Possibly he had been alarmed at his own rashness.

But one afternoon a note reached Sidney by post. It was written in a hand as clear and legible as a clerk's and was quite as brief, and to the point. He read it with a smile.

SIR: My father, Colonel Cleveland, has met with an accident. He bids me ask you if you can come to-night and see him at his house?

MARGARET CLEVELAND.

"No superfluous words here," he thought; "no empty compliments; no conventional forms. If every woman wrote notes like this, a good deal of time would be saved. It is like a telegram."

CHAPTER VI.

COLONEL CLEVELAND.

THE house where Colonel Cleveland was for the present living stood alone on Wimbledon Common, surrounded by a large garden, which was completely walled in on every side. Sidney rode toward it in the twilight of an autumn evening. A yellow light in the western sky shone through the delicate net-work of silver beech trees, where a few leaves were still clinging to the slender branches. All around him there were the forewarnings of the coming winter, and the lingering traces of the dead summer. The pale gray of the low sky overhead was sad ; and sad was the fluttering of the brown leaves as they floated to the ground. A robin was singing its mournful little song, as if all the other birds had forsaken the land, and left it to bear alone the burden of song through the winter. A few solitary rambles, looking as if they had lost their way in the gathering mist, were passing to and fro along the sodden paths. The scent of dying fern filled the air.

Sidney was the more open to all the impressions of nature because of his busy life in the city. This almost deserted, open common, look-

ing like a stretch of distant moorland, was all the more touching and pathetic to him because an hour ago he had been threading his way through the crowded labyrinths of London. The yellow light shining through the beech stems was more lovely, because for half the day his eyes had seen nothing but gaslights burning amid the fog.

He let his horse's pace fall into a slow walk, and lingered to watch the evening star grow brighter as the golden glow died out in the west. There was little anxiety in his mind about Colonel Cleveland's accident. At any rate, for this moment he would enjoy the calm and silence of nature after the noise and hurry of the day. It was a wonderful thing, this stillness of the broad heath, and of the quiet heavens above him, throbbing with life and appealing to his inmost soul with a strange and delicate appeal. It seemed to him as if a voice were speaking, and speaking to him from the sky, and the blue mists, and the vague shadows, and the silent stars overhead; but what the voice said he did not know.

"A little more, and I should be as fanciful as a poet," he said to himself, with a laugh. There had been a time when he had thought himself a poet, or at least a lover of poetry. But that was when he was a boy, before the spell of the world had been cast over him; and before he had yielded to a selfish passion which he could not altogether forget.

It was in a very softened mood that he turned from the Common into Colonel Cleveland's

grounds. He felt almost like a boy again. The life led in the city, the keen competition and cruel strife for fortune, seemed to him, as it had once seemed, to be ignoble, sordid, and barbarous. There were better things than money; things which money could never buy. There was something almost pleasant to him in this vague disdain he felt for the cares and trammels of business. He was inwardly glad that he was not a slave to Mammon. "Not yet," said conscience, entering an unheeded protest.

He was shown into a library, where a lamp, with a shade over it, filled the room with strong lights and deep shadows. It was unoccupied; but in a minute or two the door opened, and a girl entered with a quiet step. She approached him with her hand stretched out, as if he were a well-known friend, and spoke eagerly with a frank, sweet voice, the sweetest voice, he thought at the first sound of it, that he had ever heard.

"My father wants you so much," she said. "Oh! he is so dreadfully hurt."

Her face was in shadow, but he could see that it was pale and troubled; her eyelids were a little red with weeping, and her mouth quivered. It was a lovely face, he felt; and the eyes she lifted up to him seemed, like her voice, to be more beautiful than any he had ever known. She was a tall, slender girl; and the soft white dress she wore hung about her in long and graceful folds. He held her hand for a moment or two in a firm grasp.

“Tell me what I can do for you,” he said in a low tone, as if afraid of startling her.

She met his gaze with an expression on her face full of relief and trust.

“I am so glad you are come,” she said frankly, “my father has been asking for you so often. He was thrown on the Common this morning, and his back is injured, and he suffers, oh! so much pain. Will you come upstairs and see him at once?”

She led the way, running on before him with light and eager footsteps, and, when she had reached the last step on the staircase, looking back upon him with the simplicity of a child, she opened the door of her father’s room softly, and beckoned to him to follow her.

“He is longing to see you,” she said in a low voice.

It seemed to Sidney, when he thought of it afterward, that he had been so occupied in watching Margaret’s movements, and listening to her voice, that he had hardly seen her father. He had an indistinct impression of seeing the gray head lying on a pillow, and the face drawn with pain as the injured man tried to stretch out his hand to welcome him. It was not till Margaret had gone away, after kissing her father’s cheek fondly, that he came to himself, and could attend intelligently to what Colonel Cleveland was saying.

“The doctors are gone now, but they’ve a poor opinion of me, Sidney, a very poor opinion.

Time, they say, may work wonders. 'How much time?' I asked. 'Three or four years, perhaps,' they said. And I'm to lie like a log for years! Good Heavens! is life worth living when it is like that?"

"But they do not always know," answered Sidney, in a voice full of sympathy. "How can they know in so short a time? This morning you were as strong as I am; and in a few weeks you may be nearly as strong as ever, in spite of the doctors."

"To lie like a log for years," repeated Colonel Cleveland, with a groan, "and to chain Margaret to me! Though she would not mind it, poor child. She'd nurse me, without a murmur or a sigh, till she was worn out and gray herself. I know what sort of a daughter she would be, and I am as sorry for her as I am for myself. I'd have let her have some pleasure in her life if I'd known it was coming to this."

"You must not begin to despair so soon," said Sidney; "it is not possible that anyone can judge so quickly of your state. Wait a few days, or weeks even, before you give up hope."

"But I cannot move," he answered, with a hopeless expression on his face, "I cannot stir myself by a hair's breadth. I feel as if I had been turned into stone; only there's such dreadful pain. Sidney, what shall I do? what can I do?"

He broke down into a passionate burst of tears, turning his head from side to side, as if seeking

to hide his face from sight, but unable to lift his hand or to move. Sidney knelt down by the side of the bed, and with as gentle a touch as a woman's wiped the tears away, whispering comforting words into his ear.

"It is too soon to despair," he repeated, "much too soon. And if it should be partly true, I will do all I can for you, as if I were your son. But it cannot be true. It is only for a little while. You are bruised and stiff now, but that will wear off by degrees. Hold fast to the hope of getting over it, for your own sake and Margaret's."

He lingered over Margaret's name as if it were a pleasure to utter it. But he was thinking chiefly of her father at this moment. It was a pitiful thing to witness a strong man suddenly stretched as helpless as a child. Sidney's heart was wrung for him, as he listened to his deep-drawn sobs, which gradually ceased, yet left heavy sighs, which were as disturbing as the sobs. Margaret came in noiselessly and stood by the fire at the other end of the room, her face turned wistfully toward her father. But she did not come nearer to him, and she neither spoke nor stirred until he opened his eyes and saw her.

"Come here, Margaret," he said.

She was beside him in a moment, gazing down at him with eyes full of tenderness and devotion, as if she were ready to give her life for his. He looked up at her with something like a smile upon his face.

“Margaret,” he said, “I love you more than anything else in the world.”

“Yes, father,” she answered with clasped hands and fervent voice, “and I love you more than anything in the world.”

“This is my old friend’s adopted son,” he went on, glancing from her to Sidney. “John Martin trusted him; so we can trust him. I wish you to look upon him as a friend, a trustworthy, straightforward, honorable friend. If you should ever want advice or help, go to him for it. There’s no telling what may happen to me, Margaret, and I want you to know what to do. I shan’t die any sooner for saying this to you, and I shall feel more content.”

“If it will make you any happier,” said Sidney, “I swear solemnly before Almighty God to help your daughter at all times, and to shield her from all possible harm, with my own life, if needful.”

To himself, even more than to his listeners, there sounded an unusual solemnity in the oath he had so involuntarily taken. It seemed a pledge to enter upon some high and chivalrous vocation for the sake of this unknown girl. It imposed upon him an obligation, a bounden duty, from which he could never free himself. He felt glad of it. A glow of self-approbation suffused itself through his soul. He thought of the strong vows of allegiance and devotion taken by the knights of chivalry, at which it was the modern fashion to smile, and he felt astonished at his own

earnestness and warmth. — Would Margaret and her father see anything absurd in this conduct of his ?

No ; they were as grave as himself. They were in deep trouble, and Sidney's words did not sound too serious. They looked at him steadfastly ; Margaret's dark eyes turning from her father to him with unaffected and unconscious earnestness. She held out her hand to him, and he took it reverentially.

“Yes, father,” she said, “I will go to him whenever I want advice or help ; I will think of him always as my friend.”

“Go away now, Margaret,” he said. She obeyed simply, and without appeal, turning round with a half smile upon her wistful face as Sidney opened the door for her. “I have brought her up on military discipline,” said Colonel Cleveland ; “I've taught her to do as she's told, and she will obey me even in my grave. It's happier for women so ; they cannot guide themselves in this wilderness of a world. She'll look to you in the same way now, if anything happens to me. I thought I was dying six hours ago ; and the bitterest thought was leaving my little girl with no counselor. She has got female cousins enough, but no trustworthy man belonging to her. Now that's all right, and you'll see to her as if you were her brother.”

“As long as I live,” answered Sidney with fervor.

It was after midnight when he rode away over the now dark and deserted Common. He was conscious that during the last few hours a crisis had come into his life ; a difficulty which he had long foreseen and carefully avoided. He already loved this girl. But had he any right to love her? Was he free to win her heart? It was more than six years since he had last seen Sophy, and not a syllable of news from her had reached him. He shrank from letting down a sounding-line into the depths of these past years ; it had been better to let them lie undisturbed. But why had he been such a fool as to marry Sophy Goldsmith ?

The night was dark, but the sky was full of stars. Along the high roads crossing the Common lamps glimmered here and there, just tracing out the route, but leaving the open stretch of moorland as dark as if it had been hundreds of miles from any artificial light. The bushes and brushwood were black ; and here and there lay small sinister-looking pools, lurking in treacherous hollows, and catching some gleam of light on their surface, which alone revealed them to the passers-by. A red gloom hung over London, throbbing as if it beat with the pulsations of the life underneath it. There were but few country sounds breaking the stillness, as there would have been on distant moorlands : but now and then the shriek of an engine and the rattling of a train jarred upon the silence ; and to Sidney,

when he reined in his horse and listened to it, a low roar, unlike any other sound, came from the busy and crowded streets stretching for many miles eastward. It was past midnight; and yet London was not asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

MARGARET.

MARGARET CLEVELAND watched Sidney ride away until the darkness hid him from sight. He was to be her friend. But what perils were there in a country like England which could so fill her father's heart with dismay, and induce him to commit her welfare so solemnly to a man who was an absolute stranger to her? She was glad to have Sidney Martin as a friend; there was an attraction to her in his frank, steadfast face, which gave her great pleasure, and inspired a perfect confidence in him, the confidence of a child. But what was her father afraid of for her? To-day had been the most eventful day of her life; a crowd of emotions, mostly painful ones, had invaded the calm of her girlhood. This morning she had still been a child; to-night she was a woman.

Now that trouble had come she felt how utterly imperfect her training had been to prepare her to meet it. She knew nothing of the world. Her father had stood between her and it so completely, that when he had been brought home apparently dying, she had been unable to do anything, or to summon anyone to his aid. She did

not know the name of any of his friends whom he was in the habit of meeting at his club; and if he had not recovered sufficiently to give her Sidney Martin's name and address, she would have known no one to whom she could have looked for help in any contingency.

True, they had been living abroad for some years since her mother's death, and she had felt no wish to oppose her father's plan of keeping her aloof from his somewhat distant relations, and of excluding her from all companionship except his own. She had been quite satisfied with his companionship; and her faithful and loyal nature had accorded a willing obedience to his slightest wish. He chose to treat her as a child, and she was glad to remain a child.

But to-night she did not feel sure that this mode of life had been a wise one, either for herself or him. Suddenly there had come upon her a demand for prompt decision and action, which she was unable to meet. She had been obliged to stand by and let the servants act for her. It was painful to her to feel how helpless she must have been if her father had not gained consciousness enough to whisper to her, "Write at once to Sidney Martin and ask him to come."

The doctors assured her there was no immediate danger for her father's life. Her mind, therefore, was at rest upon that point; and these other thoughts crowded irresistibly upon her serious consideration. It did not occur to her

that her father purposely guarded her from making any outer use of her life; reserving all her sweetness, freshness, and girlish charm for his own pleasure merely. She had never felt herself a prisoner. Yet she knew well she did not live as other girls did; and the balls, concerts, and pleasure parties, of which her father spoke with so much scorn, probably would have had no attraction for her. But there were duties undertaken by other girls in which she had longed to share. There were children to teach, the poor to visit. "Doing good," Margaret called it, simply and vaguely. "He went about doing good," she murmured, turning away from the window, where she had lingered long after Sidney was out of sight, and looking up at a picture of our Lord, surrounded by the sick and poor. "He went about doing good," she repeated.

Her own loneliness and the immense claims of human brotherhood suddenly presented themselves to her aroused mind. Her face lit up with a strange enthusiasm. She could not be alone while there were so many millions of fellow-creatures close by, with natures like her own, whom she could help, and who could help her. She remembered how her mother had spent her life in manifold ministrations to those who were in sorrow or trouble of any kind; and now she was herself twenty years of age, and knew nobody to help or comfort—except her father.

She stole softly downstairs to his room, and crept across the floor to his bedside. He was sleeping, fitfully, the slumber due to a narcotic. The trained nurse sent in by the doctor sat by watching him, and lifted up her hand to enjoin silence. Margaret was not one to break down in a useless display of grief, though her heart sank heavily as she looked on his beloved face, already pallid with pain, and drawn into lines that spoke of intense suffering. How old he looked compared with this morning, when they had started off for their morning's ride across the Common! He was not really old, she thought, not yet fifty; many, many years younger than his friend, Sir John Martin, who had died only a few months ago. Her father had neither the gray hair nor failing strength of an old man. Only a few hours ago he had been as full of health and vigor as herself. And now he looked utterly prostrate and shattered. He moaned in his sleep, and the moan went to her very soul. A great rush of tenderness to him, almost as if he were a child, overflowed her heart. She did not dare to touch him lest she should arouse him, but she bent down and kissed the pillow on which his head lay. Margaret did not sleep that night, literally; though girls of her age rarely pass a whole night sleeplessly. Her soul was too wide awake. It had been slumbering hitherto, in the calm uneventfulness of monotonous days, and in her isolation from companions. She lay in motionless tranquillity on her little white bed, not toss-

ing to and fro as if seeking sleep, but more vividly awake than she had ever felt before. She found herself suddenly called upon to live her own life, to take upon herself the burden of her own duties. The careless unconcern of childhood was over for her, she must learn the duties of a woman.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIENDS, NOT LOVERS.

COLONEL CLEVELAND had the best surgical aid and counsel that could be had in London. A consultation was held over his case by the most eminent surgeons ; his recovery pronounced absolutely hopeless. The injury to the spine was fatal ; and life could be sustained by the utmost care and for only a few years.

The house on Wimbledon Common, which he had rented for a few months, was taken for a term of years, as it was thought impossible to remove Colonel Cleveland to his house in the country, even if he had wished it. But he did not wish to banish himself from the near neighborhood of London, and of his friends who were able to visit him when only a few miles distant. Sidney Martin, who transacted all his business, was obliged to see him almost daily. Never before had Sidney come so near the feeling of having a home. When he saw the lights shining through the uncurtained windows of Colonel Cleveland's suite of rooms on the first floor, his pace always quickened, and his heart beat faster. Margaret would be sure to start up at the first sound of his horse's hoofs on the gravel, and run downstairs

to open the hall-door to him. The pleasant picture of her face looking out through the half-open door often flashed vividly across his brain as he sat in his dark office, with the myriad threads of business passing swiftly through his skillful hands. Margaret's little hand stretched out to be enfolded in his own; Margaret's voice bidding him welcome; he would think of these as his eye mechanically read his business letters, till they brought a glow and a brightness into his heart which he had never known before.

They were friendly only; so he said. He ought not to wish for more than her friendship, as matters stood. "That woman," as he called Sophy in his hours of unwelcome reminiscence, had never shown any sign of existence. He could only hope, with all the strength of a great desire, that she was dead; though to attempt to prove it might bring an avalanche of troubles on his head. But there was no need to take any step, so long as he had no thought of marrying. He would ask for nothing from Margaret but friendship.

His manner to her was that of an elder brother toward a favorite sister. He never sought to see her alone, or to have any private intercourse with her. The frank cordiality of his behavior at once won her confidence and made her altogether at home with him. She knew no other young man; and had no idea that it was the fashion of the world to sneer at any simple friendship existing between a young man and a young woman. Her

intercourse with him was as simple and as open as with her father.

Margaret soon confided to Sidney her wish to know more of her fellow-men, especially those who were unfortunate and unhappy. She knew she could not herself neglect her father, now wholly dependent upon her, for any of the work she might once have undertaken. But to please her Sidney placed his name on the committees of sundry charities, and brought reports of them that were both interesting and entertaining to her in her seclusion. He was astonished himself to find how full of interest these philanthropic missions were ; and he threw himself into them with a great deal of energy. This new phase of his life brought him into closer contact with his cousin, George Martin, who was an East End curate, and was working diligently among the lowest classes of the London poor. Sidney brought George to visit Margaret and her father, and a warm friendship sprang up among them. When Sidney was out of the way, George could not extol him too highly.

“He is better to me than most brothers are to each other,” he said one evening, his eyes growing bright and his voice more animated than usual. “The best fellow in the world, is Sidney. He does not make any profession of religion, and I’m sorry for it, for his life is a Christian life. You know his immense business might well make him a little careless of the poor ; but it does not. He is one of our best workers and helpers. Do

you know, Colonel Cleveland, he spends one night a week with me, seeking outcasts sleeping in the streets? And he has such wonderful tact with them; he speaks to them really like a brother. He has the soul of a missionary; and yet he is as shrewd a man of business as anyone in the City. So I hear."

When Margaret was alone with him, George added still further praises.

"I am engaged to one of the dearest girls," he said, "but there was no chance of our marrying for years; not till I got a living. But as soon as our uncle died, Sidney settled £10,000 upon me; settled it, you know, for fear of my dropping it into the gulf at the East End; and Laura's parents have consented to our being married as soon as I get my holiday. There never was anyone like Sidney."

Margaret listened with shining eyes and a smiling face. It seemed wonderful to her that such a man as Sidney should have been brought to her to be her friend. He looked to her like one who went about being good and doing good, lifting into a higher region every pursuit in which he was engaged; even the details of his business assumed an aspect of romance and dignity when he spoke of them. It was a full life, this one of Sidney's; fuller than that of George, who was only a curate, and could never be more than the rector of a parish. And as far as a girl could share the fullness of his life, he was making her share his. She could hardly realize now how

her days had passed away before she knew him.

Now and then Colonel Cleveland spared Margaret to accompany Sidney to some gathering of the poor in George Martin's parish in the East End. She could sing well; and she sang for them simple English songs, which the most ignorant could understand, and which went home to the saddest hearts. There was an inexpressible charm to Sidney in the unaffected, single-hearted, almost childish grace of the girl, as she stood facing these poor brothers and sisters of hers, and singing with her clear, pure voice words that she would have found it difficult to speak. She was accustomed to dress plainly, and after a fashion of her own; and there was nothing incongruous about her, nothing to excite the envy of the poorest. She might have been one of themselves, but for the simple refinement and unconscious dignity of her bearing.

Sidney was a good speaker, and could hit upon the exact words with which to address any kind of audience, without offending the most critical taste. His speeches were naturally less religious, and more secular, than George Martin's; but there was a kindly, almost brotherly, tone running through them which never failed to tell. He loved to hear the plaudits that interrupted and followed his short addresses; and to watch the color mounting in Margaret's face, and the light kindling in her eyes. There were moments of supreme pleasure to him in those

dingy and crowded lecture-halls and school-rooms.

“How fond they are of you!” she exclaimed one evening, “and how good you are to them!”

He had been offering a number of small prizes for competition, the sum total of which was less than what he would have spent in one evening's entertainment in society; and a tumult of applause had followed. He felt himself that he was walking in a good path. He enjoyed seeing the strange sights that were to be found in unexplored London as much as he had enjoyed the strange scenes in foreign lands. How the poor lived presented to him an interesting problem, to which the usual gatherings of ordinary society were flat and dull. George and he went to and fro in the slums, doing their utmost to lift here and there one victim out of the miry depths. It was a pleasure to him to give aid liberally; a pleasure to feel that these poor people were fond of him; but a far greater pleasure yet to stand in Margaret's eyes as the champion of the sorrowful and neglected.

CHAPTER IX.

IS SOPHY ALIVE ?

“LEAVE Sidney alone with me to-night, Margaret ; I have business to talk about,” said Colonel Cleveland one evening, about a year after his accident. He had never been able to set his foot upon the ground since his fatal fall ; and when Martin entered his room, and looked at the wasted frame and pallid face of the man who had once been so strong and full of life, tears of sympathy and pity stood in his eyes ; and he grasped his thin and meager hand in silence.

“I want a long talk with you alone,” said Colonel Cleveland in a mournful voice. “Sit down, Sidney. Good Heavens ! to think what a wreck I am ! And not yet fifty ! I was just your age when my Margaret was born ; and I never guessed what she would grow to be for me. Margaret will be one-and-twenty next month. She is all the world to me.”

“And to me !” said Sidney to himself.

“There must be some kind of settlement of affairs when she comes of age,” continued her father, “and I’m afraid to let her know them. I’ve been a bad manager for her. What we are living on now is the interest of her mother’s money, and the rent of Apley Hall, which I let

six years ago for seven years. I could not afford to live in it any longer. My speculations always turned out badly, and Apley is heavily mortgaged. Margaret is not the great heiress the world thinks her. Do you think she will care, Sidney ?”

“Not a straw,” he answered ; “you need not be afraid of Margaret.”

“God bless her !” said Colonel Cleveland sadly. “I fancied I could double her fortune ; but Margaret doesn’t care about money, or what money brings ; and she’ll never think she has anything to forgive me. Ought I to tell her all, Sidney ?”

“Why ?” he asked. “Women do not understand about money ; and you could make a general statement that would satisfy her.”

“I might,” said Colonel Cleveland, sighing and falling into a silence which lasted some minutes. “Sidney !” he exclaimed at last, sharply and hotly, “is it possible you don’t see what a treasure my Margaret is ? I know you have the reputation of not being a marrying man ; and that was why I first ventured to ask you to come to see us. But I did not want to lose my girl then. Now I want to find somebody to take care of my darling when I’m gone. For I’m going, going ; every day brings the end nearer. In another year I shall be lying in the vault at Apley beside her mother, and Margaret will be very lonely. Sidney, I thought you were in love with my girl.”

Sidney shaded his eyes with his hands, and little of his face could be seen. In love with her! The phrase seemed poor and commonplace. Why! she was dearer to him than all the world besides; he counted all he had as nothing in comparison with her love, if he could win it. But the memory of his great mistake stood between her and him. The mention of Apley, where he had first seen Sophy, brought vividly to his mind the narrow street, and the little shop, and Sophy's pretty face as it was when he first looked upon it. Oh, what a fool he had been!

"I fancied you loved her," said Colonel Cleveland in an accent of bitter disappointment as Sidney remained silent; "and she is fit to be the wife of a prince. It is not the money you care about, Sidney? And such a marriage would have pleased your uncle; he spoke of it more than once, for he was very fond of Margaret; only I could not bear to think of such a thing then. Surely I can see what she is, though I am her father."

"She is more than all you think her," answered Sidney vehemently. "You cannot value her more than I do. It is I who am unworthy. God knows I could not put my life beside her life—so pure and good and noble."

"Is that all?" asked her father. "Of course a man's life cannot be as unsullied as a girl's. One must sow one's wild oats. Margaret will not think you unworthy; not she. She knows nothing of the world, absolutely nothing. It is

a pure heart and a true one ; and it is yours, if I'm not an old blunderhead. She loves you, and she has never given a thought to any other man. Think of that, Sidney ! If you marry her I shall die happy."

But once more a silence fell between them like a cloud. For a minute or two Sidney felt an unutterable joy in the thought that Margaret loved him. All at once the utter loneliness of all his future years, if he must give her up, flashed across him. For when Colonel Cleveland died this friendly and intimate intercourse between them must cease ; and Margaret would in time become the wife of some other man. The mingled sweetness and bitterness of this moment were almost more than he could bear. Margaret loved him, and it was an exquisite happiness to know it ; but behind her beloved image stood another forbidding his happiness. It was more than seven years since he had deserted Sophy ; and he had been content to let the time slip away, uncertain of her fate, and dreading to learn that she was still alive. Why had he been such a coward ? What could he now say to Margaret's father ? To have that which he most longed for pressed upon him, and yet be unable to accept it, was torture to him. No path seemed open to him ; it seemed impossible to confess the truth. For in the clear light shining upon his conduct at this moment he saw how dastardly and selfish it had been. He had forsaken a young and friendless girl in a moment of pas

sion, and had left her in a strange land, far from her own people, when the hour of woman's sharpest peril was at hand. It was a horrible thing to have done; one which no true woman could forgive. And how would Margaret look upon him if she ever knew the truth?

"I love Margaret," he said at last in a faltering voice, "but I cannot speak of it yet; and I cannot think of marriage for a while. Trust me, Colonel Cleveland. Margaret shall always find a friend in me; and if ever I can ask her to be my wife, it will be the happiest day in my life to me."

"I regret I mentioned it to you," answered Colonel Cleveland stiffly.

Sidney left him sooner than usual, and rode slowly back over the Common, as he had done last autumn, on the night when he first saw Margaret. But it was a month earlier in the year; and the leaves still hung thick upon the trees, which looked black and dense against the sky. The birds had not yet forsaken the Common in search after winter quarters, and a drowsy twitter from the low bushes answered the sound of his horse's hoofs as he rode along. A soft, westerly wind was blowing, and bringing with it the fresh air from all the open lands lying west of London. As he looked round at the house he saw Margaret standing on the balcony belonging to her window, a tall, slim, graceful figure, dressed in white, with the pale moonlight falling on her. His heart ached with a deep and heavy pain.

“God bless her and keep her from sorrow,” he said to himself.

If it was true that Margaret loved him, a bitter sorrow lay before her, one of his making. He had done wrong in going so frequently to see her, and in making so much of her friendship. It had been an unconfessed pleasure to them both; but he ought to have foreseen for her, as well as for himself, what danger lay in its indulgence. Margaret was not brought into contact with any other men, excepting George, who was just married; and Sidney was obliged to own to himself that he had done all he could to win her affection. But he repented it now. Margaret’s love could only bring her sorrow.

He could have gone back and confessed to her his boyish folly, if it had been mere folly. Had Sophy died, he could have told Margaret all about it. But what he could not own was that for seven years he had left himself in absolute ignorance of her fate. No true woman could forgive a crime like that. It was a dastardly crime, he said to himself. He repented of it bitterly; but for some sins there seems no place of repentance, though it is sought carefully, with tears.

Sidney passed the night in close and troubled thought. At last the time had come when he must turn back to the moment when he abandoned his young wife to her fate; and he must trace out what that fate had been. He must at least ascertain whether she was living or dead. What he would do if she was living he need not

yet decide. It was impossible for him to undertake this search himself ; a search which ought to have been made years before, and without which it was hopeless to think of Margaret as his wife. But he had an agent at hand to whom he could intrust this difficult and delicate mission. There was a clerk in his office who had been in his uncle's employ for over thirty-five years, to whom had been intrusted several important investigations, and who had given many proofs of his ability and probity. He would send Trevor to the Ampezzo Valley, where he had left Sophy seven years ago; giving to him such directions and indications as were in his power for tracing her movements after his desertion of her.

He arranged and wrote some notes for Trevor's guidance, with shrewd and clear-sighted skill, careful not to incriminate himself more than was absolutely necessary ; and yet finding himself compelled to admit more than it was wise for any man save himself to know. He was conscious that he was placing too close a confidence in his clerk's hands, and might have to pay heavily for it in years to come. But he must run the risk ; there was no alternative. He could not carry through these investigations in person ; and the time had come when he must learn the fate of his young wife.

“Take the next train to Paris, Trevor,” he said, the following morning, giving to him a sealed letter ; “those are your instructions, and you can study them on your way.”

CHAPTER X.

CHIARA.

TREVOR was thirteen years of age when he entered the office of Martin, Swansea & Co., and occupied one of the lowest places in the house. But luckily for him Sir John Martin had taken a fancy to the sharp-looking lad, and had given him a good commercial education. He had a special faculty for learning languages ; and from time to time had been sent to most of the foreign branches of the shipping agency, thus acquiring a practical knowledge of many of the European dialects ; an acquirement exceedingly useful to him. He had risen to the position almost of a confidential clerk, and received a good salary, but he had not been promoted to any post of authority in the house. His ambition had always been to be at the head of one of the branches of the business ; but the attainment of this end seemed farther away from him now Sir John Martin was dead, and Sidney had succeeded him. Trevor was not attached to Sidney as he had been to his early patron. He had a son about the same age as Sidney ; and from their earliest years he had compared his boy's lot with that of his master's nephew, always grudging the

brilliant and successful career of the latter, and secretly hoping that his uncle might marry and have an heir of his own. There was something painfully dazzling to him in Sidney's present position ; while his son was nothing more than the underpaid usher of a boys' school. Almost unconsciously to himself a deep jealousy and hatred of his young master filled his heart ; though he never contemplated the idea of quitting his employment, the salary he drew being higher than he could have obtained elsewhere.

Trevor studied his instructions with profound interest and a growing suspicion. He remembered with perfect distinctness the time that Sidney was away for a year's sojourn on the Continent before settling down to business. It was the year that his boy had entered upon his very different walk in life. He recollected, too, that Sidney had come back unexpectedly a month or two before his time had expired. It was seven years ago ; and these instructions bade him take up an event that had occurred seven years ago in this remote region, and to follow any clew he could find whereby to trace the movements of an English girl left alone there. Who was it that had left her alone ?

Trevor was in no wise inclined to be unfaithful to the trust reposed in him ; he would not betray his master. But he was quite ready to take advantage of any circumstance that would tend to promote his own interest. Commercial life in the City does not usually foster the highest

principles of honor. Here was plainly a secret, which had been lying dormant for some years, and which he was commissioned to take up from its long slumber. Where there is a secret there is generally a profit to be made by the discoverer of it. He pushed on toward the Ampezzo Valley, and drove through the wondrous beauty and grandeur of it with no thought beyond that of getting as quickly as possible to Cortina, and setting to work on Sidney's instructions. He was, if possible, to ascertain what had become of Sophy without referring to any of the authorities of the village, such as the parish priest or mayor, who might be inclined to ask some inconvenient questions. All that he had to discover was to what place Sophy had gone after leaving Cortina, and then to trace her steps from town to town as far as possible, without bringing too much notice to bear upon his search.

The little one-horse carriage that he had hired at Toblach set him down at the hotel to which Sidney's note had directed him; and he turned at once into the rough and comfortless kitchen on the ground floor, glad to seat himself on one of the high chairs, with his feet on the raised hearth. For the cold was keen at this time of the year after the sun was down, and it had been lost to sight for some hours behind the high rocks which hem in the valley on each side. The great logs lying on the hearth burnt brightly, and the copper pans resting in front of them emitted an appetizing fragrance to those who had been long

in the sharp and frosty air. Trevor would not hear of going upstairs to the solitary dining room, where there was neither fire nor company. A few peasants were sitting patiently at a huge oak table; and a brisk, elderly woman, in a short petticoat, and with white sleeves rolled up above the elbows, was bustling to and fro, looking into the copper cooking-pans, and from time to time exchanging a word or two with the foreigner who made himself so much at home.

At length the landlord came in, and unlocking an old fashioned desk elaborately carved, produced a large volume, strongly bound in leather. It was the Register, in which all travelers were required to enter their names and nationalities, the places from whence they came and those to which they were going, with sundry other particulars possibly interesting to the Austrian police. Trevor in a leisurely manner entered the necessary records, and then turned over the past leaves of the great book. At that time there were not many foreigners passing through the Ampezzo Valley; and he had no difficulty in finding the entries of seven years ago. There lay before him, in Sidney's own handwriting, the words in Italian, "Sidney Martin, with his wife."

"With his wife!" muttered Trevor, half aloud.

Chiara was an unlearned woman, and could not read; but she watched every movement of the stranger with sharp and suspicious eyes. She knew the page on which the young English

signore had inscribed his name seven years ago ; and now she saw the flash of mingled surprise and triumph which crossed the face of Trevor as he uttered the words, "With his wife." It was necessary to do something ; but it behooved her to act cautiously. She drew near to him as he bent over the Register, and laid her hand on his shoulders, with a touch of homely familiarity in no way displeasing.

"You are English?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"We have not many English here," she said. "Germans, yes, and Italians, yes; but few, few English; two or three in the summer, but not every summer."

"English ladies?" he inquired.

"Sometimes," she answered cautiously.

"Do you remember a young English gentleman staying here with his wife seven years ago last June?" he asked.

Chiara paused. Very swiftly she calculated the chances of this Englishman, who could speak Italian easily enough to enter into conversation with anyone he came across, making more inquiries than from herself alone; and she came to the rapid conclusion that it was necessary to tell him everything that her neighbors knew. Other English foreigners had passed through Cortina, but no question had ever been asked about these young people before. She must tell her tale cautiously, and with reserve.

"Ah," she said, with a sigh of recollection,

“the young English gentleman, Signore Martino ! He was a fine, handsome gentleman ; and the young lady was as pretty as a butterfly. Did they belong to you, Signore ? Perhaps she was your daughter ?”

“No,” he answered, “the young lady was no daughter of mine.”

“Is it not possible that the young signore was your son ?” she said, looking doubtfully at Trevor, who did not seem to her grand enough to be the father of the rich young Englishman.

“No,” he replied curtly.

It was a perplexing moment for Chiara. Upstairs, in her box secured with two locks, lay the ducats and gulden, stamped with the Austrian eagle, which she had found in Sophy’s jewel-case. She had not parted with one of them, and she was adding more gulden to them every month from her wages. There was scarcely a richer woman than herself in all the Ampezzo Valley, and the thought of it was an ever springing fountain of satisfaction. But if this foreigner had come to claim her treasure ! Her heart sank at the mere suspicion of such a calamity ; she could not believe that the Englishman had traveled all the way from England for anything less than to demand the inheritance of the dead woman. It would not be possible to pretend that she had spent much of the money upon the child ; for every person in the village could reckon up how much his maintenance had cost her, ever since his birth. There was no reason why she should

not be made to restore every one of those beloved coins, which from time to time she counted over with such fervent affection and delight. It was a very bitter moment to Chiara.

“Come,” said Trevor, with a smile, showing to her a Napoleon lying in the palm of his hand, “I see you know all about them. Sit down, and tell me simply what you know, and this is yours. I am not come here to give you trouble.”

She sat down with her feet on the raised hearth, and in a low tone told him the story exactly as he would have heard it from any other person in the village. It was short and simple. Signore Martino had traveled hither with a girl whom he called his wife; but had deserted her about three weeks before the birth of their child, leaving no trace behind him, and never returning to inquire after those whom he had forsaken. The unhappy girl had died in giving birth to her infant, and was buried in the village cemetery. He might see the grave in the morning, and the priest or the mayor would answer any questions he might choose to ask.

“And what became of the child?” Trevor inquired.

Then Chiara put her apron to her eyes, and replied that she herself had taken charge of the poor child, and put him out to nurse with her sister, who lived on the mountain, and had children of her own. He was growing a big boy now; but she did not complain of the expense, for after

the costs of the funeral were paid, the mayor had permitted her to keep the clothing of the young lady, which she had sold to advantage. There was still a small sum left; but only a few florins. But now an inquiry was being made, would the boy be taken off her hands?

“I can make no promises,” answered Trevor, “for neither the father nor the mother is related to me. But were there no papers left by the young lady? They are of the utmost importance to me; and if you give them up you shall be no loser.”

“There were no papers,” replied Chiara promptly. “The night before the Signora died she made a great fire in the stove and burned bundles of papers. That made me think that she was no married wife, poor thing! There was only just money enough to pay the bill of the house here and the doctor’s fees and the grave in the cemetery. I don’t know what would have become of her if she had not died.”

“Have you nothing that belonged to her?” he asked.

“Just a few little things [left,” she answered; “I will bring them to you—not down here, where everybody can see, but in your bedroom—presently.”

She went away, up to her own attic, as soon as supper was laid on the table. There she opened her strong box, and, kneeling beside it, held for some time in her hand the thick packet which Sophy had sealed up and directed the night be-

fore she died. Which would profit her most? To give up these concealed papers, which most likely contained an account of all the money and goods the Signora had had in her possession, or to keep them secret still, and retain this wealth in her own hands? Unless the stranger gave her very much more than she was already sure of, it was not worth while to expose herself to the indignation and contumely of her neighbors, if ever they should come to know that she had laid hands upon wealth that ought by rights to have been placed in the custody of the mayor. No, it was safer to keep quiet; it would be safer to destroy these papers, as she had often thought of doing. But there was no fire in her room, and it was difficult to make away with them unobserved. She put it off again, as she had done many times, and dropped the packet back into the box, fastening it securely. Then she went down to the great back bedchamber of the inn, where Sophy had died, and laid her handful of ornaments on the table before Trevor. He picked them up one by one, and looked at them with careful curiosity. They were not valuable trinkets—a cameo or two from Rome, and some small mosaics from Florence and glass beads from Venice. Chiara had known their value years ago, and had considered it worth¹⁷ while to keep them for her own adornment when she went to a *festa*. The back of one of the cameo brooches opened, and Trevor found an inscription written on a slip of paper: “For my dear little wife, from Sidney.” Chiara

looked at it almost in a panic ; but Trevor translated it to her.

“Is it possible that he was married?” said Trevor to himself, when Chiara carried away all the other trinkets, leaving this brooch in his hands, after having received double its value in money. He sat long beside the heated stove, weighing the probabilities. It was not an unheard-of thing for a youth of one-and-twenty, with plenty of money and no one to look after him, to travel about these remote and unfrequented regions with a girl who was not by law his wife. He did not know enough of Sidney’s college career to decide whether or not he would be likely to fall into such a crime. But the fact that he had deserted this girl, a base and cowardly action, implied that she had no legal claim upon his protection. On the other hand, there crossed his mind Sidney’s constant avoidance of ordinary social intercourse and avowed disinclination to marriage, which might be accounted for by this girl being already his wedded wife. Moreover, his anxiety now to learn her fate was greater than it would have been if no binding tie was involved in it. He was no longer dependent upon his uncle, and ran no risk of disinheritance by the discovery of any illicit attachment. If Sidney wished to marry now, the necessity of ascertaining what had become of the woman he had forsaken and lost sight of had become of primary importance, supposing her to be legally his wife, and the mother of his heir. But who could this girl have been ?

CHAPTER XI.

AT CORTINA.

EARLY in the morning Trevor found his way to the cemetery, and the gravedigger, who was digging a grave in the dreary and neglected quadrangle, pointed out to him a desolate corner, where the young Englishwoman lay alone. It was strewn over with broken pots and sherds among which a few nettles were growing, and only a little mound, hardly visible, marked the spot where she had been laid in the earth. Even Trevor felt his heart stirred a little at the thought of this unnamed and uncared-for grave. The sexton told him precisely the same story as Chiara had done, and was more than satisfied with the few kreutzers the foreigner gave to him.

Following the gravedigger's directions, Trevor took a narrow, winding path, plentifully bestrewn with stones, which led up the mountain. His brain was too busy with his absorbing discovery to allow him to see the magnificent views opening up to him at almost every turn. He might as well have been threading his way through the crooked streets of the city, so blind and intent was he. The great peaks hanging over the valley were still burning with the bright colors painted

on them by the summer sun, before the rains and snows of winter washed them away, and the pine woods through which he passed were full of the pungent scent of the resinous cones hanging in rich clusters on every branch. The channels of the mountain torrents were almost dry, and the huge bowlders in them were bleached nearly as white as ivory. Higher up the air grew very keen; but the sun was hot, until he passed under the shadow of a precipitous wall of rock, into a long, lateral valley, or hollow, in the slope of the mountains, which the sun had ceased to visit, and would shine upon no more that year. Then he shivered, and looked about him curiously for any human habitation.

He walked for about half a mile in the depressing chill of this unbroken shadow before he came suddenly upon a group of hovels, with neither windows nor chimneys, which were hardly to be discerned as not forming part of the barren scene about them. The low wooden roofs were loaded with heavy stones, telling of the tempestuous winds which swept the mountain slopes up here. But amid the rocks were little patches of sward, where a few sheep were browsing, and some goats were climbing the higher points to nibble any tuft of grass found growing there. A dozen children or so were loitering about listlessly until they caught sight of the extraordinary apparition of a visitor, and then they ran toward him with a savage howl that brought some half-clad, red-eyed women to the doors of the huts. He made

haste to fight his way through the clamorous crew of children, and to address the nearest of them.

“I come from Cortina,” he cried in a loud voice, “from Chiara Lello, who says her sister lives up here.”

“That’s Chiara’s sister,” answered the woman, pointing to another who stood in a doorway amid a cloud of wood smoke.

Trevor approached her, catching a glimpse of the dark and filthy interior of the hut, in which a goat and a kid were lying beside the wood fire. But he shrank from putting his foot inside it, and beckoned to the woman to come forward to him.

“Send these howling children away,” he said.

She caught up a thong of leather and lashed it about them as if there was no other mode of dispersing them, and they scattered out of the way, yelping like dogs. Trevor looked on, wondering if any one of these almost naked and wholly filthy brood could be Sidney Martin’s son.

“Tell me,” he said, “which is the English boy.”

Without a word the woman turned into the hut, and dragged out a child, with no clothing on but a ragged shirt scarcely reaching to his knees. The child’s eyes were dazzled with the light, but they were red and weak; his skin was grimy with thick dirt, and his uncombed hair hung in matted tufts about his face and neck. No sooner did the other children see him than

they began to howl and yell again ; and the boy, tearing himself away from the woman's grasp, sprang like a monkey up the rocks, and having reached a safe height, looked down with a savage, uncouth grin upon those below him. The other children tried in vain to dislodge him by throwing stones at him ; he had them at an advantage, and hit so many of them with the larger stones he hurled from above that they gave up the attack and went back to their sheep and goats.

“ Good Heavens ! ” cried Trevor, with a sudden emotion of pity flooding his cold nature, “ is it possible that this can be Sidney Martin's son ? ”

He sat down on a rock and looked around him. Here almost all traces of civilization were absent. These hovels were not fit for human habitation—hardly fit for pigs, he said to himself. Certainly there was a hideous crucifix erected in a conspicuous spot ; but it was only a brutal and distorted representation of the central fact of Christianity, and appeared to partake of the savagery of its surroundings. There was nothing to be seen from this point but a gloomy circle of rocks, barren and hard and cold, upon which neither tree nor flower grew, and as his eye glanced round them it fell upon the nearly naked but vigorous form of Sidney's child, standing erect on a peak, and jabbering in some unknown and barbarous dialect. Chiara's sister shook her clenched fist at him, and screamed out some rough menace.

“ What do you call the boy ? ” he asked.

“Martino,” she said; “that was his father’s name.”

“Does he know anything? Does he learn anything?” Trevor inquired.

“He knows as much as the rest,” she answered sullenly; “there’s no schoolmaster up here. Besides, he is the child of heathen parents, though our good *padre* did baptize him. His mother was buried like a dog in the cemetery; only Chiara and the gravedigger went to her funeral, and no masses were said for her. Martino isn’t like the child of Christian people. His mother is in hell, and his father will go there when he dies. It was very good of our *padre* to have him baptized.”

“What does he do all day?” he asked.

“He lies by the fire or sits up there out of the way on the rock,” she replied; “the other children will not play with him, and they are right. He’s not a little true Christian like them.”

“Poor little fellow!” cried Trevor passionately. He had had children of his own, whom he loved, and to whom he was a beloved father. It appeared monstrous to him that Sidney Martin’s son should be here, among these barbarians, the object of their tyranny and persecution. If he had been any other boy Trevor would have borne him away at once, resolved not to leave an English-born child to such a fate. But if Sidney had actually been married this was his son and heir; heir to the large estates entailed by Sir

John Martin on Sidney's eldest son. It was a secret of incalculable value to him. What was he to do?

This was a question not to be decided in a hurry. He must first see clearly how to turn it most fully to his own advantage. He was not altogether a bad man; but he had had a city training. Such an avenue to prosperity and power had never been open to him before, and he must be careful how he took his first step along it.

“Be kind to the little lad,” he said, giving a gulden to the woman, “and when I come back you shall have ten of them before I take him away.”

Ten gulden! The thought of so magnificent a sum had never entered into the head of Chiara's sister. She thought a good deal of the hundred and fifty kreutzers paid every month by Chiara; but ten gulden all at once! These English, heathen as they were, must be made of money. She watched the foreigner as he retraced his way along the rocky path until he was quite lost to sight. She would indeed be kind to the child of people so rich and generous.

So for a few weeks Martino had the richest draught of goat's milk and the sweetest morsels of black bread, and the warmest corner by the fire. But she grew weary of indulgence as the months passed by, and the Englishman failed to return and redeem his promise.

CHAPTER XII.

A HALF CONFESSION.

SIDNEY MARTIN was suffering greatly under his fresh burden of anxiety. It seemed to him that all his future happiness or misery depended absolutely upon the result of Trevor's mission. He kept away from the house on Wimbleton Common, for he dared not trust himself in conversation with Margaret. That he loved her, and loved her with the profound, mature passion of manhood—how different from his boyish fancy!—made it impossible for him to approach her with calm friendliness, as he had done before her father's private talk with him, and his avowal that Margaret herself was far from being indifferent to him.

But now he had placed his secret in the hands of another, and must be prepared to acknowledge his boyish error. He must lose Margaret, if Sophy was alive. His imagination was busy in painting to him two lives, either of which might be his in the immediate future.

If Sophy was found he must own her as his wife, and make her the mistress of his house. He pictured her to himself as his wife, with her silly, affected, low-bred manners. His inward

disgust at his own conduct exaggerated her faults, and painted her in the most repulsive colors. Her relations and friends would certainly flock about her; and, though he did not know them, he could not think of them as anything but ignorant and vulgar; for they were nothing but poor shopkeepers in a little market-town. He knew himself too well to resolve upon carrying on a continual conflict with the woman he had made his wife. He would leave her to follow her own way, while he took his; but her way could not fail to intersect his at some points; and he must be brought into contact with a vulgarity and folly which he loathed. His lot must be that bitter one of being linked indissolubly to a companion always at variance with him.

But possibly Sophy's long, persistent silence meant the silence of death. If so, his future promised to be bright and happy far beyond his deserts; for he frankly acknowledged to his own heart that he was unworthy of the prosperous happiness Sophy's death would insure for him. With Margaret as his wife, he might push his ambition to its farthest goal, and meet with no check or shock from her. If she had a fault, it was the transparent simplicity which made her almost too good for this work-a-day world. She had a charm which no other woman he knew possessed—a charm altogether apart from her personal loveliness. He could fancy her an old woman with white hair, and dim eyes, and faded-face, and yet retaining an indescribable attrac-

tion. She would be as beautiful in his eyes when she was seventy as she was now. He felt he could be a good man indeed if she was always at his side.

Day after day he went up to the City and transacted his business, keeping the threads of his world-wide enterprises in his own hand, and directing them with a clear, shrewd head. But he was waiting through all the long hours for the letter which would contain his doom. Trevor was to write to him the first certain information he gathered, and to keep him acquainted with his progress from day to day. At last the letter with the Austrian postmark came, and he fastened the door of his office, giving orders that he was to be interrupted for no one.

It was but a few lines, but it told him that Trevor had seen the grave where Sophy had lain for more than seven years. Sidney had prepared himself, as he believed, for any news that might reach him, and yet it came upon him like a thunderbolt. Poor Sophy! Still, what a relief it was to know she would never trouble him again! And she had been dead all these years, during which he had lived in deadly suspense and terror, as of one over whom a sword was hanging. How foolish he had been! If he had only had the courage to make this simple investigation before how free and joyous the years he had lost would have been. But he had lost these seven years of his youth as a penalty for his early error, and now the punishment was over.

He had intended at first to spend this evening alone, in memory of Sophy and her sad fate. But, before an hour had passed he grew accustomed to the knowledge that she was dead, and felt as if he had known it all these years. It had the dimness of an old sorrow. Seven years in the grave! He did not feel that it would be any shock to himself, or slight to Sophy's memory, if he yielded to his passionate longing to hurry away to Margaret.

It was already evening when he rode swiftly across Wimbledon Common, but it was an hour or two before his usual time, and Margaret was not waiting for him at the open door. He was shown into the library, where he had awaited her first appearance to him, now nearly a year ago. He had loved her from the first moment he saw her, he said to himself; and every day had increased his love. Would to God he was more worthy of her! From the height of his love to her he looked down on the low and foolish infatuation he had felt for Sophy. How could it be possible that, even as a boy, he could have wasted his affections in such a way? When Margaret opened the door, and came in softly, with a pale face, and eyelids a little red with weeping, looking as she did when he first saw her, he felt that she was even dearer to him than he had been fancying.

“Sidney!” she said, meeting him with both hands outstretched, “we have missed you more

than I can tell. Why have you stayed away so long? My father is so ill!"

"Margaret!" he cried stammering. He could not utter a word of all that was in his heart, for he had resolved that, if possible, she should never know of Sophy's existence. There would be no need for the world to know, and he could make it worth while to Trevor to keep the secret. For, after all, it was not a secret involving any important issues; and if the worst came to the worst, he could tell Margaret when she was his wife, and it did not signify to any other person, excepting Margaret's father. He held her hands fast in a strong grasp as he looked at her; and the color came and went on her face, and her eyes fell before his gaze.

"I love you," he said, at length, with parched lips. He had always thought it would be a moment of too great happiness when he could say these words to Margaret, but it was one of heaviness and confusion of soul. He wished now that he had waited a little longer, until he could get rid of the haunting memory of Sophy.

"Yes," answered Margaret, in a very low, sweet tone, "and I love you, Sidney!"

She spoke with the open simplicity of a child, but her lips quivered, and the tears stood in her eyes. He folded her in his arms, and for a minute or two they were both silent. The heaviness and bewilderment of his soul passed away in the sense of present gladness. All the trouble

of his old folly was over ; there was no harvest of bitterness to reap. He was as free as if he had never fallen into any unworthy entanglement. And the pure, sweet, true heart of this girl was as much his own as if he had never known any other love. He declared to himself he never had.

“ I have never loved any woman but you,” he exclaimed aloud, as if he challenged his dead wife to contradict him.

“ And I,” she said, looking up into his face with a smile, “ never thought of loving any man but you.”

He stooped down and kissed her. It was impossible to echo her words.

“ Let us go and tell my father,” she said, after a few minutes had passed by ; “ he is ill, and we must not leave him too long alone. He is very fond of you, Sidney.”

He followed Margaret to the door of her father’s room, but she passed on, beckoning to him to go in alone. Colonel Cleveland lay on his invalid couch, looking more worn than he had done the week before.

“ Welcome back again, Sidney,” he cried out, with a faint smile. “ I was afraid I had scared you away by my imprudence. And I cannot get along without you, my friend.”

“ No, no,” he answered ; “ I stayed away because I could not trust myself with Margaret, after what you said.”

“ Not trust yourself with Margaret !” repeated Colonel Cleveland.

“You told me she loved me,” he replied joyously, “and I love her as my own soul. But I could not feel worthy of her. I will confess all to you, but I do not wish her to know. While I was yet a mere lad, I contracted a secret and most unsuitable marriage ; but the girl died seven years ago. I could not all at once ask Margaret to become my wife after that.”

“Are there any children?” inquired Colonel Cleveland.

“No ; oh, no !” he answered. “How could such a matter be kept secret if there had been any child ?”

But, as he spoke, a dread flashed across his mind. Was it not possible that Sophy had died in giving birth to her child, and the child be still alive ? But, if so, Trevor must have heard of it when he heard of her death, and he would have added this most important item of information in his letter. No, Sophy and her child lay together in the lonely grave of the Ampezzo cemetery. He felt a strange, confused sense of sadness in the thought, mingling with the gladness of being sure that Margaret loved him.

“And you have lived with this secret all these years,” said Colonel Cleveland with a grave face. “It would have made a difference with my old friend if he had known it.”

“Yes,” said Sidney frankly ; “he would probably have disinherited me.”

Colonel Cleveland looked keenly into the grave, but ingenuous face of the young man, and

Sidney bore his gaze with an air of honest regret. He felt penitent, and his penitence sat well upon him. If a past wrong could be blotted out forever, Sidney was ready to perform any penance that would free himself from its consequences. He looked imploringly at Colonel Cleveland.

“Don’t let Margaret know,” he entreated. “I want her to be happier with me than any woman ever was with any husband. Only one man knows it, and he will keep the secret faithfully. What good would it do for her to be told of my boyish infatuation? If it was an important matter, I would not keep it from her. But, just now, she looked into my face and said: ‘I never thought of loving any man but you.’ I would have given half my worldly goods to be able to say the same.”

“Then you have spoken to Margaret?” said her father.

“The moment before I came to you,” he answered.

“And she loves you?” he continued.

“Yes,” said Sidney.

“God bless my Margaret!” cried Colonel Cleveland, in tremulous tones.

“Amen!” said Sidney. “God make me worthy of her love!”

There was a slight pause before Colonel Cleveland spoke again.

“I think it may be as you wish,” he said. “Most young men have some folly to confess ;

and this, though it seems more serious, was only a folly, not a crime. The worst part of it is keeping it a secret all these years. Seven years, did you say? But it is all over now, and Margaret, dear child, need never know."

CHAPTER XIII.

RACHEL GOLDSMITH.

IT was still with some anxiety and a lurking dread that Trevor might bring ill news to mar his happiness, that Sidney awaited his return, and could not account for the delay, as one day passed after another, and he did not come with further details of Sophy's unhappy end. There was a morbid curiosity in his mind to hear all the particulars Trevor had gained about the fate of his young wife and first-born child; and, until this curiosity was satisfied, Margaret's love was not enough to content him. But, by and by there came news of an accident to a diligence crossing the Arlberg Pass, which, meeting with an early fall of snow, had missed the road and been upset over a low precipice. Only one passenger was killed: his luggage and the papers found upon him were forwarded, according to an address inside his portmanteau, to the offices of Sidney Martin, Swansea, & Co. They came direct into Sidney's own hands.

The papers conveyed no further information to Sidney than Trevor's letter had done. There were only a few lines in a cipher which he did not understand, and which he considered

it prudent to burn before passing on the papers, which had nothing to do with his business, to Trevor's family. There was a disappointment to his curiosity in not learning more particulars ; but there was a curious sense of deliverance in the fact of poor Trevor's death, which more than counterbalanced this disappointment. The whole affair was ended now ; completely ended. He had no one to fear. The only man who could have made use of his secret was gone, and out of the way. There could be neither an imprudent speech, nor a threat of disclosure, uttered by Trevor. Sidney acted with his usual liberality to the widow and children of his unfortunate clerk, but he could not grieve over an unforeseen death so convenient for his own peace of mind.

There was nothing now to hinder his marriage with Margaret. There were settlements to make, of course—Apley being settled on Margaret and her second son. The eldest son would inherit the estates and the large fortune entailed by Sir John Martin's will. On Colonel Cleveland's death Margaret herself would become possessor of her mother's dowry.

The feeling of freedom with which Sidney could now live was too new and too unfamiliar to be altogether a happy one. He had scarcely realized how oppressive had been the burden of Sophy's possible claim upon him. It had weighed down his spirit with a constant, yet almost unconscious, repression. He was like a

man who had worn fetters until he drags his foot along the ground, unable to believe that he can walk like other men.

But he was free now ; and he resolved to live such a life as would atone for all his early delinquencies. There should be nothing underhand or contemptible in all his future. His ambition could have free course, and he would prove himself worthy of high fortune. With a wife and companion like Margaret there would be nothing to hinder him from making his way into the foremost ranks of the men of his time.

On the eve of his marriage he brought Margaret a splendid set of diamonds, expecting to see her delight in ornaments so magnificent. She took the case from him with a pleased and happy smile, and looked at them closely for a few minutes, but she shut the case and laid it aside, almost indifferently, he thought.

“You do not care for them ?” he said, in some disappointment.

“I care for anything you give to me,” she answered softly, “but I do not much value ornaments for themselves. I never can care for them.”

“That is because you do not see other girls who wear them,” he replied. “When you go out into society as my wife you will see women sparkling with jewelry, and then you will learn to care for it.”

“Shall I ?” she asked doubtfully ; “but it seems to me childish. You men do not adorn

yourselves with jewels, and we should despise you if you did. It seems like a relic of barbarism, akin to the love of savages for glass beads. What man could strut about in diamonds and not look ridiculous?"

"But you are a woman," he said, laughing.

"Though surely not more childish than a man," she answered, rising from her low seat, and standing beside him with her serious eyes shining into his. "O Sidney, I wish we were poorer people. I should like to work for you, as Laura does for George, because they are not rich. I shall never have any real work to do for you; that would be my idea of happiness. I will wear your diamonds. Oh, yes! But you must not make a child of me."

"You are not a child, but an angel," he said.

"Ah! if you think me an angel," she replied gayly, "it will be very bitter to find out your mistake. But still angels are ministering spirits. Don't you think I would rather use my hands in sewing for you than have you load them with rings? And my feet would be less weary moving up and down on errands for you, than dancing through tedious dances with some other man. I am sure poor people have ways of happiness that we know nothing of."

"Margaret," he said, "you have grown up too much alone. You have missed the wholesome companionship of girls of your own rank."

"Ah!" she cried, "I'm no longer an angel."

She turned away from him rather shyly and sadly, he thought, and touched the bell.

“If you had been a poorer man,” she said, “you would have bought me a beautiful flower, and I should have worn it now, at once; and perhaps, I might have kissed it when it was faded, and put it away as something sacred. But now my maid must take charge of these costly things, and I cannot keep them for no one else to see.”

“Margaret,” he cried, “I would have brought you the loveliest flower in England, if I had known!”

As she stood a little way apart from him, with downcast eyes, he noticed for the first time that she was wearing no flowers. Was it for this reason? Had she waited for him to bring one that she might carry in her bosom this memorable evening, and put it away as something sacred, which no one should see but herself? And it would have been so if he had been a poor man. For a moment he caught a glimpse, through Margaret's eyes, of a happiness simpler, more natural, and nobler in the married life than that which lay before him and her. He could almost have wished himself as poor a man as his cousin George, for the sake of it.

But the door opened in answer to Margaret's ring, and a middle-aged woman entered, whom he fancied he knew by sight. Her face was pleasant, with traces of prettiness, which had become refined by thought and by some sadness. Margaret put her hand affectionately on her arm.

“I can never tell you how much I owe to this

dear friend of mine," she said, looking up into Sidney's face, "and I want you to be a friend to Rachel Goldsmith."

Rachel Goldsmith! The shock was utterly unexpected; but his nature possessed an instinctive kindly consideration for his inferiors which impelled him to stretch out his hand and shake hands with Margaret's favorite maid.

"Since my mother died she has been almost a mother to me," said Margaret.

"I love my young lady as much as I could love a child of my own, sir," said Rachel, looking at him with eyes so much like Sophy's he felt that she must read the secret so jealously guarded in his heart. There was a keen reproach to him in her gaze, and in the air of sadness which rested on her face. She took up the case of diamonds and left them again alone.

"I must tell you something about Rachel," said Margaret, as soon as she was gone. "Her people live at Apley; and her brother is my father's saddler. He had one daughter, about six years older than me; a very pretty girl; quite a lovely face she had. But you may some time have seen her when you were a boy, and came to Apley."

"No," he answered, hardly knowing what he said.

"Everybody admired her," Margaret went on, "and her two aunts doted on her. They sent her to a boarding-school; and then she went out as a nursery governess. But just after she was twenty she disappeared."

Margaret paused, but Sidney said nothing.

“They never found her; they have not found her yet,” she continued. “O Sidney! think how dreadful it is to lose anyone you love in such a way! A thousand times worse than dying, for then we lay the body in the quiet grave, and the soul is in the hands of God; but what misery and degradation she may be suffering.”

“It is a sad history for you to know, my darling,” said Sidney.

“Sad for me to know!” she repeated. “I suppose so; it has often made me sad. But what must it be to those who love her as much as my father loves me? Since we came to London, Rachel has spent many hours in the streets, with a faint, very faint hope of coming across her. And Rachel is such a good woman; so wise and upright. She could not be a better woman if she was a queen.”

“Do you take her with us to-morrow?” he asked; for he felt as if her presence would cloud all his happiness, and become an insupportable burden to him. Yet it was too late to make any change in the arrangements for their journey.

“No,” she answered, “I could not leave my father without Rachel. Since his accident she has been his nurse; and I do not want a maid. Rachel has taught me to be independent of her in almost every way. Didn't I say she was a wise woman?”

“Very wise!” he agreed absently.

CHAPTER XIV.

APLEY HALL.

AT first it seemed almost impossible to Sidney that he could bear the constant presence of Rachel Goldsmith, and the intimate relationship that existed between her and his wife. There were tones in her voice which startled him by recalling Sophy's; and now and then she used local terms and provincialisms which he had never heard anyone utter but Sophy. There was a strong resemblance, too, between them; for Rachel's face was what Sophy's might have grown to be in middle life. It shocked him afresh when he caught sight of it unexpectedly. But it had been agreed before their marriage that Margaret must not be separated from her father; and for the present they were all living together in the house Colonel Cleveland rented on Wimbledon Common. Rachel Goldsmith was even more essential to the comfort and tranquillity of Colonel Cleveland as his nurse, than she was to Margaret's happiness as her maid. It would be impossible to displace her; it might be easier to remove Margaret to a dwelling place of their own.

But as time passed by he grew more accustomed to her presence, and it ceased to chafe him.

Rachel opened her heart to her young lady's husband, and her manner toward him was one of admiration and deference. Her somewhat sad face brightened when he spoke to her; and her smile was a sweet one, more in the eyes than on the lips. Now and then the thought occurred to him—that if Sophy had lived this woman would have come under his roof as a near relation. But Sidney possessed an affectionate nature, capable of taking a very real interest in many persons; even if insignificant persons. This woman, Margaret's maid and Sophy's aunt, had a claim upon him which he could not ignore. Besides, he had resolved before his second marriage that his future life should be a noble one; worthy of Margaret's love and faith in him. It would be a most unworthy act to add to the unknown injury he had inflicted on Rachel Goldsmith—the further sorrow of separating her from Margaret, whom she loved as her own child.

It was part of the penance he had to pay for his boyish fault; that fault of which he had repented, he told himself, so bitterly. It was not a heavy penance. There was nothing else to mar his happiness.

And Margaret's happiness would have been perfect if her father had not been slowly but surely treading the path which led only to the grave. Her marriage had opened the world to her, and she saw the brightest side of it; for Sidney was careful that she should know only the best people. His uncle had made but few

friends, and he himself had lived in a narrow circle. But now, for Margaret's sake, and the gladdening sense of deliverance from a damaging secret, he enlarged the number of his acquaintances, and used his wealth to gain a position in the world which Margaret could enjoy.

Sir John Martin, though he had made but few personal friends, had occupied a prominent place in London as a religious and philanthropic man. It was not difficult to Sidney to regain this position. As long as he had lain under the chance of a discovery that would bring him pain, if it did not bring him disgrace, he had avoided filling the position his uncle had held. But now his past life was buried. Margaret's wishes all lay in the direction of active, personal service of her fellow-men; and Sidney's own nature responded to their claims. It made him feel satisfied that the past was both past and forgotten, when he found himself recognized as a leader among Christian men. And was he not a Christian? Had any man more bitterly repented of his sin?

As for Margaret, no question existed in her mind about her husband's right to call himself a Christian. It had never been her habit to sit in judgment upon others. Religion did not consist in the observance of forms, and the keeping of times and seasons; and she had no ready test to apply for detection. She knew her father made no formal profession of religion; but she could not know how deep and true his love of God might be. Sidney went with her regularly to

church; but the secret intercourse of his soul with God was hidden, could not but be hidden from all other souls. No spirit can be so near another spirit as God is to each. God had given to her that which was his greatest earthly gift—the love of a good man.

On the Michaelmas-day after their marriage the tenancy of the present occupier of Apley Hall expired; and a few weeks afterward the rector of Apley was promoted to a more lucrative benefice, and the living, which was in Colonel Cleveland's gift, was vacant. Margaret had this last piece of news to tell Sidney when he returned from the city.

“My father wishes to offer the living to your cousin George,” she added, “and, Sidney, he wishes more than words can tell—to go home to Apley before he dies.” Margaret's voice faltered, and the tears glistened in her eyes.

“And would you like to go?” he asked, laying his hand fondly on her head. She drew his hand down and laid her lips upon it before answering.

“I was born there,” she said, “and all our happy days, before my mother died, were spent there. But I would not wish to go if it separated me at all from you.”

Margaret expressed so few desires that Sidney could not feel content to oppose her slightest wish. Apley Hall was a beautiful old Elizabethan mansion, and was in every way a desirable and suitable country house for them. It was probable that if he adopted this position which opened

to him as a country squire, he might be elected a member for one of the neighboring boroughs, or even for the county. To go into Parliament had always been a part of his scheme for the future. Yet, inwardly, he shrank a little from living so near to the home of his dead wife, and in the midst of her plebeian relations, whom he could not altogether avoid in so small a country town. They must remind him of a past which ought to be not only dead, but buried and forgotten. He sat silently weighing this question in the balance, unable to come to a decision.

“It is my birthplace,” said Margaret, in a low voice, “and I should like it to be the birthplace of our child.”

“It shall be so,” he answered, kissing her with passionate tenderness.

CHAPTER XV.

LIFE AND DEATH.

IT was early in November when Apley Hall was ready for their return, after seven years' absence. George Martin, with his wife and child, had already taken possession of the Rectory, which stood beside the church, just beyond the boundary of the park, and at a short distance from the Hall. Both houses were built of stone, and were fine specimens of Elizabethan architecture. The walls were toned down to a soft, low gray, on which the golden and silvery lichen lay in harmonious coloring. Here and there some finely trained ivy climbed to the roof, or twined about the mullioned windows. The park was richly wooded, chiefly with beech trees, which at the moment of their return were almost as thick in foliage as during the summer, but with every shade of brown and yellow on their leaves. On one side of the Hall there stretched a long pool, nearly large enough to be called a lake, where water lilies grew in profusion; and in whose tranquil surface the bronzed beech trees were clearly reflected. Margaret breathed a sigh of perfect contentment as she found herself once more at home; and her father lifted up his feeble head

and smiled sadly as he gave her a welcome back to it.

The tenantry had wished to give them a noisy "welcome home," but this Sidney had decisively negatived, both on Colonel Cleveland's account and Margaret's. For in a few weeks after their return a son and heir was born. The sight of the child seemed to give new life to Colonel Cleveland, and the following day he insisted on being carried on his invalid couch into Margaret's room, to see how well she was for himself.

"My darling!" he said, in a loud, excited voice, "I saw you in the first hour of your existence, and you have been my treasure ever since; and this little lad will be your treasure."

"Yes," she answered, "I never thought there was such happiness as this. I wish every woman in the world were as happy as I am."

"Take me away," he said suddenly, in a low voice, to those who had carried him to his daughter's side, "I am dying."

We come here upon the most singular part of Margaret's inward life; the most difficult to narrate; the least likely to be understood.

For the last twenty-four hours she had been passing through a series of the most agitating emotions, which penetrated the deepest recesses of her nature. The birth of her child had touched the very spring and fountain of love and joy. There was an overwhelming sense of rapture to her in the consciousness of being a mother, of feeling the helpless, breathing, moving baby lying

in her arms. There was a blending of pitifulness and tenderness, and an exquisite sense of ownership, in her feelings toward the little creature, such as had never entered into her heart to dream of. To die for this child would be nothing; she felt she could endure long ages of deepest sorrow if it could bring him any good in the end. Her own personality was gone; it had entered into her child. Henceforth it seemed as if she would live and breathe in him; and his life would be far nearer and dearer to her than her own.

Upon this extraordinary exaltation and happiness there came the sudden shock of her father's death. She recollected too keenly the sense of loss and separation that had fallen upon her when her mother died; when all the old, beloved, familiar duties were ended forever; the voice silent, the eyes closed. It was so with her father; he was gone from all the conditions of life known to her. They told her he was dead.

A curtain fell, thick and impenetrable, between her and the outer world. Her senses no longer brought information of what was going on about her to her brain; but her brain did not feel bewildered, or her memory failing. Rather both were preternaturally clear and active. Her own life, and the lives of others as far as they had been in contact with hers, lay before her in strange distinctness; and her judgment, held till now in abeyance, was acting keenly and quickly, discriminating and condemning or approving, as scene after scene passed rapidly in review. The

child's little life of twenty-four hours was clear to her; and all her exquisite joy in having given birth to a son.

Then it seemed to her—but with what words to describe it Margaret could never tell—that she entered into a light, a glory, a radiance far beyond the brightest sun; and felt an embrace in which her soul lay, as her little child had lain upon her bosom; and there was a throb through all her being, as if she felt the beating of God's heart toward her, and it was of an infinite pitifulness and tenderness and sense of ownership in her, as she had felt toward her newborn babe. And she knew that she was born into another world; and that this was the first moment of life in the knowledge of the infinite love of God. She was immeasurably dearer to him than her earth-born son was to her; and her joy over him was but the faintest symbol of God's eternal joy over her.

“Can this be death?” she cried aloud, joyously and wonderingly; and Sidney, kneeling beside her, felt that the sting of death was in his own soul.

But Margaret did not know that she had spoken. The trance, if it was a trance, continued. And now the rapture that possessed her soul changed a little; neither failing nor chilling, but giving her strength to remember things that were full of sorrow. She felt herself present at the crucifixion of our Lord. She made her way through the crowd to the very foot of the Cross,

and stood leaning against it, her uplifted hands just touching the chilled and bleeding feet. She shivered and wept as she touched them. Him she could not see; but all about her were the faces of those who were crucifying Him; malignant, curious, stupid, careless, and afar off a few mournful ones. All whom she had ever known were there; and Sidney stood among the most bitter enemies of our Lord. Her heart felt breaking with its burden of grief and anguish, and she was saying to herself, "Was there ever sorrow like this sorrow?" when, suddenly, like a flash of lightning, yet as softly as the dawn of the morning, there came upon her the conviction that He loved every one of this innumerable crowd with the same love that she had just felt was the love of God for her. He was their brother, their Saviour. Deeper and stronger than pain and anguish, infinitely deeper and stronger was His love; and this love was the foundation of that joy which no man, however great a sinner, could take from him.

But Margaret could never tell all she then knew and felt; for it seemed to grow dim as she returned to earth. There were no words by which she could utter it, only tears and sobs of surpassing gladness, which no one could understand. And it was but once or twice in her lifetime that she tried to tell it; and then it was to those who were afraid of dying. She came back at last to this life, as weak and helpless as the child she had just borne. Her eyes could hardly bear the

light, and the faintest sounds seemed loud and jarring to her. But she regained her former strength day by day, and she was content to take up her old life. Only when they spoke cautiously and mournfully to her again of her father's death a smile came across her thin, white face.

"You do not know what it is," she said, and they thought she was delirious again.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANDREW GOLDSMITH, SADDLER.

THE little town of Apley consisted mainly of one long, narrow, straggling street of old-fashioned houses, called the High Street, which was silent and deserted on every day except market-days and Sundays. It was out of the direct line of any railway, and there was not business enough to make a branch line pay. In the small old-fashioned shops the tradespeople conducted their own business, requiring little aid from paid assistants. There were none rich enough to live away from their shops, and their intercourse with one another was primitive and unconventional. The population of the immediate neighborhood consisted of the gentry and the townsfolk, with no connecting links.

About the middle of the High Street stood Andrew Goldsmith's little shop, which Sidney passed every time he drove to and from the railway station two miles off. Three stone steps, hollowed by the tread of feet through many years, led up to the shop; and a small bow window hung over the pavement, behind which there sat a paid workman pursuing his work fitfully at

his own pleasure. Before Sophy's mysterious disappearance Andrew had always occupied the post himself, seldom glancing away from the work in hand to notice what was going on in the street; but he never sat there now. He had, almost unintentionally, hidden himself from his neighbors' gossiping curiosity, until his love of seclusion had grown morbid.

Margaret could not recollect the time when this shop had not been a favorite haunt of hers. Andrew had made the first saddle for the first pony her father gave to her; and her mother's affection for and trust in Andrew's sister Rachel had brought all the household into close connection with her. The romance and mystery of Sophy's fate had been the deepest interest of Margaret's girlhood, and was still occasionally the subject of perplexed conjecture. Rachel's almost hopeless searches and inquiries, made whenever they were in London, kept this interest alive, though it naturally lost its intensity. Still there was no household in Apley to which she felt so many ties of mutual cares and memories.

As soon then as she was allowed to take so long a drive, she felt that Andrew's house was the first to which she must carry her little boy, for the sad and sorrow-stricken father to see. She had not seen him herself yet, since her return to Apley a few weeks ago; she had never seen him since Sophy was lost. There would be pain for him in their meeting; but Rachel said it would be well to get the pain over.

A large kitchen lay behind the shop with a floor of rich, deep-red tiles, spotlessly clean. The big grate, with brass knobs about it shining like gold, was filled with gleeds of burning coal from the lowest bar to the highest; and the old oak chairs with leathern seats, standing in the full glow and warmth of the hearth, were polished to an extraordinary degree of brightness. Beyond the kitchen was a small, dark parlor, with all the chairs and the one sofa carefully swathed in white covers; but there was no fire in it, and Rachel would not let her sister Mary take Margaret into it.

Margaret leaned back in one of the comfortable old chairs, with a happy light in her dark eyes, as she listened to the two older women admiring her child. It was in this exquisitely clean and pretty kitchen that she had caught her first glimpse of the happiness of a life far below the level of her own. As a child she had sometimes watched Mary Goldsmith busy herself in getting ready a meal for her brother, giving thought and affection to her work, while he sat at his saddler's bench in the shop, humming some tune to himself in great peace of heart. It seemed to Margaret as she sat now on the cozy hearth, and glanced round at the willow-pattern plates shining on the dresser-shelves, and the polished surface of the copper warming-pan hanging against the wall, and the tall old Chippendale clock in the corner, and the little collection of well-read books lying on the broad window-sill, that she

could make life very dear and pleasant to Sidney with no other materials than those about her.

But under all the chatter of Rachel and Mary Goldsmith her ear caught the sound of a voice half-hushed, yet lamenting with sobs and muffled cries of pain, as of one who was passing through some sharp access of suffering. It was quite close at hand ; not in the little parlor, the door of which was close to her seat, and for some time she said nothing. But as the cries and moans grew more distinct to her ear she could bear to listen no longer in silence.

“It’s my poor brother,” answered Rachel sadly, “he’s away in his room, mourning and crying for Sophy. His heart’s broken, if one may say so, and him alive and strong. He has never smiled since Sophy went away.”

“I’d forgotten,” said Margaret, with a rush of compassion in her heart toward the unhappy father. “O, Rachel, tell him I am here, and want to see him so much. You know I have not seen him since we left Apley eight years ago.”

“Just before Sophy was lost,” remarked Mary.

In a few minutes Andrew Goldsmith came slowly down the stairs. He was a tall, spare man with a vigorous frame and almost a military bearing ; for he had belonged to the cavalry of the county from his earliest manhood. He was not over fifty years of age, but his hair was white, and his shoulders bowed like those of a man of seventy. So changed he was, and wore such an

expression of intense and bitter suffering, that Margaret would not have recognized him if he had not been in his own house.

“Andrew,” she said, rising hastily and taking her baby into her arms with a young mother’s instinctive feeling that the child will interest and comfort everyone, “see, I have brought my boy to make friends with you, as I did when I was a little girl.”

A gleam of light came into the man’s dull, sad eyes, as he laid his fingers gently on the baby’s sleeping face.

“He favors you, Miss Margaret,” he said, “ay! and your father, the colonel.”

“We call him Philip, after my father,” replied Margaret, with a sorrowful inflection of her sweet voice.

“May God Almighty bless him and keep him from bringing you to sorrow!” said Andrew.

“I am willing to bear sorrow for him,” answered Margaret.

“But not from him,” he said.

“Yes; from him if that must be so,” she replied, “he will grieve me sometimes, just as we also grieve God. But if God bears with us, we must bear with one another’s faults, however hard it may be.”

The stern, grave face of Andrew Goldsmith unbent a little and quivered, and his strong frame trembled as if shaken by some invisible force. He sank down on a chair, looking up into

the pitying faces of the three women, whose eyes were so gently bent upon him.

“I haven’t seen you since I lost my daughter,” he said with a groan, “and oh! my God, she might have been standing as you are, come home to show me her baby.”

It was true. If any stranger could have looked in on the little circle, he would have taken Margaret, in her plain black dress, with her child in her arms, for a young mother come back to the old fireside to

. . . tell them all they would have told,
And bring her babe, and make her boast,
Till even those that miss’d her most
Shall count new things as dear as old.

Margaret felt the sadness of it herself, with a profound and keen sympathy. She hastened to give the child back to Rachel, and laid her hand, with a gentle and friendly pressure, on Andrew’s shoulder.

“You know I was fond of Sophy,” she said, “and how could I help but grieve over her, when I saw Rachel so often troubled? But why do you give up hope? She may yet come home any day; and perhaps bring a dear child with her. God may have given to her a child to be a comfort to her. Only God knows.”

“Ay! He knows,” answered Andrew, “if He didn’t know it otherwise, I tell Him every day; every hour of every day, for the cry after her is

always in my heart. But it could never be the same again. If it was all right with her, would she have kept silence over eight years? I had only one daughter, like your father; and she has brought me to grief and shame."

"But in one sense it must be right with her," said Margaret, "for God is with her. He has not lost sight of her; and though it may possibly be that she has sinned, and is still sinning, yet that way also leads to God, when sin is repented of."

"But to think that God sees her in all her degradation!" he cried passionately. "Oh, if I could only find her, and hide her away from all the world! hide her away from God Himself. No, no, Miss Margaret; it's no comfort to think that God Almighty sees my daughter in her sin and shame. And that man who robbed me of my only child—O Lord, set Thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer be turned into sin. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered by the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. As he loved cursing, let it come——"

"Oh, hush, hush!" cried Margaret, breaking in upon his rapid and vehement utterance with difficulty, while the tears streamed down her face, "oh, be silent! It is a terrible thing to utter these words as a prayer to God. For God loves us all; even him whom you are cursing.

Some day you will say, 'Father, forgive him ; he did not know what he was doing.' "

"Never!" he exclaimed, lifting up his haggard face, and fastening his bloodshot eyes upon her ; "but I oughtn't to trouble you. It was only because the sight of you made me think so keen of her that's lost. All the town is glad to have you back again, Miss Margaret, for your own sake and the colonel's sake. But it will be different from the old days."

"You'll be as fond of my boy as you were of me?" she asked.

"Ay, may be," he answered.

"And my husband?" she added.

"Andrew's never seen Mr. Martin," put in Mary Goldsmith ; "he's never crossed the church door since Sophy ran away ; and he never sits in the shop now, where folks can see him at his work. He spends his time mostly seeking after her, anywhere that he can find a clew ; and he sits up half his nights with the sick and dying."

"Because my nights are sleepless, or full of terror," he interrupted, "and my heart is sorer by night than by day. And poor folks that cannot pay for nurses are glad to have me near at hand ; and the dying know I'm not afraid of death, but seek it as one seeks after hidden treasure, so they hold my hand in theirs till they step into the outer darkness, knowing I would gladly take that step for them. I tell them it is better to die than to live ; and they half believe

me. They take messages for me into the next world!"

"Messages!" repeated Margaret.

"Ay," he continued, "to tell Sophy, if she's there, to send me some sign; but no sign comes. So she must be living still; and I shall know what has become of her, and where she is, some day."

Margaret did not feel it possible to combat this notion of Andrew's, though she looked anxiously from him to his sisters. George Martin had recently settled in at the Rectory, and begun his pastoral care of his country parish; and she wondered if he could not in any way turn the deep current of this man's grief, which was threatening him, she feared, with insanity.

"Has our cousin, the new rector, been to see you yet?" she inquired of Mary.

"Yes," she answered; "and Andrew's promised to go to church again next Sunday."

"I shall be there," said Margaret gladly, "and I shall look to see you in your pew, Andrew. I shall miss you if you are not there."

"I will be there, Miss Margaret," he answered.

The parish church of Apley was a small Norman edifice built near the park gates. A square pew in the chancel belonged to the Hall, and a long narrow aisle with small pews on each side led down to the western door. When Sidney took his place, with Margaret, in the Hall pew on the following Monday, he saw, just beyond the reading desk, a white-headed man, who was evi-

dently still in the prime of manhood, with a strong and muscular frame, but with a face expressive of heart-broken sadness. It was an ominous face, dark and despondent, with a fire burning in the deep-set eyes that seemed almost like the glow of madness. So striking was this man's appearance that, before the service began, Sidney whispered to Margaret :

“ Who is that man in the pew by the reading-desk ? ”

“ Rachel's brother,” she answered, “ the father of the girl that is lost.”

It was the 22d day of the month ; and Sidney, whose thoughts were wandering, suddenly found himself reading, with mechanical exactness, the terrible curses of the Psalms for the day, which Andrew Goldsmith was uttering with intense earnestness, as if the sacredness of the place added force to their vindictiveness. Margaret's head was bent, and the tears were dropping slowly on her open book ; but Sidney scarcely noticed her emotion. There was an indescribable horror to him in this sight of the despairing face of Sophy's father ; and in the penetrating distinctness of his deep voice, as he called upon God to pour down curses upon his enemy.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANDREW'S FRIEND.

THE little town soon felt the difference between having the Hall occupied by its owners and tenanted by persons who had no interest in the place. Margaret knew most of the families living in Apley, for there had not been many changes during her absence; and as a child she had been allowed free intercourse with the respectable householders of the town. Now she had returned among them, she and the rector had many schemes for their social as well as religious improvement. Sidney was liberal, and eager to further any wish of Margaret's. He was even willing to take a share in her plans, as far as his business gave him time to do so; and nobody could make himself more genial and popular than he did.

The rector's wife, Laura Martin, who had seemed willing to marry George as a poor curate, had been very well aware that he was one of the two nephews of the wealthy City man, Sir John Martin, to whom all his accumulated riches must be left. Her chagrin at his being left in poverty by his uncle had been extreme; and she was on the point of breaking off her engagement with

George Martin, when Sidney, who felt the injustice of his uncle's will, settled £10,000 on his cousin. It was a mere pittance, Laura felt; but it was sufficient to decide her to marry George. With the living at Apley their yearly income was now nearly £1200; and as she was a clever woman in household management, she contrived to make a good appearance, and was generally more expensively dressed than Margaret. She made, on the whole, a good country parson's wife, looking well after the affairs of the parish; especially in Margaret's absence, when she reigned lady paramount. It was a sore and bitter vexation to her to suffer eclipse when Margaret was at Apley; but the intercourse between the Hall and the Rectory was too intimate, and too beneficial for herself and her children, for her to show any sense of mortification. She always spoke of Margaret as her dearest friend.

There were already two children at the Rectory, Sidney and Richard; and soon after Philip's birth a girl was born, who was called Phyllis by Laura. Already there was a little scheme in Laura's brain, an organ scarcely ever used for any other function than scheming. Why should not this little girl of hers become the wife of Sidney's son and heir? It was a pleasant pastime to build castles in the air, on the foundation of this unspoken wish.

Something of the gloom which was threatening Andrew Goldsmith's reason was removed by Margaret's return to Apley, and the in-

terest taken in him and his sorrow by her and the rector. They frequently called upon him to render some service; and little by little he regained the position of importance he had once held among the townspeople, though his influence was now exercised more on religious than political subjects. He was superior to his neighbors in intellect; and he had the gift of speech, being able to address them with a somewhat uncultured eloquence, but in a manner that went home to their hearts and understandings. His life ran in more healthy currents, and there were times when Rachel hoped he would overcome the deep depression which had followed upon Sophy's mysterious disappearance.

The person to whom of all others Andrew Goldsmith attached himself, in this partial revival of his old life, was Sidney Martin. Sidney, unconsciously perhaps, addressed the sorrow-stricken man, who was bearing the burden of the sin he had been guilty of, in a tone and manner of the deepest sympathy; as if he knew all his burden, and would help him to bear it, though he would never speak of it. The sad secret lay between them, and both were thinking of it in their deepest hearts. There was a strange, inexplicable subtlety in this silent sympathy. The moment their eyes met each man saw, as if standing between them, Sophy's girlish figure and pretty face; and Andrew Goldsmith felt, with vague and confused instinct, that Sidney looked at his grief and loss with different eyes from

other onlookers. Sidney fathomed his woe with a deeper and truer plummet than that with which other men could sound it; and there was a dim sense of satisfaction in the feeling that he, who had all that earth could give, shared the pain that was gnawing his own heart.

It grew into a habit with Andrew Goldsmith to listen for the sound of Sidney's horse or carriage, and hasten to his shop door in time to lift his hat to him as he went by, and to catch the subtle gleam of melancholy comprehension in Sidney's passing salutation. There was such a link between them as did not exist between any other two souls, among all the souls they were in contact with; and it was a dark day with Andrew in which he did not see the recognition of it in Sidney's face.

Sidney would unhesitatingly have called himself the happiest man on earth but for this singular and ominous devotion toward him of the man he had so deeply injured. His life was all that he had ever hoped for; Margaret a dearer wife and better companion than he had even dreamed she might be; his child a sweetness and delight to him beyond all words. There was no flaw in his prosperity. His sky was clear of all but one almost invisible speck. At his gates dwelt this man whose mere existence was a perpetual reminder of his early blunder; for Sidney would not own it to be a sin. The friendship of this man, he said to himself, was the bitterest penance that could be inflicted on him. But for this

he could have forgotten Sophy altogether. And why should he not forget her? He had done her very little wrong; not the wrong ninety-nine men out of a hundred in his position would have been guilty of. If he could but escape the sight of this unfortunate father of hers, his wrong-doing would soon cease to trouble him.

But Sidney could find no easy way of escape. He might have insisted on living in or near London; but Margaret was strongly attached to her old home, and it happened that all his attempts to buy an estate nearer to London fell through. The estate bought by his uncle was in Yorkshire; and consequently was too far away for him to dwell upon it; and Margaret's place answered all their requirements perfectly. It was not much more than an hour's journey by train from his place of business in the City; and Margaret's position, as the last descendant of an old county family, gave them a standing in the county which they could not have elsewhere. It had always been a part of his ambition for the future to become a member of the House of Commons, and he was already recognized as the most eligible candidate of his party for a place as member for the county at the next general election. A number of minute threads, gathering in number and vigor as each month passed by, wove themselves into a rope which it needed the strength of a Samson to break through.

It was not possible, on the other hand, to dislodge Andrew Goldsmith; nor did Sidney seri-

ously think of it. He would not add to the harm he had already done him the cruel injury of turning him out of his old home, and sending him adrift among strangers. He was not in any way of a hard and pitiless nature, and his heart was full of compunction and kindness toward Andrew Goldsmith. More than once he debated with himself whether it would not be wise to confide the whole story to the rector, and take his counsel as to the question of telling Andrew, or of still keeping the fate of Sophy a secret. But he could not risk the chance of Margaret knowing it; and he resolved upon keeping silence and bearing his penalty as best he could.

His eldest boy, Philip, was three years of age; and the second son, Hugh, his mother's heir and the future owner of Apley, was about twelve months old, when a vacancy in the representation of the county occurred, which gave to Sidney a fair chance of being elected, though not without a close contest. The influence on both sides was stretched to the utmost, and party spirit ran high. It was like the sound of a trumpet to an old war-horse for Andrew Goldsmith. For the time being his heavy burden seemed to slip off his shoulders, and he became again, as in former times, the active and energetic leader of the voters in the neighborhood. His shop and the pleasant kitchen behind it were filled from morning to night with groups of his neighbors, eagerly discussing the question of the coming election. Occasionally Sidney himself dropped in, with

Margaret beside him; and was thus brought into closer contact than before with her tenants. For Sidney, busy as he was with a multiplicity of affairs, left the management of the Apley estate almost wholly in his wife's hands.

Life was very full to Margaret. She had her husband, her children, and her tenants to live for, and her desire to serve them was very ardent, to minister to their lowest as well as to their highest needs. She had the true Christian instinct of help-giving. There was one incident of her Lord's life over which her soul brooded, more frequently, perhaps, than any other. She saw him sitting at the feast with his disciples, Judas the traitor being one of them, and all of them being on the point of forsaking him. He, who was King of kings and Lord of lords, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet took upon himself the form of a servant, and came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. She saw this Jesus rise from the table, and lay aside the white robe he was wearing for the feast, and pour water into a basin, and stoop to wash his disciples' feet, soiled with the dust of the street. It was a symbol, but it was also a real action of her Lord's. What service ought she to shrink from, then, if Christ washed his disciples' feet?

Margaret was very much in earnest about her husband's election, and threw herself with all her heart into the efforts made to secure it. She believed him to be so good and true a man that

it must be for the welfare of the country for him to sit in Parliament. If he was returned it would compel them to live more in London; but that was a sacrifice she could make, and she did not flinch from the sacrifice. She was in the habit of visiting freely and familiarly among all her neighbors, the poor as well as the rich; and she had not failed in winning their esteem and regard. Her canvassing for her husband was everywhere successful.

But the chief factor in the election was Andrew Goldsmith, who labored night and day for Sidney Martin's return. When the poll was declared Sidney was elected by a small majority only, and everyone said this majority was due to Andrew Goldsmith's influence in his own district, where the voters had given their votes as one man. Sidney had reached the goal of his ambition, or rather he had passed one winning-post to enter upon a new path; and his heart beat high with exultation. He was a young man yet, and he would win such a name as should reflect glory upon his two boys and lay the foundation of an illustrious family. He had no long line of ancestry to boast of; his uncle had been a self-raised man, and he was still almost unknown. But Margaret's lineage was old enough to compensate for the newness of his own, and his boys should have such a position in the world as few others had. Hugh, the youngest, would succeed Margaret, and take the name of Cleveland; but Philip would be his heir and nothing should be

lacking in his career. He would make his name illustrious for his boy's sake as well as his own.

These thoughts were flitting through his brain as he drove homeward with Margaret and his friends, after the declaration of the poll at the county town. It was a very bright hour for him. But within a few miles of Apley they were met by a procession of his wife's tenants coming out to congratulate him, with Andrew Goldsmith on horseback at their head. There was something very striking in the appearance of the vigorous, soldierly, white-headed man, as he came up to the side of the carriage to act as spokesman for the crowd behind. He sat his horse well, as a member of the cavalry troop must do; and his deep-set eyes glowed with pride and affection. His pale, sad face was transfigured for the time; for this was the happiest moment he had known for years. Sidney practically owed his election to him; and it was some return, he thought, for all the kindness he had received from him and Margaret.

It was a singular and bitter trial to Sidney to stretch out his hand and clasp the hand of his father-in-law. If this crowd only knew the relationship that existed between him and the man they had chosen for their spokesman, their cheers would turn into execrations. He had never shaken hands with him before; for though he had visited Andrew's house frequently during the last few weeks, the latter knew his place too well to push himself forward so as to compel

Sidney to such a friendly greeting. But now, at this juncture, nothing was more natural than that these two men, forgetting the differences of rank, should clasp each other's hands in token of a victory won by both.

It was a strong grip that the saddler gave to his friend Sidney Martin, and spoke of all the subtle, indefinable sympathy that existed between them. Margaret's eyes filled with happy tears. So long had she felt the gloom of this man's deep sorrow that her heart was filled with gladness to see him escaping from its chain.

"It's you I have to thank for my election, Goldsmith," said Sidney, glad to get his hand released from his painful grasp.

"We've all done our best, sir," he answered, "and we are come to meet you, and say not one of us has known a prouder day than this; a proud day and a joyful day it is. And we pray Almighty God, every man among us, that he will bless you with all the blessings of this life, and preserve your precious life for many, many years. And that you may live to be Prime Minister," he added with a tone of humor in his grave voice. There was a tremendous chorus of "Hurrahs!" and a great deal of laughter. Prime Minister! Yes; that was what they would all like. On Andrew Goldsmith's face there came a quiver, as if his features so long set in sad despair were attempting to smile, and might succeed if many more such joyous occasions came.

Sidney answered shortly and pleasantly, and

the procession fell behind the carriages. It was only as they passed along the High Street that Andrew Goldsmith, looking at his little shop, and seeing its doorway and windows empty, while every other house was filled with women and children, remembered too vividly the mystery surrounding the fate of his own daughter. He dropped behind in the procession as it passed on to Apley Hall; and when Sidney looked for him in vain, he felt a keen sense of relief in Andrew's absence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LAURA'S SCHEME.

THE rector and Margaret continued to be fast friends, and the intercourse between the Hall and the Rectory was of the most intimate kind. The children of either house scarcely knew which was their home. The rector was a high-minded, unworldly man, altogether untouched by ambition or the love of money; there was perhaps a shade of indolence in his temperament, which made him less likely to feel the spur of ambition. Margaret and he understood one another better than any others understood them. Moreover, his genuine admiration, and his strong affection for her husband, added much to her happiness. For now and then, with the persistent recurrence of doubt, a misgiving crossed Margaret's mind that Sidney was not exactly a Christian in the sense she was. Not that he was in any degree negligent in observing the outward duties of religion. He was a constant attendant at church services; and a more regular communicant than she was herself. Day by day his life appeared to be one of conscientious continuance in well-doing. He was foremost in all philanthropic and religious schemes, and worked energetically at them. But

now and then, at rare intervals, a false note jarred upon the harmonious and sensitive chords of Margaret's inmost soul; and then there was no man's praise of her husband so precious to her as that of his cousin George, who had been brought up with him as a brother, and who never doubted that he was one of the best men living.

As for Sidney, he was well content with himself and his career; and, as the years passed by, he was no longer troubled by qualms of conscience. He was spreading himself like a green bay tree; and his "inward thought was to found a house that should continue forever, a dwelling-place to all generations." He was increasing the glory of his house; and men praised him because he was doing well for himself. He blessed his own soul, and fell into the mistake that God was blessing him.

For Sidney almost fully persuaded himself that he was a Christian. He accepted what he imagined were the doctrines of Christianity. He would have signed the thirty-nine Articles of the Christian faith as readily as any candidate for orders. He had no doubts, or rather he had not time to trouble himself with inconvenient questions, so he believed that he was a believer. Often when he was listening with deep attention to some eloquent or touching sermon, he felt a thrill of emotion, which he mistook for devotion to Christ as his Master. The sins of his youth had been repented of and cast behind him; and if one repents is he not forgiven? He gave

largely to the cause of religion, both in time and money. He was in no open way self-indulgent. If he was not a Christian man, as well as a rich man, who then could be saved? The camel had gone through the needle's eye.

The training of his sons he left almost entirely to Margaret; and she had them brought up as simply and hardily as their first cousins at the Rectory, boys not born to inherit wealth. No differences were made between them; no extra indulgences were allowed to her own children because some day they would be rich men. They had the same tutor and the same lessons. When Philip was old enough to go to Eton, his cousins, Sidney and Dick, were sent with him; when Hugh went, the two younger accompanied him. As they grew up to young manhood they were sent in the same manner to Oxford. It was no wonder that the rector believed, what he was always ready to assert, that Sidney was better than a brother to him. But if the rector was more than content with his lot, and grateful beyond words for Sidney's generous friendship and munificent liberality in the education of his four sons, Laura was very far from feeling the same satisfaction. She had been willing to marry George for love when he was a poor curate, especially after Sidney had settled £10,000 upon him; but she could never forget the inequality existing between her income and position and Margaret's. Both of them belonged to better families than the Martins; but Margaret was an

only child, and Laura was one of a family of eleven children, with so small a dowry that the interest of it only found her in dress. She could not help feeling that she and Margaret were in each other's places; Margaret would have been perfectly happy as a poor rector's wife, and she would have been perfectly happy as the owner of Apley Hall and the wife of a wealthy merchant. She was fond of pre-eminence, but she always found herself occupying the second place. Margaret's splendid generosity, and almost lavish expenditure on objects which she considered worthy of her time and her money, aroused in Laura merely a spirit of envious criticism. The economical management of household expenses at the Hall, where Margaret would brook no wasteful customs, however time-honored, Laura pronounced mean. The bountiful hand, which gave largely if a gift could be helpful, she called ostentatious. George Martin's sisters, who paid annual visits to the Rectory, never failed to fan the smoldering fire of her discontent into a flame. They always lamented over the small share they and their brother had received of their uncle's wealth.

"Every penny was left to Sidney," the rector would say in grieved remonstrance.

"Then he ought to have halved it," persisted Laura, "at the very least; half for himself, and half for you and your sisters. And he only gave you a paltry £10,000! It makes one quite mad to think of dividing such a mean sum among our

five children. Two thousand apiece! The portion of a farmer's daughter, or a tradesman's son! Andrew Goldsmith possesses as much as that. And think of what Philip and Hugh will inherit."

"Oh, hush! hush!" answered the rector, "we are rich; as rich as anyone need be. God knows I am ashamed of having all we have, while so many of his people have scarcely the necessaries of life. And, my dear Laura, it seems to me that you have all that Margaret allows herself. Tell me what indulgence she has that you lack. If she and Sidney have money, they are not spending it on themselves; they are making it a blessing to all about them."

"So should we," replied Laura sulkily.

But Laura took care to keep on excellent terms with Margaret. Indeed it would have been difficult for her to quarrel with her. Margaret's affection for the rector gathered into its wide embrace all belonging to him; and his children were only a degree less dear to her than her own. Phyllis was scarcely a degree less dear, as she had no daughter; and this little girl almost filled the place of one. All of them were as much at home at the Hall as at the Rectory; and the rector took hardly less interest in Philip and Hugh than in his own sons.

Laura's scheme with respect to Phyllis grew deeper and stronger as the years went on. If she could never be more than Mrs. Martin of the Rectory, her daughter should be Mrs. Martin of

Brackenburn ; or if not that, Mrs. Cleveland of Apley Hall. One of the two brothers she must marry. But Hugh was nearly two years younger than Phyllis ; if possible she must become the wife of Philip.

She began very early to mold the children to her wishes. She made much of Philip, lavishing upon him praises and indulgences which he seldom received from his mother. She left Phyllis almost constantly at the Hall, before Philip went to Eton, to share his nursery games and childish pursuits. Philip was grave and serious ; what the townfolk of Apley called "an old-fashioned child" ; but Phyllis was like a little bird fluttering joyously about the quiet nursery, and filling it with childish chatter. She could rouse Philip to play and laughter out of his gravest moods ; and Margaret was thankful to Laura for sparing the child to her.

"Mother !" said Philip, coming one day into Margaret's sitting room, holding Phyllis by the hand, while both children looked up to her with large and solemn eyes, "mother, may I marry Phyllis when I grow up to be a man ? Cousin Laura says yes. Will you say yes too ?"

"My boy," answered Margaret gravely, yet almost unable to conceal a smile, "you cannot understand what marriage means. You are only a child of seven yet : and marriage is more solemn and more important even than death is. You know that death is very solemn ?"

“Yes,” said the boy, “it is too high for me to understand yet.”

“And marriage is still higher,” continued Margaret; “you will understand something of death first. Some day, when you are years older, I will talk to you about marriage, but not now. And, Philip, do not talk foolishly about a thing that is too high for you to understand.”

“No, mother,” he said gravely.

“Phyllis is not your little sister,” she said, “but she will be like a sister to you for many years to come; and she will always be your friend, if you are good children.”

It was in keeping with Philip's thoughtful and steadfast nature never again to speak of Phyllis as his little wife, or to allow anyone about him to do so. But constantly, by a word dropped now and again, Laura kept alive in his mind the idea that Phyllis would some day be his wife. To Phyllis she spoke as if her whole life was to be fitted to meet Philip's wishes. It was skillfully and subtly done; never being so definite as to excite opposition in the nature of either of them. Year after year Phyllis was taught that the one person in the world whom she was bound to please was her cousin Philip.

But when Phyllis was fourteen, and Philip, a few months older, was an Eton schoolboy, Laura thought it wisest to put some little check upon their intimacy, which was too much like that of

brother and sister. Phyllis was at an age when a country girl is apt to be something of a hoyden. She rode after the hounds with as much spirit as her brothers; could play at cricket as well as any of them; and was an adept at climbing trees. She could shoot and fish fairly well, and tramped about the country with the boys, never owning to fatigue. But her mother shrewdly suspected that none of these accomplishments would retain their charm for Philip, when he entered upon that romantic and sentimental era of a young man's life during which she hoped to successfully attach him to Phyllis. If she was to be the accomplished and cultivated girl likely to attract him then, she must be sent away for some years.

So Phyllis was sent away, coming home for her holidays generally when Philip was absent; only meeting for a few days at Christmas just to keep them in mind of one another. So well and wisely did Laura manage that Margaret did not notice that virtually Phyllis was separated both from her brothers and her cousins. She only felt that the girl, whom she loved very tenderly, was undergoing a change which was distasteful to her.

The night before Phyllis left home for the first time, her mother went into the little room opening out of her own bedroom, where the girl had slept ever since she was a child. Laura held the shaded lamp up to see if she was sleeping, and thought with exultation how pretty the face was

on which the light fell. She put the lamp away into the other room, and sat down in the dusk by her young daughter.

"Phyllis," she said, with her hand resting fondly on the girl's head, "there's one thing I must say to you before you go away to school; but it must be between you and me, a secret. You must not speak of it to anybody else; not even to Dick, or your father. You love Philip, my darling?"

"Oh, yes, mother!" she answered, "I have always loved him."

"More than anyone else?" suggested her mother.

"I think so," she said, "unless, perhaps, it is Dick."

"Oh! you must love Philip more than Dick," replied her mother; "never think of loving anybody as much as Philip. By and by, when he is old enough, he will ask you to be his wife; and then your father and I would be happier than words can tell."

"That was settled a long while ago," said Phyllis, "as soon as I was born, and you called me by a name something like his."

"But it was to be kept a profound secret," urged her mother, "and nobody has ever spoken of it since, except me, to you. Of course if you and Philip did not like it, no one could force you to marry one another."

"Nobody could do that in England," said Phyllis, with a wise little laugh, "but don't you

be worried, mother; I do love Philip; and I will marry him."

"Then you must do all you can to fit yourself for him," pursued Laura anxiously; "he will go to Oxford, and when he has been there he will not want a romp and a tom-boy about him. You must make a lady of yourself. When you are his wife, you will be very rich, not a simple country parson's daughter; and by and by you will be Mrs. Martin of Brackenburn. You must learn how to fill such a position."

"I must learn to do my duty in that state of life into which it may please God to call me," said Phyllis, laughing again. "Oh, mother, you shall see what a fine lady I can make of myself. I will say to myself every morning, 'Remember you are to be Mrs. Martin of Brackenburn!' and I will act up to it. I have quite made up my mind to marry Philip."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SON AND HEIR.

It was four years before Phyllis came to live at home again ; and the transformation was complete. The tom-boy of fourteen, with her excess of animal spirits, had developed into a bright and dainty girl of eighteen, with a grace and bloom about her like that of a flower just opening to the light. Her face was prettier, and her figure more graceful than even her mother had expected them to be. She could sing well, with a sweet, clear voice, that suggested the spontaneous joyousness of a song-bird. She seemed fond of reading ; but she was still fonder of active pursuits. Sidney, who had taken little notice of her as a child, felt the charm of this bright, companionable young girl, who made Apley so much more lively when he came down from his busy London life. Hugh was now at Eton, and Philip was at Oxford with his cousin Dick. There was nothing to suggest caution or anxiety ; and Phyllis spent more time at the Hall than she did at the Rectory. She owned frankly that she felt more at home there than in her father's house ; and she fell into the position of a

daughter quite naturally. She was introduced to London society under Margaret's wing; and received there the finishing touches to her education.

When Philip came home, he fancied he saw in his cousin Phyllis precisely the woman he would choose to make his wife. †

She had grown up for him. The idea that this bright, lovely young girl had been destined for him from her birth, gave to him a feeling of perfect, undisturbed possession, precluding the necessity of claiming her, any more than the necessity of claiming his mother. Their lives were so blended and interwoven that it seemed impossible for them to be separated. There was no need of speech between them. They knew they loved one another; and that when the right hour came they would marry amid the general satisfaction and gladness of all their friends. Until then they lived for one another in the simplest and purest happiness. So Philip felt; and Laura was quite content that he should say nothing about his love, while he was still under age.

There was no actual concealment, however. Phyllis was seldom alone with him, for Hugh and her own brothers were constantly with them. When they wished for quiet converse, they sought it usually in Margaret's presence. She saw them reading together, singing together, walking arm in arm about the gardens and park; but then Phyllis read, and sang, and walked

with all of the other young men, when any of them claimed her companionship. Margaret saw no difference in her manner or ways ; if there was any difference, she was a shade more serious with Philip than the rest ; but then Philip himself was the most thoughtful of all the youthful band.

In the training of her sons, Margaret had done her utmost to make them understand her views of life. Wealth and position, she pointed out to them, were among the poorest and smallest of the gifts of God ; sometimes, seeing that wicked men can gain them by evil means, not the gift of God at all. Birth was not a much higher thing, though that, indeed, must be the gift of God, since they had no choice as to the circumstances, or the family, into which they were born. Better than these were the gifts of intellect ; and Dick, who had a genius for mathematics, and Stephen, with an equally strong bent for science, possessed nobler powers than they did. Any great talent was better than silver and gold, or rank. Good temper alone was worth more than all the riches they could possess ; and Phyllis's brightness and sweetness placed her higher than a duke's daughter who did not possess the same qualities.

“ You will find the richest men among the poorest,” she told them. “ If a man is brave, true, unselfish, serviceable to his fellow-men, he is higher in the sight of God, though he may not own a penny, than the wealthiest man in the

world. God cannot regard gold and land as riches."

"You pride yourselves on your birth?" she asked them; "you forget that you did not choose it—God gave it to you. It is a poor gift in itself, and perhaps you are the servants to whom the Lord could only intrust one or two pounds instead of ten. But do not lay it aside, and hide it in a napkin; use it worthily, and in the next life, or perhaps in this life, God will give you more and better gifts."

"The best gifts are those we get directly from God," she taught them, "and you must ask him for them yourselves—for no man can ask or seek these blessings for you—no other hand can knock at the gate till it is opened to you—and, what your spirit asks, the spirit of God gives. You are nearer to God than to me. You are dearer to his heart than to mine."

Sometimes Sidney, sitting by, while Margaret was teaching her boys, would smile to himself at her want of worldly wisdom. When she told them the loss of money was the smallest loss they could suffer, and asked them whether they would rather lose their sight, and never more see the faces of those they loved; or their hearing, and never again listen to dear voices and the glad and solemn sounds of music; or lose their friends by death, her and their father; and the boys would declare with eagerness that they would a thousand times rather face the world penniless than be bereft of any of these great gifts—then

Sidney would say to himself how much greater would be the pity of rich men toward himself if he lost his large fortune, than if he lost sight, or hearing, or sons, or even this dear wife of his, with her unworldly spirit, who was in truth more precious to him than all gold and lands! It was sweet to hear Margaret talk in this way, but she spoke a language that had no meaning in the City.

Philip took a fairly good place at Oxford, but Dick far surpassed him. There had been no emulation between the young men, and Philip felt no grudge against Dick for his triumph and the distinction he earned. Dick's success had been very great, and both the Hall and the Rectory celebrated it with much rejoicing. Sidney, who had borne all the cost of the education of George's sons, was greatly pleased. But he was not less pleased that Philip had not distinguished himself in the same way. There was no need for his son and heir to win high honors at the university; he did not wish to see him a great mathematician or a fine classical scholar. That was all very well for Dick and Stephen, and the other boys, who had to earn their own living by sheer force of brain. For Philip it was more essential that he should be an all-round man.

In this Sidney was satisfied. Philip could do all things customary to young men of his station and prospects, but he did not specially excel in any of them. In his father's eyes there was in him a slight touch of listlessness, the listlessness

of certainty. There was a lack of something to strive for, which had been no characteristic of his own. Sidney could still recall the strain of anxiety to retain his uncle's favor, and the sacrifices he had made, and was ready to make, to secure his vast fortune falling to himself. It could not be the same with his son. The large estate in Yorkshire, which was entailed upon him, secured his future, and deprived him at the same time of the stimulus of uncertainty. It was the same with his younger boy, Hugh. Their mother had taught them so to value wealth and position that they had no ambition to increase either, while their ancestors had taken care they should not be compelled to work for their living. It was a knot in the silken thread of their lives which Sidney could not untie, and was equally powerless to cut through.

CHAPTER XX.

BRACKENBURN.

THE large estate in Yorkshire to which Philip was heir had been seldom visited by Sidney. It was much too far from London to be a place of residence for him while he remained in business, and Margaret's house at Apley exactly met all their requirements as a country place within a short distance from town. The Yorkshire estate had been left to an agent, and the house had been let for a term of twenty-one years soon after his settling upon Apley as their home. Hitherto, therefore, it had been little more to them than a source of income. The tenant of Brackenburn was reported to be an eccentric man, who greatly resented the occasional visits of the agent, and neither Sidney nor Philip had cared to intrude upon him. The house was small, and Sir John Martin had left the sum of £50,000 for building one more suitable for his heirs. Now that Philip was so nearly of age it became a question of some importance when and how the new hall should be built. Architects were consulted and plans drawn up, bringing more forcibly to Philip's mind that he, too, like Hugh, to whom Apley would come, was heir to a large property in land.

The love of land awoke within him. He threw himself with ardor into the questions of building and planting. The tenant's lease would expire shortly after he came of age, and it was then proposed that Philip should take up his abode in the old Manor House, and superintend the erection of the new mansion. When thinking of it, he always thought of Phyllis as being there beside him.

But some months before Philip's coming of age Sidney received a letter from a firm of solicitors in York informing him that his tenant, Mr. Churchill, was dead, and that he was left sole executor of his will, and the guardian of his only child; "having no friend whom I can trust in the whole world," was added. Sidney had seen his tenant only a few times, and nothing had been said to him of the service thus thrust upon him by Mr. Churchill's will. It was a surprise and an annoyance to him; but the words, "no friend whom I can trust in the whole world," appealed to his and to Margaret's sympathy, and, telegraphing that he was starting immediately, he set out on his northward journey.

"It is odd," he said to Margaret before leaving her, "that we have no idea whether the only child is a son or daughter, or what the amount of property left may be. But in any case we can befriend Mr. Churchill's only child."

It was early morning when Sidney reached the little road-side station nearest to Brackenburn, and a walk of four miles lay between it and the

old Manor House. His temperament was still alive to all the simple pleasures of a solitary walk like this, at an unwonted hour and in the very heart of the country. London lay very far away from him. His love of nature had no touch of age upon it, and as he sauntered along the lanes, with the joyous caroling of little song-birds all around him, and the bracing air of the dawn caressing his face, he felt almost like a boy again. If Margaret had but come with him, his enjoyment would have been perfect. The fever of city life always running in his veins cooled down into an unusual calm and tranquillity, and for once he asked himself if his satisfied ambition was worth the sacrifice he had made for it.

The old Manor House of Brackenburn stood at the head of a long dale, with wide stretches of heather-clad moor rising behind it and lying in long curves against the distant horizon. It was an old timber house, the heavy beams black with age, and the interstices, which had once been kept white with frequent lime-washing, were now weather-stained and discolored. But the front of the old house was hidden under a thick mantle of ivy, which had never been touched or trained, and which grew in long, luxuriant sprays that waved to and fro restlessly in the breeze. A stone wall, ten feet high, surrounded the house and concealed the lower story, and Sidney found it difficult to push open the heavy iron gates, which admitted him to the forecourt. The windows were still closed with outer wooden shut-

ters, and the only sign of life was a thin line of smoke rising from one of the great stacks of chimneys, and floating softly across the blue of the morning sky. Sidney rang gently, in order not to disturb the household at so early an hour, and the door was presently opened by an old woman, who appeared with a candle in her hand, and led him into a darkened room. He told her briefly who he was.

“I’ll call Dorothy to you,” she said as she shut the door upon him.

There was something about being left in this way to wait for some unknown person which brought back very vividly to his memory his first meeting with Margaret. He could see her coming in, and drawing near to him, with her simple, unconscious grace, and hear her addressing him as frankly as if she had been a little child. He had loved her with all his heart from that moment. Was it possible that it was more than twenty-two years ago? It might have been but yesterday; only she was dearer to him now, and her love was more necessary and more precious to him. How foolish he was to waste so much time in business, which might be spent in companionship with her. Well, as soon as Philip, or Hugh, was ready to take his place, he would himself relax his pursuit of wealth and power.

He was pacing to and fro in the dark room when the door was opened timidly, and a young, slight girl entered, and stood just within the

doorway, gazing at him. The dim light of the single candle hardly reached her, and he could only see large dark eyes, looking black in the wan pallor of her face, which were fastened upon him, partly in terror, and partly in appeal to him, like the pathetic gaze of some dumb creature doubtful of the reception it will receive. She seemed almost to be shrinking away in dread of some unkindness, when he approached her as she stood trembling just inside the door.

“I’m Dorothy,” she said, looking up at him with pale anxiety.

“Dorothy Churchill?” he asked.

“Yes,” she answered, nodding, the tears gathering slowly in her eyes.

“And you have no brothers or sisters?” he said.

“No,” she whispered.

He took her hand tenderly in his, and led her to a chair, and sat down beside her, keeping hold of the little brown hand, which trembled in his clasp. She looked like a forlorn, neglected child. The big tears rolled one by one down her cheeks; but she did not dare to move or wipe them away. She seemed as if her spirit was crushed by long and constant unkindness. Sidney drew her near to him as he would have done a little child. His heart was troubled for her, and he wished Margaret could be with him to comfort this lonely and sorrow-stricken girl.

“You loved your father!” he said, after a pause.

“Not much,” she answered; “he frightened me.”

“Didn’t he love you?” he asked.

“He loved his dogs most of all,” said Dorothy, sobbing. “Oh, come upstairs, please. You are the master now; and oh, I want you to come to his room. They said I must not give any orders about anything.”

She led the way up the broad old staircase, where the morning sun was shining in gleams of light through chinks in the shutters, and, pausing for a moment or two before a door till he was close beside her, she opened it very cautiously. The room was low and dark, wainscoted with almost black oak, which reflected no light from the candles that were burning in honor of the dead. A heavy four-post bedstead held the corpse of the dead man, laid out in the terrible rigidity of death; eyes closed, lips locked, head and hands motionless for ever. The head and face were uncovered, and the weird, indescribable seal of death was on them. No light would ever reach those closed eyes again, no sound would ever enter those deafened ears.

If that had been possible, the uproar that followed Sidney’s entrance into the darkened room would have aroused the dead man. For to each of the four posts of the great bed was chained a huge mastiff, which, as he stepped across the threshold, sprang forward as far as the chain would allow him, as if to attack the intruder, with a wild chorus of furious howling and baying.

“Good Heavens!” he exclaimed, starting back in horror, “what is the meaning of this?”

“He would have it so,” answered Dorothy, as she clung with both hands to his arm; “he would have them here all the time he was ill, because he said no one else loved him. And John and Betsy said they must stay here till you came, because you are the master now. But, oh! they were howling and wailing all night, and the night before, and it is dreadful. Oh! be quiet, Juno and Di; he cannot hear you now. Yes, you loved him, I know. But he is gone, and can never come back to you. Poor dogs! lie down, lie down. I will be kind to you, and take care of you; but you must not stay here, now the master is come. Poor dogs, poor dogs!”

Her voice fell into tones of pity, and she loosed Sidney’s arm, and ventured up to the mastiff nearest to her, laying her hand gently on its great rough head and speaking caressing words, until all four crouched down moaning, as if they understood her. After the furious barking it seemed as if a sorrowful silence had fallen into the death-chamber, though the dogs still whined and whimpered, but quietly, as if they were growing exhausted with their grief.

“He loved them very much,” said Dorothy, looking across to Sidney as he stood at some distance, afraid of provoking the mastiffs to a fresh outbreak if he attempted to draw nearer. “Oh, yes! he loved them ever so much more than he did me. He always said I should live to be a

sorrow and a curse to him ; and it was no use wasting his love upon a girl. I am almost grown up now ; but I've never been a sorrow and a curse to him. And I never would have been, father," she added, turning and speaking to the corpse, as if it could hear her ; "perhaps you know now that I would always have been a good girl to you."

"Come away, my poor child," said Sidney, with a feeling of deep pity and tenderness for the desolate girl, "you belong to me now. Come away, and these poor dogs shall be taken out of this room. I cannot come to you, lest they should begin their fierce uproar again."

She was shivering with excitement when she reached his side ; and he put his arm round her, and almost carried her away from the gloomy room and terrible assemblage of mourners. The light was stronger outside the door, and he could see her small, pale face quivering, and her dark eyes gleaming with terror and grief. He stooped down and kissed the pale face.

"Now, Dorothy," he said, "listen to me. I have no daughter, and from this moment I take you as mine ; and my wife will be as a mother to you. It is a new life you are about to begin ; quite different from this old one. Which is your room, my child ? Go, and rest now till afternoon. And remember that I am master here, and I will take every care of you."

Though owner of the old house he hardly knew it. It was twenty years since he had let it to Mr. Churchill, and he had not seen it since. He

filled up his time, while waiting for the solicitor from York, in wandering through the rambling old rooms. Most of them were low and dimly lighted, with heavy mullioned windows and wainscoted walls ; but there was a charm about them which no modern mansion can possess. All of them were poorly and barely furnished with the mere necessaries of household life. There were no curtains to the windows, and no carpets on the floors, which looked as if they had been seldom cleaned. His footsteps echoed loudly through the nearly empty rooms ; and he found nowhere any trace of wealth or refinement, except in the library, which was well furnished with books. There were only two servants—an elderly man and his wife. The large garden surrounding the house had become a wilderness, where the old gravel walks were scarcely to be traced.

“The little girl will be poor,” Sidney said to himself, “but Margaret will care the more for her if she has nothing.”

As the morning passed on the solicitor arrived, eager to get through his business and catch a return train, which would take him back that evening. He ran rapidly through the will, which left everything in Sidney’s hands.

“You see you have absolute power,” he said ; “it is the simplest will in the world. His only daughter sole heiress, and you sole executor. No relations, no legacies, no conditions.”

“He must have been an odd man,” remarked Sidney.

“Very odd indeed,” he replied, “very odd! Has not spent £200 a year over and above his rent since he came to this place. No, I’m wrong! since his wife left him, when their child was about two years of age. Ran away, you understand, and providentially died a few months afterward. The girl has grown up quite untaught and uncared for. She will be eighteen soon, and looks and acts like a child of twelve. A serious thing that, with her fortune.”

“Fortune!” repeated Sidney. “I judged them to be poor.”

“About a quarter of a million, more or less,” said the solicitor; “and she has never been trusted to spend a sixpence in her life. Poor Churchill professed to hate her, as being like her mother; but you see he could not disinherit her. Curious instinct that in human nature to leave one’s possessions to one’s own flesh and blood. We seldom find it contravened.”

“But there is no trace of wealth about the house,” suggested Sidney.

“Churchill sold off all his wife’s knickknacks when she ran away,” he replied, “and kept nothing but necessaries. He has lived here with two servants and a host of dogs. By the way, the dogs are to attend the funeral as far as the churchyard gates; the rector will not allow them inside. We fixed the funeral for to-morrow, and I will run over to it; and then we can arrange any further matters of business.”

CHAPTER XXI.

SIDNEY'S WARD.

SIDNEY passed the rest of the day in seeing a few of his tenants renting the farms in the immediate neighborhood of Brackenburn Manor, and hearing from them gossiping reports of the oddities of the late occupier of the Manor House. By all accounts, the life led by his young ward had been dreary and lonely indeed. She had not been suffered to hold any intercourse with her neighbors, even to the extent of attending the little parish church, which stood in a village about a mile and a half away. The prevalent idea about her was that she was not quite in her right mind ; that she was at the least an "innocent," as they called her, and for this reason her father had never sent her to school or engaged a teacher for her. That she had spent the greater part of her time in wandering alone about the moor was told to him again and again as a proof that she differed from ordinary girls. Sidney went back to the Manor, after strolling about some hours, and found Dorothy sitting in the wide old porch, evidently awaiting his return. The evening sun shone full into the porch, and fell upon a white, wistful little face, which was

lifted up shyly to him as he drew near, with a faint flush of color coming to the pale cheeks. It was a sad face, yet the face of a child. He took her hand gently into his own as he sat down on the bench beside her.

“So you have been sleeping well,” he said in his pleasant voice.

“Yes ; they’ve taken the dogs away from his bed,” she answered gratefully, “and the house was very quiet. His room is the quietest of all. When he was ill he let me read to him sometimes ; the dogs could not do that, and he seemed to like it. So this afternoon I’ve read to him all the burial service.”

“Aloud !” asked Sidney.

“Yes, aloud,” she answered : “it was not wrong, was it ?”

“No, no,” he replied, looking down pitifully into her anxious, wistful eyes. She was a very slight, small creature, he thought, easily hurt, and very easily neglected, for she would not assert her own claims. There was a great attraction to him in the simplicity and quaintness of her ways.

“I know,” she said, fastening her dark eyes earnestly upon him and speaking with a quivering mouth, “I know that his body is dead, and he could not hear me with those ears, but I felt as if his spirit was near me ; and when I finished I almost heard his voice saying : ‘After all, I did love you a little, Dorothy.’ I wish I could be sure he thought it.”

“I feel sure he loved you,” said Sidney, “though he would not show it.”

“I am glad you say that,” she answered in a trembling voice.

They sat in silence for a few minutes; the pleasant country sounds only falling peacefully on their ears. Then the girl spoke again in slow and measured tones.

“I do so wish you would take me away with you,” she said. “I would do everything you like, and work at any kind of work; and I should want nothing but food and clothes. My clothes do not cost much,” she added, looking down on the coarse merino dress she was wearing. “Betsy buys my frocks for me, and she says they cost less than her own. If you could afford to let me live with you I would try not to be an expense to you.”

“Then you would like to live with me?” asked Sidney with a smile.

“You are more like a father to me than he was,” she replied wistfully. “Oh, yes! I should love to live with you. I love you.”

“That is well,” he said, “because your father has left you to my care—you and your money.”

“Have I any money?” she inquired.

“A great deal,” he replied; “you will be very rich.”

“Oh!” she cried with a sigh, “I always thought we were poor. And Jesus Christ says, ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.’”

The tone, and the look, and the words were so like Margaret's that they startled him. This young girl might have been Margaret's daughter.

"But, perhaps, you want money," she went on, after a pause; "perhaps you can use it. I only want a little; and I could not use much. Take it; I do not care for it. It shall all be yours. It is not impossible to enter the kingdom of God, even if you are rich."

"I trust not," he answered gravely, "for I, too, am a rich man, and my wife is a rich woman, yet she is truly in the kingdom of heaven already. My wife will teach you how to use your riches well."

"I thought we were very poor," pursued Dorothy. "My father gave me a shilling once, the day he let Betsy take me to York with her, to see the Minster. If I am to be a rich woman, I ought to have learned how to spend money. Will it take me long to learn it?"

"Very likely not," he replied, smiling at her anxious glance; "it is easy enough to spend money."

"If you leave me here," she went on, "I should like to keep the dogs with me, for his sake, you know. They would miss me so, and I should miss them; and this place is too lonely to live in without plenty of fierce dogs. John and Betsy want to get rid of them," she said, cautiously lowering her voice; "but please let me keep them if I stay here."

"But you cannot stay here," he answered.

“The day after to-morrow I must take you away, and you will live in my house, under my wife’s care, until you are of age. You have a great deal to learn, my child.”

“I do not know anything!” she cried clasping her hands. “Do you think she will like me? I never spoke to a lady in my life; and I am so ignorant. I can only read, and write, and sew. Only I can work in a garden and make flowers grow, and take care of dogs, and walk miles and miles on the moors. I know all the birds, and all the wild creatures that live there, and they will come to me when I am all alone and I stand quite still and call to them. After the funeral to-morrow I must go and bid them good-by. Because, if I ever come back here, I shall be different. Oh! how different I shall be; and perhaps they will not know me again.”

She turned her head away, looking out pensively across the moors, where the sun was setting behind the low curves of the horizon. There was a quaint grace about this girlish outpouring of her full heart which touched Sidney deeply, accustomed as he was to nothing less conventional than Phyllis, with her pretty manners and highly cultivated accomplishments. He felt sure the girl had never spoken so freely to anyone before. What would Margaret think of her? But he smiled as he thought how warmly Margaret would welcome this desolate young girl who had so quickly won her way to his heart. She was in no degree imbecile, he told himself as he looked

at the low, broad forehead and the thoughtful eyes, and the firm yet sweet mouth of the girl who sat so motionless at his side watching the western sky. This was a fresh, simple, unfettered nature which had grown up alone, with its own thoughts and feelings, and Margaret was the very person to mold it into true womanly strength and sweetness.

They went into the house as soon as the sun was set and the chill air of the moors swept across the neglected garden. A supper of oat-cakes, brown bread and cheese, with a large jug of buttermilk, had been laid on a bare table in the large hall; and Dorothy invited him hospitably to partake of it. It was the meal of a workingman. A fire of peat and wood was smoldering on the hearth, which, when she stirred it, gave a fitful blaze, and this, with one candle, was all the light they had during the evening. But Dorothy made no comment on the frugal meal or the dim light; it was evidently all she was used to, and she did not think her guest would find it strange.

The next morning Sidney and the lawyer alone followed the dead man to the grave. Dorothy said nothing about going, and Sidney thought it best that she should be spared the excitement. As they drove somewhat slowly among the lanes, followed by John and the four mastiffs, the solicitor gave to Sidney all the necessary information concerning the property of the deceased, and took his instructions as to the management

of Dorothy's inheritance. He did not return to the Manor after the funeral, bidding Sidney good-by at the churchyard gate. So, with no mourners, they laid Dorothy's father in the grave.

Sidney took care to dine at the village inn, where the fare was better than at the Manor, and it was late in the afternoon before he returned. Dorothy had gone out on the moors, and the dogs were yelping and baying in the stable-yard, making their cries resound far and near, as if they resented being left behind. John pointed out the path Dorothy had taken, and he followed it till it became a scarcely perceptible track among the heather. It was an intense enjoyment to him to be up here in the bracing air, with miles upon miles of uplands stretching on every hand as far as he could see, with little lonely tarns lying in the hollows, and gray rocks, half covered with moss, scattered among the purple heather. He regretted that he had ever let Brackenburn Manor, and had not kept it as a summer resort for Margaret and the boys. How they would have enjoyed its wildness and solitude! but now their boyhood was over. Still he would bring Margaret here next summer, and they would have long rambles together, such as they had never had before.

He caught sight of Dorothy at last, her slight girlish figure standing out clearly against the sky, as she stood on a ridge of rising ground. As his footsteps drew nearer to her, the dried

heather crackling under his tread, there was a flutter of birds all around her, flying away hither and thither, and he fancied he heard the scuttering of little wild creatures through the ling and brushwood. He saw her face was bathed in tears as he came up to her.

“I have bid them all good-by,” she said, “and I think they understand. And I’m saying good-by to the moors all the time in my heart. It can never be the same again; for they die soon—the poor little birds and the wild things—and their young ones will not know me if I go away; and they’ll be afraid of me and fancy I mean to hurt them or catch them. I’m very glad to go and live with you anywhere, but I love the moors and the sky, and the living creatures; and I cannot go away from them without crying.”

“But we shall come again,” he said; “the Manor is mine; and we are coming next winter to fix on a site for building a new house for my son Philip. You shall help to choose it, Dorothy. Who could choose it better?”

As he spoke the thought flashed across his brain, why should not Philip marry this charming girl with her large fortune? After three years’ companionship with Margaret she would be all he could wish in his future daughter-in-law. She had won his heart already, and she would make his and Margaret’s old age as happy as their middle life had been. Nothing could be better than that Dorothy should marry Philip

and live here, in the birthplace she loved so much, for the best part of every year.

“Who is Philip?” asked Dorothy.

“One of my boys,” he answered. “I have two of them, Philip and Hugh.”

“I never spoke to any boys,” she said in a troubled tone.

“It is time you did,” he replied, laughing heartily. “What sort of a world have you lived in? Philip is heir to this estate and will live for a time in the Manor. Here are my boys’ photographs for you to see, and my wife’s, too.”

He put into her hands a morocco case containing the three portraits, and Dorothy scrutinized them with intent eagerness. But she had never seen photographs, and their want of color disappointed her. She gave them back to Sidney with a faint smile.

“I shall not like any of them as much as you,” she said.

CHAPTER XXII.

DOROTHY'S NEW HOME.

BUT even with Sidney as her companion and protector the long journey south was a great trial to Dorothy, who had only once before left her native place. She was very pale and nervous ; he could see her little hands trembling when they did not lie clasped tightly together on her lap. The tears gathered under her drooping eyelids, and now and then rolled slowly down her cheeks. The change in her life had been too sudden and too great. Only a week ago she had been still a forlorn and neglected child, of whom no one took any thought. She had believed herself to be the daughter of a very poor man, who could afford her no advantages of education and training. Now she was told that she was heiress to a great fortune ; and already the luxuries of wealth were beginning to surround her. She was traveling by an express train in a first-class carriage ; and Sidney had bought a heap of newspapers and books to beguile the hours of her journey. She did not open one of them ; her brain was too busy for her to read. Her heart, too, was beating with fear that had something akin to pleasure in it.

What would Mrs. Martin be like? She had never seen any man like Sidney; but she loved him, and felt grateful to him. She watched him shyly from under her long eyelashes, and thought how handsome and distinguished he looked; very different from her father, whose hair had been white and his face gray and morose as long as she could remember him. She admired her guardian with an intense admiration that would have amused him greatly had he known of it. But she was afraid of Mrs. Martin, and still more afraid of the boys of whom Sidney had spoken.

The well kept park, with its fine avenue of elm trees, lying round Apley Hall, was very different from the neglected wilderness of a garden surrounding the old Manor House; and the long front of the Hall itself, with its stone walls and mullioned windows, and the broad terrace of velvet-like lawn stretching before it, was very imposing to her eyes, and filled her with a strong feeling of dismay. She was not fit to live in such a place as this, and with such people as inhabited it. A crimson flush rose painfully to her pale face; the tears gathered again in her eyes as Sidney almost lifted her out of the carriage, for her dimmed eyes caught a vision of a beautiful woman coming down the steps to meet them, with an eager and graceful movement, as if she was hastening to welcome her. Dorothy, like a child, flung her arms round Margaret's neck, and hid her face on her shoulder, as she burst into a passion of tears.

“My poor girl! my poor little girl!” reiterated Margaret, pressing Dorothy closer to her, “you will be at home here very soon. We are going to make you fond of us, Dorothy.”

“Oh!” she said, “I did not mean to be so foolish.”

Margaret herself led her to her room, the one which Phyllis had always occupied when she stayed all night at the Hall. It was near to Margaret’s own room; and she wished to have Dorothy near to her. Dorothy had never seen such a room before. There was a small white bed in one corner, hidden by an Indian screen; but in all other respects it was fitted up as a young lady’s sitting room. The window sills were low and broad, and cushioned as seats; and as soon as Margaret left her she sat down on one of them, and gazed half frightened about her. There were books, and pictures, and flowers everywhere. A small cottage piano stood against the wall, and a writing table was placed in a good light, as if the occupant of the room was supposed to spend a good portion of her time in writing. How different it all was from the bare, uncarpeted, uncurtained chamber, in a lonely corner of the old Manor, where she had slept last night, and all the nights of all the years she could remember! She felt almost too shy to walk about this dainty nest and examine its numerous decorations. Most of the pictures were engravings of famous originals; and presently she realized that they were chiefly sacred subjects in which the central figure was that of

our Lord. Three of them were photographs of bas-reliefs, representing his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, the way to the Cross, and the procession of sad men and women carrying his dead body to the sepulcher. The predominant impression made upon her by the pleasant room was that produced by these representations of the life of the Saviour. The place seemed like a sacred vestibule to another world.

The sound of voices on the terrace below arrested her attention, and she peeped stealthily through one corner of the window. The light of the setting sun lay low upon it, casting long shadows across the close, smooth turf from some figures pacing to and fro under her windows. There was Margaret; and leaning on her arm was Phyllis, in some wonder of a white gown, with soft spots of color here and there, which to Dorothy's eyes looked the prettiest and daintiest of dresses. She was talking to Margaret playfully and lovingly, but glancing back now and then to smile upon Sidney, who was following them, and by whose side walked a young man as tall, as handsome, and as distinguished looking as himself. This, then, was one of his boys! Dorothy caught her breath, in a sob of mingled terror and admiration.

She stole away into a little dressing room, and looked long at herself, with grave concern and disapprobation, in the mirror, which gave to her, for the first time in her life, a full-length reflection of her face and figure. Her dress was clumsily made, and her dark hair was drawn

tightly back from her face, and fastened up into a prim knot at the back of her head. She was smaller and shorter than the beautiful girl she had just seen. There was neither grace nor charm about her, she felt vaguely. Nothing in her former life had fitted her for the one she was just entering. It would have been better for her to have remained at Brackenburn.

She went back to the sitting room disturbed and unhappy; but a soothing and comforting presence seemed to be there. The terrace was deserted now; and only the long shadows of the trees fell across its soft sward. The low evening light gave a tranquil brightness to her room, which was neither hot nor garish; and in it she seemed to see more distinctly the many pictures, which more or less clearly told the story of the life of Christ.

“Oh, I must be good!” she said in a half whisper. “I will try to be good.”

She heard a low knock at her door, and Margaret looked in, dressed for dinner.

“My dear,” she said, “I thought you would be too tired to dine with us to-day, so you shall have dinner here alone, and Phyllis and I will come and take tea with you by and by. Will you like that, Dorothy?”

“Oh! I could not go down to-night,” she answered eagerly.

“And my husband says he will come to see you,” continued Margaret; “he looks upon you as his special charge. By and by you will be quite at home among us.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WIFE FOR PHILIP.

LAURA had heard with dismay that Sidney was bringing a rich young ward to live at Apley. But when Phyllis brought a report of Dorothy, after taking tea with her and Margaret alone, accurately describing her appearance and mimicking her manner, Laura's mind was set very much at ease. A timid and awkward country girl was not likely to supplant Phyllis with Philip or his parents. Both Sidney and Margaret took great pleasure in Phyllis's attractiveness; and Laura had made them feel that it was in a great measure due to her constant intercourse with themselves. She only hoped that Dorothy would not be too homely and unpolished to reconcile one of her own boys to marry her for her fortune. A girl with a quarter of a million as her portion set close to her own doors, almost in her own hands, excited Laura's imagination. How admirably she would do for Dick! But it would not do to let Dick know that he must woo her for her quarter of a million. This would be a far more difficult affair than Philip and Phyllis had been, and would require her most adroit management. George on her side, and Margaret on the

other side, would not give Dorothy's fortune a thought; it would not appear any advantage to either of them to secure possession of this large sum of money. But Laura was shrewd enough to know that Sidney would be anxious to retain it in his own hands, and no way could be surer than making the heiress the wife of one of his sons. Hugh would not be too young; he was the same age as Dorothy, and she was as young and ignorant as a girl of twelve.

But it seemed impossible to get hold of Dorothy. She was shy, silent, and diffident, and clung, as Laura thought, very foolishly to Margaret. There was a speedy and startling transformation in her appearance as soon as Margaret could procure suitable dresses for her, and have her abundant, soft, dark hair arranged becomingly. Margaret saw no religion in slovenly or peculiar dress; and she took pleasure in seeing everything and every person appear at their best. Dorothy hardly recognized herself in a week's time; and the change in her own appearance fitting her for her surroundings made her feel more quickly at home; but she was very shy with Phyllis and her mother. Neither of them could become intimate with the quiet, retiring girl. Dorothy, like most girls, was more afraid of Phyllis than of anyone else; the very grace of her manner, conventional rather than natural, made her shrink within herself, and feel awkward and homely.

But there was no such feeling in Margaret's

benign presence. The neglected girl's nature opened and unfolded under her influence like a flower in the sunlight. There was a strong sympathy between them on religious points. Dorothy had had no training except that of a constant and simple study of the Bible. Her father had allowed her but few books out of his large library, but those he had given to her she knew almost by heart. She was studying diligently now under Margaret's direction, with the aid of teachers who came down from London to give her lessons. This education of Dorothy had an intense charm for Margaret; there had been nothing like it in Phyllis's training, which had naturally been left in her mother's hands. It was a never flagging delight to watch the girl growing day by day more intelligent and more beautiful in her presence; blossoming out into smiles, and caresses, and half timid merriment. It sent a thrill of pathetic pleasure to Margaret's heart when she heard Dorothy's first laugh.

"How much you think of Dorothy!" said Sidney to her one evening some months later, as they sat together on the terrace with Philip beside them.

"I cannot tell you how dear she is to me," answered Margaret.

"But not more than Phyllis—not as much as Phyllis?" said Philip jealously.

"Not more or less," she replied, "but differently. Dorothy is more like my own child. Phyllis has her father and mother; Dorothy has

no one nearer to her than me. She has never been cared for before, and she returns my care with the simplest love."

"But Phyllis loves you as much as this child can do," persisted Philip.

"Not much more a child than Phyllis," said his father; "she is not two years younger."

"But she is only a schoolgirl," put in Philip, "a mere child compared with Phyllis. Still if she is in love with you and my mother I can overlook all her defects."

"Phyllis is not in love with me," replied Margaret, laughing, "and I admit that makes a difference. We are blind to the faults of those who are in love with us. 'It is not granted to man to love and to be wise,' I suppose. But don't be afraid, my dear boy. I shall not love Phyllis less because I love Dorothy. We do not carve our hearts into slices, and give piece after piece away till there is nothing left. Rather every true love makes all our other love deeper."

"That is true, Margaret," said Sidney. "I have loved God and man more and better since I loved you."

He spoke earnestly, and in the agitated tone of deep feeling. Life was very full to him just then; and he felt day by day that he was greatly favored by the God he worshiped. His heart expanded with a vivid glow of religious gratitude. What more was there that he could desire? His lot was prosperous and happy beyond that of any man's he knew. Sidney was apt to

look at himself through other men's eyes. If he looked at himself as a rich man it was through the eyes of City men, who spoke to one another of him as one of the most successful men in the City. As a religious man he looked at himself through the eyes of Margaret and the rector, who seemed satisfied that he was truly a Christian like themselves. It would, then, have been a crying ingratitude if he had not loved God, who was crowning him with blessings, and man, whose general lot was less prosperous than his own. There was only one more success to desire and to achieve, and that Margaret was unconsciously doing her utmost to attain for him. He must secure Dorothy and her large fortune for Philip.

“Philip,” he said, “I see Dorothy yonder under the cedars. Go and tell her I am come home, and have brought something for her.”

Sidney watched her and Philip with pleased eyes as they returned side by side along the terrace. She was still a slight, childish-looking girl; but there was no affectation of childish graces in her. She looked up into Philip's face with a shy, half smiling admiration, which had a peculiar attractiveness in it. Philip was conscious of this for the first time, and saw a new beauty, or rather a promise of beauty, in the dark eyes and the quaint, smiling face lifted up to him. Her eyes had a depth in them he had not observed before; and even the nervous interlacing of her fingers, as she ventured to talk to

him, did not seem so awkward a trick as it did when he first saw her. Phyllis had never been shy with him ; and the shyness of a pretty girl has a wonderful charm. Not that he could compare her with Phyllis for a moment. He was carrying the book she had been reading under the cedars, and looking into it he saw that it was the "Pensées de Pascal" done into English.

"Do you like this book?" he asked in some surprise.

"Very much," she answered.

"But do you understand it?" he asked again.

"Not all," she said ; "you see, I cannot read it in French. But when I don't understand I ask Mrs. Martin. She lets me read with her two hours every day," she added, with a light in her eyes, and a tone of gladness in her low voice.

He wished it had been Phyllis who had read with his mother two hours a day. But Phyllis was too much of a butterfly to apply herself to anything for two hours at a time ; and solid reading like this would be impossible to her. He was afraid that his father and mother both preferred Dorothy to his destined wife ; and a disquieting shadow crossed his hitherto cloudless future as he saw the pleasure with which Sidney watched their approach.

Philip felt that there was a sort of disloyalty in thus thinking of Phyllis in comparison with any other girl ; and as soon as he had found a chair

for Dorothy, he strolled away, hastening his steps when he was out of sight of the terrace as he crossed the park to the Rectory grounds. There had been a clerical meeting at the Rectory, which had kept Phyllis at home with her mother. But now he caught sight of her standing on the other side of a sunk fence, which separated the garden from the park; and it seemed to Philip as if she felt she was being supplanted in the house which had always been a second home to her. He leaped lightly across the barrier and hastened to her side. As she looked up to him tears were glittering in her eyes.

“What is it, Phyllis?” he asked tenderly.

“You have not been to see me all day,” she said in her most plaintive tones, “and it makes me sad. How could I ever bear to lose you, Philip! You and I have been more to one another than any of the others; haven’t we? I was thinking just then how we used to play together when we were quite little creatures. Do you remember?”

“I never forget it, Phyllis,” he answered; “you have belonged to me as long as I can recollect. How can you imagine you could ever lose me?”

“I am afraid of it sometimes,” she whispered, with a sob that pierced him to the heart.

“My darling!” he cried, “that could never be! never! You used to be my little wife when we were children, and you will be my real wife

as soon as I am old enough to marry. I suppose we are very young yet, my Phyllis; too young. We must wait at least till I come of age——”

“But I’m afraid of Dorothy,” she said, with another sob. “My mother says your father is making up his mind you shall marry her, and your mother is just wrapped up in her. She cares very little for me now, and Dorothy is all the world to her.”

“No, no!” he exclaimed, “my mother is not changeable; she loves you as much as ever. Of course Dorothy takes up a good deal of her time, for the poor child has been taught nothing. You cannot be jealous of her, Phyllis. Only think of all you are, and all you know, and compare yourself with a little untrained, awkward girl like Dorothy. Why, there is not a maid in our house who has not been taught more.”

“But how fond your father is of her!” said Phyllis.

“And how fond she is of him!” replied Philip, laughing; “she has neither eyes nor ears for anyone else when he is by, except my mother. And she drinks in all he says upon every topic as if she understood it. I suppose she does in some measure, for she has some brains in that little head of hers. But no man could resist such sweet flattery; and I believe he loves her next to my mother.”

“More than you boys?” suggested Phyllis.

“Neither more nor less,” said Philip, quoting

his mother's words, "but differently. Of course his love for a girl like Dorothy must differ from his love for young men like Hugh and me."

"But more than me?" she persisted.

"Perhaps," he admitted reluctantly, "perhaps. But what then? I have only to say I love you, and it will be all right. No, no. He would make no objection; he could not, when I say I have always regarded you as my future wife. Besides, it will be years before Dorothy will think of falling in love. She will grow up for Hugh, perhaps."

"She is not so much younger than me," said Phyllis in a petulant voice.

"Years younger; a child, a baby!" he went on; "not to be compared with you for a moment. But why do we talk of her? You cannot think that Dorothy could ever take your place with me, Phyllis? I cannot remember a time when you were not dearer to me than anyone else—except my mother."

"I cannot bear any exceptions," she said, pouting.

But Philip kept silence. Yes; Phyllis was all he could wish for, and would be a charming wife, with her little capricious ways, and in spite of slight uncertainties of temper. She always stirred within him a sense of life, sometimes of ruffled life, perhaps; but there was no stagnation of feeling in her companionship. But would she ever possess, and, by possessing, diffuse, the sense of great peace which his mother's presence gave

to him? He knew there were times when if he could not go to her, and open his heart fully to her wise and tender scrutiny, his life would be crippled and incomplete, and he would be as a man who had lost his eyesight, or the use of his right hand. But it was not so with Phyllis. She could walk merrily beside him along smooth and sunny roads; but when the thorny path came, what would she do?

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RECTOR'S TROUBLE.

It was quite true that Sidney loved Dorothy next to Margaret. From the first she had been more at ease with him than with anyone else. He had liked to have Phyllis about the house, with her pretty girlish ways, and ready to sparkle with delight if he brought some dress or trinket for her from town. But Phyllis had a father of her own ; and her daughter-like smiles and kisses belonged of right to George, not to himself. There was no other man to whom Dorothy owed any demonstration of girlish tenderness and devotion, or who could have felt he was yielding an indulgence, when she watched for his return home, and ran to meet him, greeting him with the frank and innocent delight of a little daughter. Often she was waiting for him at the lodge, with two or three of her great mastiffs about her ; and he would leave the carriage to walk up the avenue, listening to her bright and quaint chatter. For she was talkative to him, however silent she might be to Philip. She was growing prettier every day ; Sidney found her as pretty as Phyllis herself, and far more natural. He declared to himself that she was as like Mar-

garet when she was a girl as if she had been Margaret's own child. Only one drop was lacking to make his cup of happiness full, and that was to see Dorothy the wife of his eldest son. This keen desire made him more clear-sighted with regard to Phyllis. He could not imagine how he could have been so blind hitherto to the danger of letting so close an intimacy exist between her and Philip. When Phyllis was not at the Hall, Philip was sure to be at the Rectory. Dorothy's shyness with him made Phyllis more his companion. As Sidney began to notice them more closely, he detected an air of appropriation in Phyllis's manner toward Philip which disturbed him greatly. How long had this been going on? It was useless to call Margaret's attention to the matter, as she would look upon it from quite a different point of view from his own. But his son and heir must make a better match than with a poor clergyman's daughter. He must put a stop at once to any such love affair, if it existed.

There was no difficulty in taking a first step in pursuit of this object. The rector was accustomed to dine regularly at the Hall on a Monday night, which he looked upon as his leisure time. George greatly enjoyed these occasions, especially when Sidney and he were alone. They had been brought up by their uncle almost as brothers, and the old boyish love still lived in his heart. He had never seen any reason to dethrone Sidney from the first place he held in his esteem. George

was one of the few fortunate mortals who had possessed an ideal all his life, and at fifty could still place faith in it. Sidney and his career had been a ceaseless pleasure and pride to him.

“George,” said Sidney one Monday evening, as they lingered alone together in the comfortable dining room, “my boy Philip will be of age now in a few weeks.”

“My boy Dick was of age a few weeks ago,” replied George, with a smile.

“Ah, yes!” went on Sidney, “and a very fine fellow he is. He will distinguish himself in the world more than Philip will do. Your boys have genius, and will make their mark. It would be hardly fair if Philip had every advantage.”

“Philip has riches,” rejoined the rector, “but Margaret and I agree that money is not one of God’s great gifts.”

“But he has other gifts besides money,” said Sidney.

“Many, many!” replied George warmly; “he has a noble, unselfish nature like Margaret’s, and a steadfast, faithful heart. He is less worldly than my boys. I do not think he could make for himself a brilliant place in this world, any more than I could. But he would stand high in the kingdom of heaven, as his mother’s son should do.”

Sidney made no immediate answer. George had spoken the truth, but it was an unpalatable truth. Philip was all he could desire in a son, except that he had no ambition, and was abso-

lutely contented with his position and prospects in the world.

“I hope,” he said after a pause, “that Philip will make my little Dorothy my real daughter. He is young yet; too young to know his own mind. But under Margaret’s training Dorothy is growing all I should wish in Philip’s wife. And when I think of how happy my life has been made by Margaret I cannot help coveting the same happiness for my boy. You spoke of God’s gifts, George. If God will give Philip a wife like Margaret it would be his best gift.”

George leaned back in his chair, staring intently into the fire, with an expression of perplexity and trouble on his usually placid face. How it was he did not know, and now he was trying to find out; but there was a vague impression on his mind that long, long ago it had been an understood thing that Philip was to marry Phyllis. True, he could not recall any conversation on the subject; the children were too young. But it seemed to him that he had always been led to expect it. But who had so led him? Certainly not Sidney, for he clearly knew nothing of it, and had no idea of such a thing. Was it possible he had been mistaken? Could he have been merely dreaming a pleasant dream that his dear child’s future welfare was secure? For nothing could have given him greater happiness than intrusting her to the care of a man he knew so well as Philip, who was in fact like one of his own sons. Phyllis had her faults, but they

were trifles, said the indulgent father to himself ; and she cared more for worldly advantages and worldly show than she ought ; but Philip's unworldliness would check all that. He found this hope so firmly rooted in his heart that he could not believe it was only a dream of his own.

“Yes, Philip must marry Dorothy,” pursued Sidney, in a tone of friendly confidence, “but it will be soon enough in four or five years' time. Then she will be all he can wish for. If I am not mistaken, Dorothy is not indifferent to him. I can see no brighter future for them both than to be man and wife. They are very equally matched in money.”

“But if Philip loved someone else?” began the rector gently.

“He does not, he cannot,” interrupted Sidney ; “surely his mother and I would be the first to know it. He has no intimacy with any girl except Phyllis ; and that is the intimacy of brother and sister. They love each other as brother and sister ; nothing more.”

“Phyllis thinks more of Philip than she does of her brothers,” said the rector, with a sigh. If it was painful to him to be suddenly awakened from a dream, there was possibly the same pain in store for his little daughter also.

“Oh, it is nothing but a girl's fancy,” answered Sidney lightly, “even if it is so. She has seen no other young men ; and we must get her out more, away from this too quiet spot. Laura can easily manage that. She and Philip

are quite too young to have set their hearts upon one another ; so do not trouble yourself. And George, old friend, though I love your girl for her own sake as well as for yours, I could never receive her as Philip's wife."

"I don't say that Phyllis loves your son," said the rector, "or that he loves her. It is enough for me to know that it would displease you to set me on my guard lest such a misfortune should occur. I will set Laura on her guard too."

"No, no! much better not," replied Sidney, with one of the genial smiles which had never failed to win George's cordial assent to what he said ; "we are two old simpletons to be so near quarreling about nothing. I simply confide to you my hopes for Philip as I always talk to you of my plans. They are all children yet ; and will make up their minds and change them a dozen times in the next few years. Let us keep our gossip to ourselves. I do not tell Margaret. Why should you tease Laura?"

But the rector went home that night with an anxious and a troubled spirit. The more he considered it the more certain he felt that Philip and Phyllis believed that they were destined for one another. Laura always spoke, vaguely indeed, but with reiterated persistence, of the two together, as if there was no question of them ever being separated. The boys, too, seemed to think of nothing else ; and Phyllis was always left to Philip as his special companion, when he came daily to the Rectory. There were small jests and

hints, nods and shrugs, all meaning the same things, among the boys, when Philip made his appearance. He had himself never doubted their love for one another. But how this state of affairs had come about he did not know ; it had grown up so slowly and surely. It was an inexpressible shock to him to discover that Sidney and Margaret knew nothing of it. Was it not dishonorable toward these, his dearest and oldest friends, to have thus allowed so close an intimacy to exist between his daughter and their son? Had he taken advantage of their noble, generous friendship, which had embraced his children almost as if they were their own? How deeply he was in their debt for all that made life tranquil and free from cares! And he was going to repay them by basely entrapping their eldest son and Sidney's heir into a marriage with his portionless daughter!

The rector was very miserable, and there was no one to whom he could confide his misery. Instinctively he shrank from confessing it to his wife ; and of course he could not tell Margaret. It was a high delight to him to speak with Margaret of those spiritual experiences, which she seemed to comprehend almost without words, but which Laura altogether failed to understand. Of this painful and perplexing anxiety he could not speak. Once or twice he tried to approach the subject, hoping that Margaret might utter some word indicating that she, too, was aware of the attachment between Philip and Phyllis. But

Margaret gave no sign that she had ever dreamed of such a thing. Though the idea of it seemed natural and familiar at the Rectory, it was quite unthought of at the Hall.

But one plain duty lay before him—to separate his little Phyllis from Philip as much as possible. He faintly hoped that he was mistaken, and that she had not already given her heart to him.

CHAPTER XXV.

COMING OF AGE.

THERE was great consternation in the tranquil Rectory, when the rector declared with unwonted decision that neither he, nor his wife, nor Phyllis would go north to the coming of age festivities of Philip. These revels had been talked of for years ; and since Dorothy had come from Brackburn she had been called upon to describe again and again the old Manor House and its surroundings. Philip and Phyllis looked forward to choosing the site of the new mansion together.

“ You boys may go,” said the rector ; “ you have been brought up as brothers with Philip, and if he wishes it, it is only due to him and his father that you should attend them. But no one else goes.”

“ What ! ” cried Dick in blunt astonishment ; “ not the future Mrs. Martin ? ”

“ What do you mean ? ” asked the rector sternly.

“ Why, Phyllis, of course ! ” he answered ; and Phyllis laughed merrily, and blushed a little, but did not show any resentment.

“ I will have no such jests made here,” said the

rector with increased sternness. "Philip and Phyllis are not children any longer."

"Children? no!" cried Dick; "and it is no jest either, father. They've always been promised to one another. Of course they are engaged."

"Secretly?" said the rector, unable to utter another word.

"Oh, it's an open secret," pursued Dick. "You ask Philip. Ask uncle or aunt Martin. Ask Dorothy. Ask Andrew Goldsmith. Everybody would say they knew it, except you, dear old father."

"No, your uncle and aunt do not know," he replied in a tone of deep depression and sadness. It seemed an unpardonable treachery that these two should have entered into an engagement without asking the consent of their parents. This base blow had been struck at Sidney in his home, and by those that were dear to him. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household," he said bitterly to himself, as he sat alone in his study, after leaving all the members of his family in a state of dismay and amazement. Philip came to him by and by, having been summoned by Phyllis, and declared that he had never thought of keeping his love a secret; that he was only waiting till he was of age to speak openly of it to his father and mother; and that he did not for a moment anticipate anything like disapproval from either of them. The rector was too unhappy to take courage or comfort. But he

could not be shaken in his resolution that Phyllis should not join the party going north.

Philip's coming of age was to be celebrated merely by a gathering of the tenants at Brackeburn Manor, a festivity which could not have taken place at all but for the death of Mr. Churchill, an event which had left the old house at Sidney's disposal. They were strangers on their own estate, and had, therefore, no friendly neighbors to gather about them. Now that the rector so firmly refused all invitations, except for his sons, there was a small party only going northward. Oddly enough, Sidney invited Andrew Goldsmith to accompany them. It was a sudden impulse and freak for which he could not account to himself. Rachel Goldsmith was accompanying Margaret, as she still held the nominal post of her maid, and it did not seem altogether out of place to ask her brother Andrew.

"It'll be a rare treat to me," said the old saddler, "for I've loved Mr. Philip, as if he'd been my own flesh and blood, ever since my lady brought him to my house as a little babe. Ah! if he'd been Sophy's boy I couldn't have loved him more."

It was years since Sidney had heard Sophy's name; for, naturally, as time went on, the memory of her, and of her strange disappearance and silence, had withdrawn into the background of life, and only two or three hearts, that had been stricken sorely by her loss, kept her in remembrance. They had no hope now of finding her;

but no day passed in which her father and Rachel did not think of her, and still wonder, with sad bewilderment, what could have become of her.

It was early in December: the few leaves left in the topmost branches of the trees were brown and sere. The wide moors rising behind Brackenburn were brown too, but there were purple and gray tints on them—dun, soft tints that looked very beautiful under the low sky and slowly drifting clouds. To Dorothy it was an unmingled pleasure to revisit, in this manner, her birthplace, and to see its empty rooms peopled by all those she had learned to love. The old familiar house, with its latticed windows shining through the luxuriant tendrils of ivy, which Sidney had left untrained, was quite unchanged; but when she entered through the broad porch into the large old hall, she uttered a cry of delight. It was a transformed and brilliant place; not the bare, barnlike entrance she remembered. Soft skins and rugs lay on the oak floor, and a large fire burned in the wide old chimney, which had always looked to her, when a child, like the mouth of a black cavern. On each side of the broad and shallow staircase there stood flowering plants on every step. The place was the same; yet, oh, how different! A rich color came into her face, and her dark eyes glowed with happy excitement. Margaret was tired, and Dorothy, feeling almost like mistress and hostess in her old home, conducted her to her room, where Rachel was awaiting her lady's arrival.

Margaret was not in her usual health and spirits. There was always mingled with her joy in Philip's birth, the memory of her father's death the day afterward, and the solemn recollection of her own strange experience of dying, as if she had actually passed out of this world, and been sent back to it. Life had never been to her, since that memorable time, the commonplace existence of her mere physical or intellectual being. She had lived more by the soul than by the mind or the body. These lower forms of life had possessed their fullness for her. She had enjoyed the perfect health of her physical nature, with all the rich pleasures coming through the senses, and she had in a greater measure taken delight in intellectual pursuits. But, pre-eminently, she had lived in the spirit, and just now her spirit was overshadowed. There was a conflict coming near from which it shrank.

She was troubled about Phyllis. The girl was dear to her from old associations and the intimacy of a lifetime; but she could not think of her as Philip's wife. No word had been spoken to her yet about this subject; but it had been in the air for the last fortnight, and she could not be unconscious of it. She had guessed the reason of the rector's firm resolution of not coming to Brackenburn, and not letting Laura and Phyllis come. Sidney had not spoken of it; but she thought he was troubled. But the most disquieting symptom of a coming storm was that Philip kept silence, even to her. He never mentioned

Phyllis ; but he was absent and low-spirited. This was the first sorrow, the first shadow of a cloud, coming over Margaret from her relationship with her husband and her son. Until now she had been able to speak as she thought before them, with quiet, unrestrained freedom. But there had sprung up, during the last few days, a novel feeling of restraint and embarrassment. Neither Sidney nor Philip uttered the name of Phyllis.

After Dorothy had seen Margaret comfortably established in her room, she stole quietly and quickly out of the house, and hastened on to the moors. There was yet half an hour of the short December day, and she could not wait for the morrow. At the first low knoll she turned round to look back upon the old Manor House, with its picturesque gables and large stacks of chimneys. She knew now better than she used to do how very beautiful it was. The sun was setting, and the low light shone full upon the small diamond panes of the many windows, and cast deep shadows from the eaves, and brought into stronger relief the antique carvings on the heavy beams of oak. She felt proud of the place—as proud as if it had been her own.

“Why did you never tell us how pretty it was ?” asked Philip’s voice ; and turning round, she saw him coming up to her over the soundless turf.

“I never knew,” she answered, almost stam-

meringly ; "I never thought it was as lovely as this. Yet I've seen it from this very spot thousands of times. Why did it look so sad to me then, and so beautiful now?"

She looked up into his face as if it was a very knotty question for him to consider, and his grave expression relaxed a little as he answered her.

"You were not very happy here then," he suggested.

"I never knew a happy day till I knew your father," she replied ; "and I've never known an unhappy one since. Is it happiness that makes a place look lovely?"

If it was so, thought Philip, this place could have no beauty for him. Phyllis was not there, and his heart was very heavy for her absence. And not only for her absence, but from a growing dread of meeting with an opposition he had not anticipated. It was significant to him of trouble that his father and mother never spoke of Phyllis in his presence ; he did not know that they were equally silent with one another. Though it was the rector who had prevented her from coming north, he could not help guessing that it was his father who had, in some way, been the real hinderer. The rector could have no objection to himself as Phyllis's suitor, and he felt sure that he at least had looked upon him as her future husband. Phyllis, too, was certain of it, and so were the boys. He was only waiting

till he came of age, and stepped into his right of free and independent manhood, to tell his father that he had chosen Phyllis as his wife.

“It is not only happiness that makes a place lovely,” pursued Dorothy, after a pause, “it is being with people one loves. Do you see that window just touched by the end of a branch of those Scotch firs? Your mother is in that room. I cannot see her, of course; but that window is more beautiful to me because I know she is there. And I know all the rooms, and how they will be occupied; and the whole house is full of interest to my mind. So that even if it was an ugly place, it could not be altogether ugly to me.”

There was a pleasant ring in her voice which was new to Philip's ear. He looked long and earnestly at the old house, which some day would belong to him, unless it was pulled down to make room for a finer mansion. It already belonged to him because it belonged to his father. It was a beautiful old place, with the gray stones of the strong wall surrounding it made warm with golden mosses; and the front of the house covered with unclipped ivy-branches, hanging in glistening festoons from every point of vantage. Such a place could not be built or made. Why should he be such a Goth as to erect a brand-new mansion, which could possess no such charm and beauty until he, and generations of his sons, were moldering in their graves?

“Wouldn't it be a pity to pull it down?”

asked Dorothy, as if she read his thoughts ; “but Phyllis would find the rooms too small, and too low for her. I described it to her one day, and drew a sort of plan of it ; and she said it was only a big rambling farmhouse, and you must build a much grander place, because Sir John Martin left a large sum of money to build it with. So I thought, was it quite impossible for me to buy it, and you build a house somewhere near it ? Then we should always be neighbors ; and it is very lonely here in the winter. Do you think Phyllis would like to live here in the winter ? ”

It was sweet to him to hear Phyllis’s name spoken in this way ; no one had uttered it in his presence for a fortnight except the boys, and they spoke it with a sort of jeer, as brothers sometimes do. Dorothy’s gentle voice lingered shyly over it. He looked down into her shining eyes with a smile in his own.

“We must not talk of Phyllis living here yet,” he said, “not till the day after to-morrow.”

“Let us go a little higher up the moors,” she said, “I know every little track, and beck, and dingle for miles round. When I lived here with my father, I used to sit an hour or two with him every day, on the other side of the table, reading aloud, and answering the questions he asked me. But he never talked to me, or took me on his knee, or kissed me ; and I thought all fathers were the same. The rest of the day I had to myself, and I spent my time here, out of doors.”

“And in the winter when there was snow or rain?” asked Philip.

“I read all day long,” she went on. “See on the roof there, between two gables, is a little dormer window. There my secret room is. I really believe nobody knew of it but me; and I used to stay there till I was nearly starved and famished. But there was no one to ask me where I had been, or what I’d been doing.”

“Poor child!” said Philip unconsciously. The color mounted to Dorothy’s face, and she turned away from him a little.

“It is all different now,” she continued, after a momentary silence, “you are all so kind and good to me. And I think sometimes that when my father died he too went to a place where everyone is good and kind to him and trys to make up to him for his life here; for he was more lonely and unhappy than I was. I was only a child, and he was a man. I should not like to feel that his death had made me so happy, if it has not made him happy too.”

“My mother has always told us that death itself comes to us out of the love of God,” said Philip.

He had followed Dorothy along a narrow track, and now they were out of sight of the house. A wide, undulating upland, whose limits were almost lost in the darkening sky, stretched as far as the eye could see. The sun was gone down, but a frosty light lingered in the west. The keen,

sweet air played around them ; and Dorothy drew in a deep breath, and stretched out her arms, with a caressing gesture, to the wide landscape. She looked more at home here than Phyllis would have done. Phyllis would have seen but little beauty in so wild and solitary a spot. Perhaps it was better that she had not seen her future home for the first time in the winter.

Philip retraced his steps, with Dorothy beside him, in a more tranquil frame of mind. She did not shun conversation about Phyllis; and though nothing was acknowledged between them, he was sure she knew of their love for one another. What was more likely than that Phyllis had told her?

They went back to the house slowly through the deepening twilight, Dorothy pointing out distant objects which neither of them could distinguish in the darkness, though she fancied she saw them, so familiar and so dear they were to her. He looked at the wide, open, dusky landscape, and the broad sky above them, and the picturesque old house, with light shining through the many windows, from Dorothy's point of view. But what would Phyllis think of it, with her dainty, fastidious ways, and her love of society?

As they passed through the great gates into the forecourt Andrew Goldsmith met them.

“Well, Mr. Philip!” he said, “I don't think

much of your place. The saddle and harness room is almost in ruins; and the stables aren't fit for anything better than cart horses. It's not to be compared with Apley Hall; and the sooner you begin to build yourself a suitable mansion the better."

CHAPTER XXVI.

AT CROSS PURPOSES.

FOR the next two days Philip was fully occupied in riding with his father to call upon the principal tenants, who had been already invited to commemorate his coming of age. He was quite a stranger to them, and Sidney knew but little of them. They were mostly farmers; a fine, outspoken, independent race of north-country men, very different in their ways and manners from the same class on Margaret's estate in the south. Sidney made himself exceedingly popular with them; and Philip was almost surprised at his father's tone of easy friendliness with his tenants. But Sidney was, as he told himself, enjoying the happiest season of his very prosperous life. Putting aside that little trouble about Phyllis, which would prove no more than a boy's fancy, he gave the reins to his feelings of exultation and rejoicing. He was very proud of this handsome, athletic, well-bred young Englishman, who was his eldest son and heir, the apple of his eye through all these twenty-one years, since he welcomed his first-born into the world. He was secretly afraid of yielding to the tender recollections that crowded into his brain as his son rode beside him, and, therefore, he flung himself more

fully into an open demonstration of his pleasure in introducing him to his future tenants. He told them that the Manor House would not be let again, but that Philip would soon be coming to dwell among them for a great part of the year, and take his position as a country squire. He could never quit the south and the near neighborhood of London himself, but, with his son living up here, he would naturally be often among them, and would get better acquainted with them.

The great dinner given to the tenants and the afternoon merry-making passed off well, as such festivities usually do. But Dorothy, not Philip, was the real center of interest. She had grown up under their observation, a neglected, forlorn, uncared-for child, thought little of by all of them; and suddenly, on her father's death, she had been made known to them as a great heiress. She was an astonishment to them all, especially to the women; the elegance of her dress, the frank and simple grace of her manner, her daughter-like familiarity with Mr. and Mrs. Martin amazed them. When she joined in an easy country dance, with Philip as her partner, there was only one thought in the mind of each of them: This poor little Cinderella was destined to marry the young son and heir.

If Andrew and Rachel Goldsmith had not known better they would have thought the same. Even Dick and the other boys, who had come north to be present at these festivities, said to

one another that Phyllis was not missed. Dorothy was very much more the daughter of the house than Phyllis could ever have been. She was at home, and she felt as if the success of these rejoicings depended partly upon her. For the first time, too, she was free from the depressing influence of Phyllis's superiority; and Laura was not there, with her chilling, criticising gaze. No one could be insensible to the charm of Dorothy's gay spirits and sweet kindness.

But as soon as the last guest was gone Philip went off alone up the moors. The moon was at the full, and poured a flood of light on the twinkling surface of the silent little tarns sleeping in the hollows. The frosty sky was shot with pale red lines in the north, and a thick bank of clouds, the edge of which was tinged with moonlight, stretched across the south. He did not wander out of sight of the black massive block of the old Manor, but all day he had longed to be alone, and here he was safely alone. The day he had been looking forward to, which had been talked of, in his hearing, for as long as he could remember, was come, and was almost gone. He felt distinctly older to-day than he was yesterday. No birthday had had a similar effect upon him. Yesterday he was a boy, bound to obey his father's will; to-day he was himself a man. Not wiser perhaps, not clearer-headed, or stronger in principle than yesterday; but free, with a more real liberty. His actions hereafter would

be more definitely his own, for he would be acting more fully on his own responsibility, and at his own discretion. He had always loved his father profoundly, with a depth and distinctness rare in a boy ; and Sidney had missed no opportunity of gaining and strengthening the affection of his sons. But of late Philip had learned to appreciate his mother's peculiar character more than he had done in his earlier youth ; and if he had asked himself whom he now loved and trusted most implicitly his heart would have said his mother.

For he could not go to his father with the story of his love for Phyllis, and be sure of a patient hearing. He shrank from doing the duty that must at once be done. Until the last few weeks he had not felt any doubt of his father's and mother's consent to his marriage with Phyllis ; but he felt now a vague presentiment that his father would say he had never thought of such a thing, and could not approve of it. Phyllis's unexpected absence from these rejoicings had marred the pleasure of the day to him, and filled him with anxiety. She ought to have been at his side, instead of Dorothy, laughing a little scoffingly at the speeches made ; his own among them. He loved Phyllis's little sarcasms.

But why did he feel as if he had been guilty of concealment and disingenuousness ; he, who was so jealous of his honor, and so proud of speaking to his father with utter singleness of heart ? How was it that he became conscious,

uneasily conscious, for the first time, that his love for Phyllis was possibly unknown to his parents? It was no secret at the Rectory, that he was sure of; unless the rector himself was ignorant of it. Why had he never spoken openly of it with his mother as he had done with Phyllis's mother? When did he begin to hide this thing from his parents? And why? He could not answer these questions to himself. He felt himself caught in a net, a very fine net, of circumstances; but how it had been woven about him he could not tell.

His mother was gone to her room when he returned to the house, being overtired; and Dorothy was with her. There was a dance going on among the servants in the great kitchen, and his cousins were there amusing themselves. All the rest of the house looked deserted and cheerless, with the disorder that follows upon any festivities. Philip recalled with surprise how happy he had felt, in spite of Phyllis's absence, only an hour or two ago. The cheers of his future tenants sounded again in his ears; and the proud gladness of his father, and tender gladness of his mother, came back to him with a sting of reproach; but still it was his reticence that troubled him. He did not fear any strong opposition to his wishes when they knew that his love for Phyllis was unchangeable. They could not have any objection to Phyllis.

Sidney was sitting in the corner of a huge fireplace, where a fire was burning cheerfully, and

Philip sat down opposite to him. For once his father was absolutely unoccupied, musing with a smile upon his handsome face, as if he was reading all the happy past and the brilliant present in the leaping flames and glowing coals upon the hearth. There was no sign of old age upon him. In fact, he was still in the prime of life; strong, athletic, vigorous, with an air of intellectual keenness and power, which set him high above average men. Philip felt as proud of him as he did of Philip. He looked across at his son with a light in his eyes as undimmed as if he had been himself a boy.

“A man now!” he said, as if he welcomed him across the line that had lain between him and manhood; “a man like myself!”

“Yes, a man!” said Philip abruptly, “with a man’s heart and a man’s love like yours. Father, I love Phyllis as you love my mother.”

Sidney was not prepared to receive the blow so soon and so suddenly; it was struck at him in the very zenith of his happiness. But he had expected it to fall sooner or later, and had laid his plan of action. He hoped that Philip was not yet involved in an engagement, and that it would be possible to temporize, to use such tactics as would set him free from the snare. His face clouded over a little, but he still gazed affectionately in his son’s face.

“Of course, you have said nothing to her, as you have not spoken of it to me or your mother,” he said.

“There was no need to say anything,” answered Philip, stammering. “Why, father, she and I have been brought up for one another! I cannot remember the time when I did not think she would be my wife. Neither she nor I have thought of anyone else.”

“Does your mother know this?” inquired his father in measured tones.

“I don’t know,” he replied; “I suppose not.”

“Who, then?” asked Sidney.

“Oh! all of them; every one of them,” he said, “except my mother and you. I thought you knew of it till a few weeks ago.”

“Does the rector know?” pursued Sidney.

Philip paused a little.

“I cannot say yes for certain,” he answered, “for the rector seems to live in another world from ours; but I never doubted it till he refused to let Phyllis come here with us. And I never meant to conceal it from my mother and you; it seemed such a settled matter, and you were both so fond of Phyllis. I cannot understand how or why this moment is so painful to me. I thought I could ask you for Phyllis as I have asked you for everything else I wanted all my life long.”

“Did I ever refuse you anything that was for your good?” asked Sidney, his voice, which was always pleasant and persuasive, falling into softer tones.

“Never, father, never!” he answered eagerly.

“But I must refuse you this. Listen!” he said, as Philip was about to interrupt him.

“Such an idea never entered your mother’s mind or mine. The children at the Rectory were brought up with you as if you were one family. I had utter confidence in the rector and his wife. If I had seen anything to make me suspect an attachment between you and Phyllis, I should have separated you at once. Brought up for one another! I see it clearly at last. The plot has been artfully contrived, and cleverly carried out. You are the dupe of a cunning and worldly woman. I cast no blame upon Phyllis herself. But, my boy, Phyllis is born to be the wife of a rich man; she would make a bad wife for a poor one. Think for yourself if you could ask Phyllis to share poverty with you.”

“But I shall not be a poor man!” exclaimed Philip. All day long circumstances had impressed upon him the fact that the career of a very rich man lay before him, and he was almost shocked by his father’s words.

“You are a poor man until I die,” said Sidney, rising and stretching himself to his full height. His tall and muscular frame was as vigorous and powerful as Philip’s own, and his life at fifty was probably as good as his son’s at one-and-twenty. “How soon would you wish me to die, Philip?” he asked in a mournful tone.

“Oh, father!” he cried; “how can you say such words? I could not bear the thought of you dying.”

“But till then you are dependent upon me,” continued Sidney, “and you cannot ask me to

give you the means of bringing trouble on your mother and myself. I shall probably live another twenty-five or thirty years. Consider how Phyllis would like the life you could offer her. I do not say I would let you come to want; but if I allowed you no more than £800 or £1000 a year, would that satisfy her?"

Philip was silent. There was reason in what his father said. Phyllis would look upon £800 a year as poverty. As long as he could recollect, she had chafed and fretted about the narrow income of her father, and openly expressed her intention of not living as carefully and economically as her mother was compelled to do. Certainly Phyllis was not fit to be a poor man's wife, even if that poor man had an allowance of £800 or £1000 a year.

"But I have always thought of her as my wife," he broke out passionately; "and I cannot give her up. Think how happy you have been with my mother; and why should you deny me similar happiness?"

"Because Phyllis is nothing like your mother," answered Sidney, his eyes sparkling with anger. "Good Heavens! do you compare that empty-headed butterfly with my Margaret? Your mother would be happy in a cottage with her sons and her husband, as happy as she is now in her own house. If I thought for a moment that Phyllis would be such a wife to you as your mother is to me, I would consent willingly, though she could never be like a daughter to me.

Phyllis would separate you from me. We should soon be as strangers to one another."

"No, no!" he said; "you have always seemed to love Phyllis, and so has my mother. What can you object to in her? Her father is your own nearest relation and friend. Everybody in Apley knows we have been always thrown together, as if we were some day to be married. Let me know your objections, your reasons. No one came between you and the woman you loved. Why should you not allow me to choose for myself?"

"Because you have not really chosen for yourself," answered his father. "Your nature has been played upon ever since your childhood. I can see it all now, and understand it. Phyllis is not to blame; but Phyllis's mother has laid her plot, and carried it out very successfully. Brought up for one another! Did your mother and I ever speak of your being brought up for Phyllis?"

"I cannot give her up now!" exclaimed Philip.

"Ask your mother if Phyllis would make you a true wife," urged his father.

"But I could not give her up," he reiterated. "It would break my poor Phyllis's heart. Every year of my life binds me to her; every feeling of honor as well as of love. No; it would be impossible. It is of no use to consult my mother. I will tell her I must marry Phyllis, and I will beg of her to look upon her as a daughter. In

the sight of God I believe Phyllis is my wife, and I should not be free to marry anyone else. You will give your consent in time, father."

"Never!" his father answered with mingled anger and sadness. "You will be a poor man as long as I live. Tell Laura Martin she and her daughter must wait for my money till my death."

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHO WILL GIVE WAY ?

THE conflict which Laura Martin had foreseen years ago was at last begun between herself and Sidney, and she was prepared for it. But she was not prepared to meet with two firm opponents in her husband and Margaret. Her plans had been based on the assumption that these two, Philip's mother and Phyllis's father, in their complete unworldliness and contempt for money, would be on her side ; and Sidney would be left practically alone. But now the rector's eyes were open they saw matters in a very clear light ; and his soul was filled with shame. He was invulnerable to all attacks ; even to the tears of his precious child, and to Laura's repeated assurances that Phyllis would break her heart if she could not marry Philip. The rector was almost crushed under this heavy trouble, but he did not yield his position for a moment. He could not give his approval or consent to the marriage until Sidney gave his. Nor would he have Philip coming to the rectory. Margaret was equally firm. She knew Phyllis's nature thoroughly. The girl was dear to her ; for her wide charity, which strove to love all that God loved—and did not God love every soul of man?—embraced this

child, whom she had known from her birth, with a special and very close affection. But she knew her to be of the world—very emphatically of the world. She believed her to be destitute of real spiritual life. As a clergyman's daughter Phyllis was fairly orthodox, though with her, as with many clergymen's children, there was a great lack of reverence for sacred subjects; she made a jest of many things which, to Margaret, were full of mystery and solemnity. But Margaret attached little importance to outer forms and rites, and it was at the spirit of Phyllis's life she looked. That spirit was distinctly selfish and worldly. Margaret knew that she could not make Philip happy as his wife, and she refused to sacrifice his future welfare to the gratification of the moment. The question of Phyllis's fortune or station never crossed Margaret's mind.

But Laura was not to be daunted. Philip and Phyllis were as obstinate in maintaining their position as she could wish them to be. There was no concealment now. Philip formally announced their engagement to his personal friends and to the people at Apley. Sidney was amazed and angry to discover how it was taken as a matter of course by these nearest spectators of his domestic drama. They had witnessed the side-play distinctly, while his own eyes were hoodwinked. Andrew Goldsmith was the first to speak to him about it.

“They've grown up for one another, sir,” he said, “and we've seen it all along; and I trust

they will be happy. But Rachel and me, we've often thought of late how much better Miss Dorothy would have suited him, if she'd only been in Miss Phyllis's place. Rachel says Miss Dorothy is growing up to be the very copy of my lady, true to the life of her. And what could we have wished more for Mr. Philip?"

"Goldsmith," answered Sidney, "I will tell you, and you may tell others, that I disapprove of my son's engagement, and will never give my consent to this marriage."

"But it's a hard thing to choose another man his wife, sir," urged Andrew, who knew perfectly well the conflict now raging between the Hall and the Rectory. "I've thought often enough of that when I've been thinking of my poor girl. I was an austere father, though I loved her as my own soul; and she was afraid to tell me who it was she loved. It would have been better for her, if she'd lived ever so miserably, to have our love to comfort her. Now we are lost to one another altogether. If Miss Phyllis shouldn't make Mr. Philip very happy, he would still have you, and his mother, and Mr. Hugh. Ah! I'd rather see my Sophy a miserable wife than know nothing about her. There's an aching void here in my heart, and must be forever in this world; and I pray God you and my lady may never feel the same."

"You have not forgotten her yet," said Sidney in a tone of pain that went straight to the old man's heart.

“Nor never shall,” he answered; “first thing in the morning and last thing at night, a voice says to me, ‘Sophy!’ Ay! I should have gone crazy but for you and yours. It’s the kindness and friendship you and Miss Margaret have shown to me that has kept my reason for me. And my reason says, ‘Mr. Martin ought not to break with his first-born son because he has chosen a wife for himself. No man can know the heart of another man. And life is short; and death may cut us off at any minute.’ I don’t say as I would give way so as to let them marry in a hurry, for they are young and don’t know their own minds yet. But set them a time to wait, and let him serve for her as Jacob did for Rachel; and if they love one another truly, and are faithful for the season you fix upon, then give your consent to their being happy in their own way. We can’t be happy in other people’s way.”

“I will think of it, Goldsmith,” Sidney promised.

He watched the old man going down the road toward the village street, for they had returned to Apley, and his mind dwelt, almost involuntarily, on the unknown tie which united them. Philip was exactly of the age he himself was when he contracted his foolish and secret marriage. He recalled his own hot passion for the pretty village girl, and how impossible it would have been for any argument to convince him that such love as his would quickly burn itself out,

and leave behind it only darkness, disgust, and misery. He had risked all, when he had all to risk, to gratify his boyish infatuation. But Philip would risk only the chance of poverty during his father's lifetime; and Sidney knew well he could, if he would, raise money on his future inheritance of an entailed estate. Moreover, Philip's love was given to one of his own rank in life, a girl of equal cultivation with himself. It was not a brilliant match, but no one would be surprised at it. It seemed probable that he might in the end be compelled to make some terms with his son; and would it not be politic to make them at once?

He went slowly homeward, haunted by more vivid remembrances of his early marriage than any that had troubled him for many years. The dead past had buried its dead; but there is no stone rolled upon the sepulcher to make us sure of no resurrection. Suppose Philip had been Sophy's son! How widely different his training and his whole character must have been! How different he himself would be at this moment, if Sophy had been his constant, intimate companion in the place of Margaret. He thought of it with a shudder of disgust. His love for Margaret had never known decrease or ebb; it had grown stronger and deeper every year, but there was an element of almost sacred awe mingled with it. She was as much above him as Sophy had been below him. Not that she felt this herself; there was always in her a deference to his will which a

prouder woman would not have shown. But he recognized her as a purer, nobler, truer soul than himself. His marriage with her was no more an equal one than his marriage with Sophy. To-day he felt more nearly on a level with Sophy than with Margaret.

She was standing in the pretty oriel window of her sitting room as he approached the house, and smiled down upon him with something of sadness in her smile, as he stood below looking up to her. She had never seemed more lovely in his eyes, or more distant. After all their married life of twenty-two years he knew himself a stranger to her, and he felt that he could get no nearer to her. What icy barrier was it existing between them, growing denser and stronger year after year, and which could not be melted by the warmth of their love? For they loved one another—Sidney did not doubt that; Margaret's first love had been his. Yet there was a great gulf between them; and his spirit could not go to her, nor hers come to him.

He went upstairs and received a fond welcome from her, as he sat down beside her on a sofa. She laid her hand on his, and he lifted it to his lips; and then he felt her kiss upon his forehead, a caressing, almost maternal touch, such as she might have given to her son Philip. Both of these beloved ones were wounded, and both came to her for consolation. Sidney told her what old Andrew Goldsmith had been saying.

“Perhaps he is right,” said Margaret thought-

fully ; “we should remember that Philip is something more than our son. He is a man and has rights with which we ought not to interfere. Dearest, it is a bitter disappointment to me to think of Phyllis as my boy’s wife. But who can tell? If she truly loves him it may be her salvation ; and if he truly loves her, no one else, not an angel from heaven, could be his wife as she would be, and as I am yours. We may be striving against God’s will, whose love for Philip is infinitely greater and wiser than ours can be.”

“But, my darling,” he remonstrated, “you speak of God’s will ; and all this is but the outcome of Laura’s machinations. That is only too plain. If I believed it to be a simple, true, enduring love on both sides, I would not oppose it so strongly. And it would be an extreme mortification to let Laura triumph.”

“We must not think of that,” she said, smiling. “I have felt it, too, Sidney ; but the mortification has passed over. It is natural enough they should love one another ; they are both very attractive, and they have seen no one else. Let us do as Andrew suggests, fix a time for them to wait and test their attachment. And let Philip have a year or two abroad, as you had when you were his age. His mind will be enlarged. We have kept him too much at home ; and home has been too dear for him to care to wander from it. But he is not so happy now, and he will be willing to go away for awhile.”

“He shall,” assented Sidney ; “and I will

make him promise not to correspond with Phyllis during his absence."

But Philip would make no such promise. He maintained that it was an unworthy course to adopt toward his future wife. He was willing to wait any reasonable number of years that his parents thought right to ask from him, but in no way would he separate himself from Phyllis. It would be easier, he declared, to cut off his right hand, or pluck out his right eye. He left home for a long and indefinite absence, and his letters came to Phyllis as regularly and as frequently as to his mother. To his father he did not write.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOMESICKNESS.

FROM this first break in the perfect union of their home Margaret suffered less than she would have done but for the companionship of Dorothy. The girl's nature was one of strong, simple, and pure impulses ; and her mind, though uncultivated in the ordinary acceptation of the word, was clear and intelligent. Margaret could speak to her, more fully than to anyone else, of the exceptional spiritual life she was living. There were thoughts and feelings in her soul, inmost impressions, to which she found it was impossible to give utterance. It was a life hid with Christ in God. But Dorothy seemed able to comprehend something of these workings of her mind, if only she caught a syllable here and there, which told of Margaret's profound realization of the love in which all men lived and moved. Probably Dorothy's long years of solitary childhood spent on the open moors, in contact with simple and grand aspects of nature, had kept her spirit open to such impressions as Margaret's mysticism, if it could be called mysticism, produced upon her. These two, like exiles in a strange land, clung to one another with an intense sympathy and love.

But this attachment to Margaret did not diminish Dorothy's devotion to Sidney. There was a touch of romance in this devotion. He seemed to her to be the deliverer who had opened her prison doors and brought her out into a happy freedom. In these first hours of his disappointment in Philip, her presence in his home tended to soften the bitterness of his vexation. Laura thought that she kept Phyllis out of her proper place; but it was, in fact, due to Dorothy that Phyllis continued to visit at the Hall. She would not let Philip's future wife be banished from his parents' house. The girlish acquaintance which had hitherto existed between them ripened into a girlish intimacy; and Phyllis was almost as often at the Hall as formerly. It was a comfort to Margaret that it should be so; and even Sidney felt it was wiser to maintain a certain degree of intercourse with his future daughter-in-law. He could not blame her as he blamed Laura.

In all this Laura felt that her schemes so far had not miscarried. She had never expected Sidney to welcome an engagement between his son and her daughter; it was too poor a match, and here Laura sympathized with him. But his opposition to it was less violent than she might have anticipated. All was going well with Phyllis; and now if Dick would only woo and win the young heiress she would be perfectly content. Dick was quite willing to fall into her plans. She spent many really happy hours

in forecasting and arranging for them. Though Margaret was younger than herself, and in perfect health, and Sidney no older than her husband, and more likely than not to outlive all his contemporaries, she frequently thought of them both as dead, and Philip possessing the estates, and Phyllis reigning in Margaret's place. She expected to behold these things with her own eyes, and share in the glory of them. That she herself might grow old and die, while Philip and her daughter were still in comparative poverty and dependent upon Sidney, very seldom occurred to her. It was a contingency she could not bear to think of.

It was a much quieter winter at Apley than usual. There was no political excitement to occupy Sidney, and Hugh was visiting some of his Oxford friends during the short Christmas vacation. A few guests, staying two or three days each, came to Apley Hall. But there was no special festivity at which Laura could have made an open display of her daughter as betrothed to the son and heir. The few friends who came were fully aware of the circumstance, and sympathized very cordially with the disapprobation felt by Sidney and Margaret. Philip was wandering about Italy, and wrote frequently to Phyllis. The opposition to his love, of which he had never dreamed, naturally deepened it. He felt aggrieved and amazed that his father and mother should see any defect in her ; and this made him exaggerate her charms and good qualities, until

she seemed perfect in his eyes. Yet her letters were poor and meager, betraying an empty head, and an almost equally empty heart.

In spite of the novelty of the impressions crowding upon him, especially in Rome, this winter was, on the whole, a dreary—a very dreary—time to him. For the first time he was separated from everybody whom he loved; even Dick could not spare a year of his life to travel about with him. He saw no one but strangers, until he longed to see some one familiar face. He began to feel himself banished; and at times he suffered from genuine homesickness. His mother wrote long letters to him; letters as precious in his eyes as Phyllis's; to any other eyes as gold to tinsel. But his father did not write; it was the only sign of his displeasure. The checks sent out to him were liberal beyond his requirements; but no message came with them. There was a silent strife between his father and himself, a warfare of their wills, both of them strong and unyielding. It was as great a grief to Philip as to Sidney.

The spring came in early, and with unusual heat, in Italy. Much rain had fallen in February and March, and with the sudden outburst of heat there was an unwholesome season and a good deal of fever. Down in Sicily, and even in Naples, there were some fatal cases of cholera. A few of the English visitors, thronging to Rome for Easter, died of malaria; probably not a larger number than usual, but they happened to be

persons of some note, whose deaths were reported in the daily papers, with a few lines of comment. Sidney read the notes from the Italian correspondents before looking at any other column of the *Times*. Laura and Phyllis grew anxious, and professed their anxiety loudly. But Philip wrote regularly, though in his now wonted strain of low spirits; and Sidney could see no reason for shortening his term of banishment. He had not been away four months yet; and there was no sign of any decrease of his infatuation.

Philip sent word he was going north to Venice, where the weather was reported as cool and fine. But about the end of April there came a letter from him complaining of low fever; and after that there was silence for a few days, a silence which filled them with apprehension. Then arrived a note from an American doctor, living in Venice, saying that he was attending Mr. Philip Martin, and that he was suffering from a combined attack of nostalgia and malaria, which might, not improbably, take a serious turn, and which could be best counteracted by the presence of his father or mother, or one equally dear to him.

“I must go to him, at once,” cried Margaret. “I was expecting this. I knew it would come sooner or later; and, O Sidney, it is I who must go. He fancies he loves Phyllis best, but his love for me will be strongest now, for a time at least. And Phyllis cannot nurse him as I can; his own mother! I can be ready in an hour.”

“You shall go,” answered Sidney, “and I will take you. I would give my life for his. Is not he my first-born child as well as yours?”

As he made the hurried arrangements—looking out the trains, giving orders at home, and sending telegrams up to the City—his brain was full of remembrances of his son. It seemed but yesterday that he was a boy at school, idolizing his father; not longer than the day before yesterday that he was a little child, venturing on its first perilous journey across the floor from its mother’s arms to its father’s. He felt that the fibers of his heart were all interwoven with his son’s life; and there was a new and terrible pain there. What if Philip should cut the knot of their estrangement by dying?

The carriage was ready to take them to the station, and Margaret was seated in it, when the rector and his wife came breathlessly up to it. Laura was wringing her hands in excitement and terror.

“Oh! you must wait for Phyllis!” she exclaimed. “You cannot go without her; and she went only this morning to Leamington on a short visit. She will be back to-night, in time to start first thing to-morrow morning. It will break her heart if you go without her.”

“We cannot wait ten minutes,” answered Sidney, “it is impossible. But I will telegraph as soon as we reach Venice; and if there is any danger,” and his voice faltered as he uttered the word, “George must bring her out at once.”

“Oh! if she could only go with you!” cried Laura.

At this moment Dorothy appeared in a traveling dress. For some years past Rachel Goldsmith had been too old to travel, and Margaret, who was always independent of a maid, had not engaged anyone in her place. There was a smile on Dorothy's face as she ran down the steps to the carriage.

“I am coming to take care of my lady,” she said. “Rachel quite approves of it. She was almost beside herself till I said I would go. You must let me come. Perhaps Phyllis ought to go instead, but she could not wait on Mrs. Martin as I can. Besides, I am ready.”

She looked pleadingly into Sidney's face; and he stood aside for her to enter the carriage where Margaret was sitting.

“Yes, yes,” he said, “jump in; there's no time to lose. Good-by, George. I will telegraph if Phyllis is wanted.”

Laura watched the carriage rolling out of sight, with a new and unwelcome misgiving. She had not been afraid of Dorothy before; but she could not be blind to the great improvement in her since she had been under Margaret's care. And now she was going out to share in nursing Philip as an invalid, and amusing him as a convalescent. But this must not be. George should start immediately in their wake; and Phyllis with him.

Here, however, Laura was doomed to disappointment. The rector would not listen to reason.

When he had once made up his mind upon any worldly matter he was an obstinate man ; and he was irrevocably resolved that he would play no part in furthering the marriage of his daughter to Sidney's son and heir. When Sidney telegraphed "Bring Phyllis," then he would take her ; but not till then.

It was well for both Sidney and Margaret that Dorothy was with them. Unlike her usual self, Margaret was despondent, and convinced that they could not reach Venice in time to find Philip alive ; and Sidney, seeing her so lost to hope, was stricken with a miserable dread. They made no pause for rest on the long journey ; and, but for Dorothy, they would hardly have taken food. It was an immense relief to her when, after many hours of traveling, she saw afar off, in the midst of its shallow sea, the white domes and towers of Venice glistening in the sunlight. Sidney and Margaret had been there before ; and for them there was but one point of interest, their son lying ill, perhaps dying, under one of those glittering roofs. But Dorothy gazed out of the windows at the lagoons over which the strange railway was carrying her. She was very weary, and her eyelids were heavy and swollen with long wakefulness ; but the stretches of silvery water, with its low banks of soft sea-green weeds, were too beautiful not to arouse her. There were no trees or fields in sight : all around her lay a pale, tremulous plain of water, quivering under a clear vault of sky, and reflecting on its surface the

deep blue, flecked with little clouds, which over-arched it.

They had telegraphed beforehand to Daniele's, where Philip was staying, and a servant awaited the arrival of the train. The young English signore was better; he had begun to recover as soon as he heard that his father and mother were on their way to come to him. The message was delivered in the hurry of passengers descending from the train; but the relief it brought was instantaneous. They were led through a commonplace station; but as soon as they had passed through the great gates and stood on the top of a flight of broad steps, Dorothy could not restrain a cry of pleasure. Below them lay a busy crowd of gondolas, swinging and floating lightly on the water, and passing to and fro with the swiftness and accuracy of so many carriages, with neither collision or delay. There was no noise of wheels or the trampling of horses' feet, only the cries of the gondoliers and the shouts of the officials who overlooked them. As soon as she found herself seated in one of them it threaded its way out of the throng with a skill that delighted her. Margaret sat back in the shelter of the awning, with tears of thankful gladness stealing now and then down her cheeks; but Sidney, with the load suddenly rolled off his heart, took a place beside Dorothy, and pointed out to her the palaces and churches he knew so well.

Dorothy was left alone when they reached Daniele's, and she stood leaning on the cushioned

window-sill of her room, and looked out on the gay and busy quay below her, with all sense of weariness gone from her vigorous young frame. The air was very fresh and sweet, and the sparkling water-roads stretched before her, with black gondolas flitting noiselessly to and fro, bringing to her ears the merry chatter of voices, in other cities drowned by the noise of wheels. Opposite to her a church of white marble delicately veined seemed to float upon the water, and beyond it stretched a shallow sea, rippling under the sunshine. It looked like a city of enchantment to her.

Presently Margaret came in, pale and weary with the long journey, but with the light of happiness in her eyes. Philip was better than she could have hoped ; there would be no real danger, the doctor said, now that she was there to satisfy his longing to look upon some dear, familiar face.

“He is not even grieved that Phyllis is not come,” she said gladly, “he is just satisfied, with a perfect satisfaction, to see his father and me. After all there are seasons when no love contents us save a father’s love. We are but children, every one of us.”

Late in the evening, after a long rest, Margaret sat beside Philip’s bed again, holding his nerveless hand in her own. She could hardly believe that this pale, almost wasted face and languid frame was her strong young son, who had said farewell to her only a few months ago. He

seemed to have grown years older. He was graver and more thoughtful. His manner toward her and his father was at once more independent and more full of a manly deference. His smile, as he looked into her face, was that of one who was more her equal than he had been when he parted from her. He had suffered, and suffering had lifted him nearer to her level.

“I understand you and my father better than I did,” he said. “I see why you wonder at my love for Phyllis; yes, and I see why I love her. Possibly I should not love her now, if I saw her for the first time. But it has grown with my growth, and been secretly fostered and cherished, unknown to you both. Still I thought you knew; and I love her, and she loves me. We must venture upon life together, and if it is not as perfect a union as yours and my father’s, why, it is the most perfect I can make. I could not sacrifice Phyllis now, even to your reasonable objections.”

“You love her enough to make you ill when you are away from her,” said his mother, sighing, “so we must withdraw our objections.”

“Yes, I love her,” he replied; “but that is not so much the question as whether she loves me as much as ever. Think, dear mother. She has regarded herself as mine ever since we were little children together; and with all her vivacity and charming spirits she has never even thought of attracting anyone else, or of being loved by any other man. She is all my own. If I could

give up my engagement out of love and obedience to you, I could not run the risk of breaking Phyllis's high spirit—perhaps her heart. I dare not act like a scoundrel, even to please my father.”

“Your father would never wish you to act like a scoundrel,” said Margaret in a pained tone; “but he withdraws his objections, and says you must come home again. Only we wish you not to marry for three years longer. But oh, my boy! surely you can be happy at home as you were before, seeing her as you used to see her. You will yield to us this much? You will not force us to consent to an earlier marriage?”

Philip drew his mother's hand to his lips, and kissed it in silence. This was no moment of triumph to him, because he knew it to be one of pain to her. She had not demanded a great concession from him, and she had asked it doubtfully, almost humbly. It was amazing that his mother should petition him for anything, and he not to be able to rejoice in granting it.

“Yes, we will wait,” he said; “we are both young enough to wait, but three years is a long time.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN VENICE.

PHILIP'S recovery from the combined effects of low fever and homesickness progressed so favorably that Sidney soon felt at liberty to leave him in his mother's care, and return to London, where his presence was becoming necessary. Venice was too much haunted by painful reminiscences for him to care to linger in it, even if he had the leisure to do so. He had been there once with Margaret, and had found it so hateful that he had hurried her away after a day or two, unable to endure its associations. There was no dread of this early marriage coming to light; it was now nearly thirty years ago, and the past had given no sign yet of rising in judgment against him. It was only in a place like this, crowded with associations, and occasionally when old Andrew Goldsmith spoke of her, that he ever thought of Sophy. But the streets of Venice, singularly unlike the streets of any other city—and it was the last city they were in—brought the recollection of her to his mind with startling and sickening frequency. As soon as Philip was pronounced convalescent, he could bear it no longer.

It was still the month of May, and Venice was

at its loveliest. The air was light, and soft, and warm, without too great heat. The little party left behind by Sidney had nothing to do but float about the border canals and the lagoons leading out to the sea all day long. More often than anywhere else, they sailed to the Lido, and sat on the sand-banks to breathe the keener and purer breezes blowing off the Adriatic. They could not grow weary of watching for hours the fleet of fishing boats flitting to and fro on the green waters, most of them carrying gorgeous yellow sails with brown patterns on them, and stripes of pale yellow and white along the edges—sails that were heirlooms in the fishermen's families. Now and then a sail of the clearest white or the faintest primrose was seen; and far away on the horizon, where the sky was bluish gray, the distant sails looked of a deep bronze and purple. All of them fluttered hither and thither as if they were large and gorgeous butterflies hovering over the waves. It was a sight they never wearied of. There was a rapture of delight in it for Dorothy which caught Margaret and Philip into a keen participation in her enjoyment; and the days passed by as if there was nothing else for them to do but to glide slowly about in their gondola and see the churches and palaces floating on the tranquil water, which so faithfully reflected them in form and color.

It was but a brief pleasure, for as the month drew to an end a sudden outburst of heat came on, bringing with it the danger of a return of

Philip's fever. Margaret called in the American doctor, and he ordered an immediate retreat to the mountains.

"You will find it bracing enough in the Tyrol," he said, "and you cannot do better than go for a month or so to the Ampezzo Valley. In two days' time you will find yourself at Cortina, where you will obtain fairly comfortable quarters. Or you might go to the Italian Lakes, if you thought better."

"No ; let us go to the Austrian Tyrol," said Philip.

"You must go to-morrow morning," continued the doctor.

"It only seems like a day since we came here," said Dorothy regretfully, "one long beautiful day. I do not feel as if I had ever been asleep."

"It is quite time then for you to be off," remarked the doctor ; "you will be falling ill if you stay much longer. Take my word for it, you will enjoy the mountains as much as Venice when you get among them. There is nothing like the Dolomites."

But when the doctor was gone Dorothy entreated for one more sail in a gondola. The sun was set, and the heated air was fast growing cool. The moon was at the full, and as they floated toward the lagoons, the lights of the city behind them shone like jewels. The sound of music reached their ears, softened by distance, from gayly illuminated gondolas bearing bands of musicians up and down the Grand Canal. As

soon as they were beyond this sound, and only the faintest ripple of the water against their gondola could be heard, Dorothy began to sing snatches of old north-country ballads and simple old-fashioned songs, in a soft undertone, with now and then a cadence of sadness in it, which seemed to chime in with the pale light of the moon, and the dim waters, and the dusky outlines of the city behind them. Margaret and Philip listened in silence, for they were afraid she would stop if they praised her.

“I feel so happy,” she exclaimed, suddenly checking herself, as if she had forgotten she was not alone.

“So am I,” said Philip, laughing, with such a boyish laugh as his mother had not heard for many months.

“And so am I,” assented Margaret. “Oh! how good life is, even in this world!”

“But why are we so seldom happy?” asked Philip.

“Why are you happy now?” she rejoined.

“I will tell you why I am happy,” said Dorothy, leaning toward them, as they sat opposite to her, and they saw her dark eyes shining in the moonlight. “I am thinking of nothing but this one moment, and everything is very good. The moon up there, and the little clouds in the sky, and these waves rippling round us, and the happy air; and you two whom I love and who love me. There is nothing here but what is good.”

“Why should we not oftener live in the present moment,” said Margaret, “instead of burdening it with the past and the future? God would have us do so, as children do who have a father to care for them. He gives us to-day; to-morrow he will give us another day, different, but as much his gift as this. If we would only take them as he sends them, one at a time, we should not be so seldom happy.”

“I promise to try to do it,” cried Dorothy, stretching out her hands toward Margaret, but without touching her. “Philip, let us enter into an agreement to be happy. Let us take each day singly as it comes, and look upon it as a gift straight from God.”

Philip did not speak, but Margaret said, as if to herself:

“My God! Thou art all love.
Not one poor minute 'scapes Thy breast
But brings a favor from above.”

“I will try to believe it,” said Philip; “but there is so much in life that is not good. There are few days and hours like this.”

They returned to the quay almost in silence, but not less happy because their happiness had taken a tinge of solemnity. As they landed, and the light of a lamp fell upon Margaret's face, there was a look of serene gladness on it, such as neither Dorothy nor Philip had seen before. It looked to them like the face of an angel, both strong and happy.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MYSTERY.

THEY started by the earliest train to Victoria, and were half-way to Pieve di Cadore before nightfall, taking great delight, each one of them, in the wonderful beauty of the scenery through which they were traveling. Philip was in that delicious state of convalescence, the last stage of it, when health seems renewed to greater and fresher vigor than before the illness came. He was in high spirits, and in his inmost heart, if he had looked there, he would have discovered no regret that Phyllis was absent. Her presence, charming as it was, with the thousand little attentions she would have demanded from him, would have interfered with the perfect freedom he enjoyed in the companionship of his mother and Dorothy. They exacted nothing from him, and were good travelers, complaining of no discomfort or inconvenience. There was a good deal of discomfort which would have fretted Phyllis considerably. But Dorothy was like a pleasant comrade, whose society added another charm to the picturesque scenery. When Margaret was too tired to leave the carriage, Dorothy was always ready to climb the steep paths with

him, by which they escaped the tedious zigzags of the dusty roads.

To Dorothy, accustomed to a low horizon and wide sweep of upland with a broad field of sky above it, the lofty peaks of gray rock rising for thousands of feet into the sky, and hanging over the narrow valleys with a threatening aspect, were at first oppressive. But the profusion of flowers on the nearer slopes, which were in places blue with forget-me-nots and gentians, and yellow with large buttercups, was delightful to her, and she soon lost the sense of oppression.

It was the evening of the second day when they reached Cortina, having crossed the Austrian frontier a few miles from it. They were the first tourists of the season, said the custom-house officer, and would be very welcome. The snow was not yet melted off the strangely shaped rocks, towering upward so precipitously that it could lodge only in the little niches and rough ledges of the surface, tracing with white network the lines scored upon it by alternate frost and sunshine. The valley was more open than those through which they had traveled, and little groups of cottages were dotted about it, and for some distance up the lower slopes of the mountains. The air was sharply cold and nipping, for the sun was gone down behind the high ridge of rock, and they were glad to get inside the hotel, and into the small, bare dining room, which was the only room, except the kitchen, not used as a

bedchamber. They intended to stay here for some days, and Margaret, who had written from Venice to Sidney, informing him of their proposed journey, sent Philip to telegraph to him that they had reached Cortina.

It was a little town, and was quickly traversed. To Margaret's telegram he added that they were all well and happy, smiling to himself as he thought how his father would shake his head at the needless extravagance of sending these two words. But Philip felt there was something special in his sense of well-being which demanded explicit acknowledgment. The young woman who copied his telegram looked at him with an air of curiosity and interest.

"The signore is English?" she inquired.

"Yes, signora," he replied.

"The first English of the year," she continued, "and I must send word to the padre. He was here yesterday, and at all the hotels, to say he must speak with the first of the English who come to Cortina. Perhaps the signore has heard so already?"

"No," answered Philip; "but I have not seen my landlord yet; he was out of the way when we arrived."

He had learned Italian sufficiently to carry on a simple conversation; but he was not very fluent, and he was obliged to pause and think over his sentences.

"We are going to stay here some days," he resumed, "or possibly some weeks. Is it neces-

sary for me to call upon the priest? or will you tell him where I am staying?"

"I will call him; it is urgent, I believe," she said, hastening to the door, and running across a small, open space to a house near the church. In a few minutes she returned, accompanied by a young priest in a shabby cassock and worn-out broad-brimmed hat.

"I have the honor to speak to an English signore," said the priest, bowing profoundly.

"I shall be most happy to serve the padre," answered Philip.

The young priest bade the telegraph clerk a courteous good-night, and drew him a little on one side. A steep lane led down to the brawling river which ran through the valley, and they descended it until they were quite beyond any chance of being overheard. He then addressed Philip in a low voice, and in tolerably good English.

"It is an affair of the confessional," he said slowly, and with an evident effort of memory, as if he was repeating a statement he had carefully composed beforehand; "it is the case of an old woman, a very respectable old person. She dies at this moment, and she wills, before dying, to behold a true Englishman, and to betray to him one great secret, one important secret. I desired all the persons in the town to announce to me the arrival of the first Englishman touring to this place, and lo, it is the signore!"

It was great luck, thought Philip, to come in

so immediately upon a mystery. No young man would shrink, as older men might do, from being intrusted with a secret, which might involve them in much trouble and worry.

“I am ready to go with you at once,” he said, smiling.

“Not to-night,” answered the priest, “it is two hours up the mountain, and it is already night. She dies not to-night; perhaps not to-morrow. In the morning, if the signore will condescend his favor.”

“What time shall I be with you?” asked Philip.

“At six o’clock; will that do?” replied the priest. “I take the—what you call the Sacrament—the Lord’s Supper, is it? to the respectable old person, and I cannot have any food till she receives it from my hands. Will the hour of six be too early for the signore?”

“No, no!” he answered; “but I shall breakfast before starting on a two hours’ walk up the mountain.”

“That, of course,” said the priest, laughing low; “you are not a padre. Moreover, the Protestants have the good things in this life, mark my words!”

Margaret had already retired to her room when Philip returned to the hotel; and when he knocked at her door to bid her good-night, she called to him to come in. It was an immense chamber, with a red brick floor, and several windows; but a fire had been kindled in a large

white-tiled stove in one corner of it, and a pleasant heat was diffused through the room. His mother was lying down on a red velvet sofa, which threw a tinge of rosy color upon her face, yet she looked to him somewhat pale and sad.

“I may be a little overtired,” she said, in answer to his anxious question, “and I am somehow depressed—oddly depressed. We have been so gay and happy these last few days, that I can hardly bear to feel myself going down to a lower level. I feel a great longing for your father to be with me. Philip, do you ever feel as if you had been in some place before, even if you knew for certain that you never can have been there?”

“I have felt it once,” he replied.

“I feel it here,” she continued, sighing; “I feel it very strongly. I feel, too, as if your father had been here; of course that is possible, though he never mentioned it to me. It seems almost as if I could see him passing to and fro, and sitting here by my side, just as you are sitting. And I have another sensation—as if for years I had been traveling unconsciously toward one spot, and it is here, this valley, this room. You know I am not superstitious, but if I cannot shake off this feeling, we must go on somewhere else. It is foolish of me, but I cannot stay here. I am positively afraid of going to bed, for I shall not sleep. Look at that great bed in the corner; it frightens me. Yet I never am afraid.”

“You are overdone, mother,” he said tenderly. “I have not taken care of you, but left myself to

be taken care of. Let Dorothy come and sleep with you ; you would not be afraid with her sweet, happy face beside you."

"It is sweet and happy," answered Margaret, with a smile. "Yes, I will have a bed made up for her here, and if I lie awake in the night I can look across at her, sleeping as if she felt herself under the shadow of God's wings."

"Ah, mother!" he cried, "if you only loved my Phyllis as you love Dorothy!"

"I may do some day," she replied. "When she is your wife and my daughter-in-law, she will be nearer to me even than Dorothy."

He put his arm round her and kissed her gratefully, but in silence. He knew that she could never love Phyllis as she loved Dorothy. Phyllis, with her little petulancies, her pretty maneuvers, her arch plottings to get her own way, her love of ornament and display, all her pleasures and her purposes, was too unlike Margaret ever to become the daughter of her heart. But he must make up to Phyllis by a deeper devotion, a more single attention to her wishes, even when they were opposed to his own. Marrying her against the will and judgment of his father and mother, he must make it evident to her, as well as to them, that he never regretted acting on his own decision.

"I am going up the mountains to-morrow morning," he said before leaving her, "with a priest, to hear some great secret from an old woman who is dying. Some tale of robbery, I

expect. We start at six, and it is two hours' up the mountain; but I shall get back for twelve o'clock breakfast."

The clock in the bell tower struck twelve before Margaret could resolve upon lying down in the great square bed in the corner, which stood almost as high as her own head. Dorothy had been fast asleep for some time on the little bed that had been moved into the room, and the girl's sweet, tranquil slumber in some measure dispelled her own nervous fears. But the night was sleepless to her. She heard, every quarter of an hour, the loud, single boom of the great bell, which reassured the inhabitants of the valley that their watchman was awake on his chilly tower, and looking out for any cause of alarm. Was it possible that she had never listened to it before, so familiar the sound was? Could this be the first night she had lain awake in this weary chamber, longing for Sidney's presence, and watching with weary eyes the gray light of the morning stealing through the chinks of the shutters? Had she never wept before as she did now, with tears slowly forcing themselves beneath her heavy eyelids? It was all a nervous illusion, she told herself, proceeding from overstrain and fatigue; but if it continued through the day, she must go on to some other place. There would be no chance of rest for her here.

She lay as still almost as if she had been stretched out in death, her arms folded across her breast, and her eyelids closed. If she could

not take rest in sleep, she would commune with her own heart upon her bed, and be still. "Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety," she said. She reminded herself that nothing could befall her that God had not willed. Death she had never feared since the day when she had all but crossed the threshold of another life. The death of her beloved ones would be an unspeakable sorrow to her, but not an unendurable one. What else, then, was there to dread?

CHAPTER XXXI.

MARTINO.

THE jagged crests of the eastern rocks were fringed with light from the sun still lingering behind them, when Philip stepped out into the frosty air of the morning, which made his veins tingle with a pleasant glow. He enjoyed the prospect of this novel expedition, and felt glad that he was the first English tourist of the season. All the town was astir already, and the priest, with an acolyte, was awaiting him at the church door, where mass was just over, and the congregation, chiefly of women, was dispersing to their labors in the fields. Very soon the sun was shining down on the mountain track they were taking, and the whole valley lay below their eyes, lit up in its beams. The fields wore the vivid green of early spring, after the melting of the snows and before the scorching of the summer skies of brass. There were no song birds; but once the harsh cry of a vulture startled Philip as it soared above them, uttering its scream of anger. On the fir trees the crimson flowers were hardening into cones, which would soon be empurpled and bronzed by the sun, where they hung in great clusters on the boughs just beyond his reach.

He must bring Dorothy to see them, he thought. As they mounted higher they came here and there upon broad patches of gentian, so thickly grown that not a blade of green peeped among the deep blue of the blossom. Spring flowers were blooming in profusion, and their path lay once through a field of forget-me-nots, where the grass was hidden under a mantle of pale, heavenly blue. Certainly he would bring his mother and Dorothy to see such a pretty sight.

Higher up the mountain path, which he could not have found without the priest as a guide, the road grew rougher and more stony, and presently they passed under the chill shadow of a long, high wall of rock. Here the snow lay unmelted in great masses, as if it had fallen in avalanches from the steep precipices above. But a path had been trodden over them, hard and slippery as frosty roads are on mountain passes where winter still reigns. Beyond these, in a valley lying high up on the mountain side, was a group of miserable hovels. From every roof there rose a cloud of smoke, as if they were all smoldering from fire, and a volume of smoke issued from each open doorway. There was neither chimney nor window in any of the rude dwellings.

“Will the signore arrest himself here till I turn again?” asked the priest courteously.

Philip strolled on a little through a mass of broken rocks, split by the frost from the precipices, and interspersed with tiny plots of cultivated ground, wherever a handful of soil could

be found. But in a few minutes he heard shouts and yells from what might be called the village street, and he turned back to see what was going on. The priest, attended by his acolyte, had entered one of the huts ; and now, stealing away from it, Philip could see the gaunt and wretched figure of a man, at whom the children were hooting loudly, though they kept at a safe distance from him. He came on toward Philip with a shambling gait, and with round, bowed shoulders, as if he had never stood upright. His shaggy hair was long and matted together, and his beard had been clumsily cut, not shaved, giving to him almost the aspect of a wild beast. His clothes were rags of the coarsest texture. Yet there was something—what could it be? not altogether strange and unfamiliar in his face as he drew near. There was a deep glance in his gray eyes, which lay sunken under heavy eyebrows, that seemed to speak some intelligible language to him, as if he knew the same expression in a well known face. The peasant passed by, muttering, and stopping immediately behind him, as if using him as a screen, he picked up an enormous piece of rock and flung it at the yelping children.

“ Martino ! Martino ! ” they shrieked as they ran for refuge to their miserable dens ; and at the clamorous outcry a crew of dirty, half naked women, who looked barely human, rushed out into the street, as if to take vengeance on the irritated man ; but at the sight of Philip they

paused for an instant, and then fled back again, banging their doors behind them, as if fearful of an attack.

At the sound of the cry "Martino," Philip for a moment fancied they were calling to him; but quickly recalling to his mind where he was, he felt how impossible it was for any creature here to know his name. This poor fellow must bear it—an unlucky, pitiable namesake. He must be a dangerous madman, he thought; yet when he looked round he saw the man crouching quietly under a rock at a little distance, his shaggy head buried in his hands. Philip's whole heart was stirred. He approached him cautiously, saying, "Good-morning," and the peasant lifted up his head and fixed his deep-set and mournful eyes upon him.

"Here is a *lira* for you," said Philip, by way of opening up a friendly feeling between them. The man turned it about in his rough hands, with something like a smile on his rugged face. Then he crouched down at Philip's feet, with his hands upon the ground—the attitude of a brute.

"The good signore!" he exclaimed.

The two young men presented a striking contrast. The one a handsome, thoroughbred, refined Englishman, whose culture had been pushed to the highest point, with all his powers of mind and body carefully trained, full of pity and kindness toward the almost savage and imbecile creature, all but prostrate at his feet, who had grown up an outcast and a thrall among

barbarians. Philip compelled him to rise from his knees.

“What is your name?” he asked, speaking slowly and clearly.

“Martino,” he answered in a mumbling voice.

“That is one of my names too,” said Philip, with a light laugh. He himself was struck with the utter contrast between them. The man was the same height as himself, only his head hung low, and his shoulders were rounded. Coarse and brutish as this Austrian peasant was, he felt a peculiar kindness toward him, and looked at him with the eye of a future patron and benefactor. If he had only been cared for sooner, these large limbs might have made a fine man, and his head was not a bad shape. Now he saw him near at hand there were possibilities about him which would have made him quite another creature if he had been taken in hand a few years earlier. It was too late now.

They stood opposite to one another with friendliness in both faces, but with the accursed barrier of different languages making it impossible to communicate their kindly feelings. The peasant kept looking at the coin in his grimy palm, and back again at Philip's compassionate face, but he did not try to speak. Philip was about to make another effort, when the priest approached and addressed a few sharp words to Martino, who immediately shambled off, dragging his bare and horny feet along over the stones and ice, in the direction of Cortina.

“The respectable old person is now ready to receive the signore,” said the priest to Philip.

He conducted him into the dark interior of one of the hovels, into which no ray of light entered, except through the nick between the doorpost and the door, which he left purposely ajar. Coming out of the strong, clear light of the mountain side, for a minute or two Philip could discern nothing ; but by and by, in the darkness, there appeared slowly and dimly a haggard, yellow face, wrinkled in a thousand lines, with cunning eyes grown bleared and red, which wandered restlessly between him and the priest. All else was dark and indistinguishable. The black roof lay low, almost touching his head, and the black walls hemmed him in closely. On the hearth a fire of [dry dung was smoldering, but gave no light ; and the noisome smoke rose in wreaths and columns which found a partial escape through the roof and doorway. Philip took silent note of it all, with the calm interest of an accidental bystander.

“This person wishes to disclose a strange circumstance to the English signore,” said the priest with grave deliberation ; “he understands the Italian a little, I think so.”

“Only a little,” answered Philip ; “but if you will repeat to me slowly what she says, I shall make out most of the meaning. And you can help me, for you know more English than I do Italian.”

The priest bowed with a smile. There was, indeed, great difficulty to make out the whole story, as Chiara told it in patois ; but her manner was intensely earnest, and Philip bent all his mind to catch the meaning of her confession. It seemed an obscure and painful story of some young English girl, who had been deserted by her lover at Cortina, when she was about to become a mother, and who gave birth to the poor unfortunate creature whom he had just seen. This man was half an Englishman, the son of an English mother. This, then, was the secret of his strange feeling of being almost akin to him.

“Why did she not try to send him as a child to England?” he asked, feeling a great rush of compassion toward the man who had been thus deprived of his birthright.

There was some hesitation about the reply. Chiara had confessed her theft to the priest, but she had also left the stolen money to the church for masses to be said for her soul. She had derived no benefit from it during her lifetime, having grown to love it with all a miser’s infatuation, and she was not willing to sacrifice the good it might do her in the life to which she was hastening. She could not run the risk of having to give up her idolized plunder. The priest, also, was unwilling for the church to lose any portion of its revenues.

“Chiara took charge of the child,” he said, “and sent it up here to be nursed by her sister. When her sister died ten years ago she came to

live in this place herself, and Martino worked for her. It was fair for Martino to work for her, when she paid for all he had."

"Yes," answered Philip; "but did this woman take no measures to find the father who deserted his child so basely?"

"Not possible," exclaimed the priest; "there were few English tourists passing this way thirty years ago. And Chiara began to love the boy, and could not part with him."

"But why does she tell the story now—now, when it is too late?" asked Philip with a tone of passion in his voice.

"She would not tell now," said the priest, "but she dies, as you behold. She is poor, and there will be nothing for Martino. When she is gone the other people here will stone him, or kill him in some way. For his mother was a heretic, and they believe she is in hell, and Martino is not a good Christian, though he was permitted to be baptized. He is very savage, like a wild beast, and the women are frightened of him. The men will kill him like a wild beast."

"She wants to find a friend and protector for him," responded Philip pitifully. "Well, I will take care of the poor fellow. Did the poor girl leave nothing behind her which might give me some clew as to who she belonged to? Martino may have some relations in England."

"There is this little packet of papers in English," said the priest; "I have not read them yet, for this person did not give them to me only a

moment ago. No person has ever read them, for she kept them safe and secret all these years. She wishes the English signore to read them, and say what can be done for Martino."

"I cannot read them here," replied Philip, taking the yellow, time-stained packet from his hand; "but if you will come to my hotel this evening I will tell you the contents."

"Very good," said the priest.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN OLD LETTER.

PHILIP left the stifling atmosphere of the hovel, and, with a deep-drawn breath of relief, stepped into the open air. The wonderful landscape stretched before him in clear sunlight, dazzling to his eyes. He was nearly two thousand feet above the valley, and the mountains, which were foreshortened to the sight there, now seemed to tower into the cloudless sky with indescribable grandeur and beauty. It was a perfect day, and the light was intense. The colors of these rocks were exceedingly soft, with a bloom upon them like the bloom upon a peach. Tender shades of purple and red, with blue and orange, pale yellow and green, blended together, and formed such delicate tints as would drive an artist to despair. Tall pinnacles of these cliffs rose behind the dun-colored mountains of porphyry, and seemed to look down upon him, as if their turrets and parapets were filled with spectators of the trivial affairs of man. Thin clouds were floating about them, hanging in mist upon their peaks or slowly gliding across from one snow-veined crest to another. Immediately above him, just beyond the hamlet, lay a vast hollow, in which the snowdrift was melting in the heat of the sun, which had at last

risen behind its rough screen of crags ; and a stream of icy-cold water was falling noisily down a steep and stony channel, which it had worn out for itself through many centuries of spring thaws. The heat was very great ; and Philip made his way to some little distance from the huts, and sat down on the ledge of a rock, which commanded a splendid view of the groups of mountains, and the valleys lying between them. He was not, as yet, so interested in the packet in his hand as to be indifferent to the romantic scenery surrounding him. These letters had been written thirty years ago ; they could well wait a few minutes longer.

Yet he was indignant ; and he was full of compassion toward his unfortunate fellow-countryman. But at that moment he was enjoying the sensation of an almost perfectly full life. He felt himself in faultless health ; his mind was on the stretch, with a sense of vigor and power which was delightful to him after the low spirits of the last few months ; and beneath this strong sensation of mental and physical life lay a clearer, keener, diviner conviction of the presence of God than he had ever known before. It seemed to him as if he could all but hear a voice calling to him, "This is holy ground !" In spite of the miserable homes of men and women close by, and in spite of the degraded man whose life had been one long wretchedness in this place, Philip felt that it was a temple of God himself.

With this strength, and in the consciousness of unusual energy, he turned away at last from the

sublime landscape, to read the faded paper in his hands. It bore no name or address ; and it was not sealed, only tied together with a ribbon. A very, very long letter of several pages, written in almost undecipherable lines, for the ink was faded, and the paper stained. But there was another packet, and opening it he found a daguerreotype glass. There were two portraits on it, one of a girl with a very pretty face, and the other—but whose could this portrait be ?

Philip's healthy pulse ceased to beat for a moment. Who could it be ? How [perfectly he seemed to know it ! There had been an old daguerreotype lying about in the nursery at Apley, which he had seen and played with as soon as he was old enough to recognize it in its morocco case. Was it possible that this portrait was the same as that ?

He shut the case softly, feeling as if dead hands were closing it. A terrible foreboding of some dire calamity came all at once into the sunshine, and the sweet air, and the sound of hurrying waters. He unfolded the time-stained letter, and began to read ; and as he read, the dreadful truth, the whole truth, as he thought, broke upon him, and overwhelmed him with dismay and horror.

One of his earliest remembrances was the story of the lost girl, Rachel Goldsmith's niece, who had gone away secretly from home and had never again been heard of. As a boy he had often thought of how he would go forth to find her, and bring her home again to his oldest friend, Andrew

Goldsmith. It had been his boyish vision of knight-errantry. As a young man he had learned what such a loss meant; not the simple loss he had fancied it as a boy. It had become in later years a subject he could no longer mention to her father, or his own mother. Philip's ideal of a man's duty toward a woman was of the purest and most chivalrous devotion.

And now! Philip could not face the horror of the thought that was waiting to take possession of his mind. He roused himself angrily, and stood up, crushing the letter and the portraits into his pocket. A path went beyond the hamlet, leading upward toward the crest of a pass lying between two ranges of mountains. He strode hastily along it, as if he were pursued by an enemy, passing through pine woods, and over torrents of stones, which many a storm had swept down from the precipices above him. Some massive thunderclouds had gathered in the north, and the snowy peaks gleamed out pale and ghost-like against the leaden sky. But his eyes were blinded, and his ears deafened. Yet he was not thinking; he dared not think. A miserable dread was dogging his footsteps along an unknown path; and presently he must summon courage to turn round and confront this dread.

He reached at last the top of the pass, where three crosses stood out strongly and clearly against the sky. Three crosses! Not only that on which the Lord died, but those on which every man must hang, weary and ashamed, at some mo-

ment of his life. He sat down beneath the central one, and leaned against the foot of it. It was his Lord's cross ; but on each side stood the cross of a fellow-man—the man of sorrows, and the man of sins. He, too, was come to the hour when he must be lifted up upon his cross. He must be crucified upon it, perhaps in the sight of men, certainly in the sight of God. He had come to it straight from the conviction of the presence of God ; and looking up to the three empty crosses, he cried out, “ Lord, remember me.”

Then, with hands that shook, and with dazed eyes, he read the long letter, which Sophy had written years before he was born. And as he read he found the burden less intolerable than he had dreaded it would be. His father had not been as base as his first miserable suspicion had vaguely pictured him. Sophy Goldsmith had been his wife ; and Philip, counting how many years were passed, saw his father a young man like himself, loving her as he loved Phyllis, but with far less hope of ever gaining the consent of his friends to such a marriage. He, too, would have married Phyllis, in spite of all opposition ; only not in secret.

His brain grew clearer with this gleam of comfort. Then the thought came that the miserable, half savage peasant whom he had seen that morning, being Sophy's child, must be his father's first-born son, and his own brother. It was his father's eyes he had seen, and partly recognized, when he first looked into Martin's face. His brother

Martin! He thought of his brother Hugh, between whom and himself there existed the strongest and most loyal brotherhood. Hugh had stood by him through all his difficulties about Phyllis, and approved of his choice of her with the warmest approbation. But this barbarous, degraded, forlorn wretch, an outcast among the lowest people—how could he feel a brother's love for him?

If the eldest son—then the heir! The estates in Yorkshire were strictly entailed upon Sir John Martin's male heirs, as his mother's lands were settled upon Hugh. This man, scarcely higher than a brute, must take from him the inheritance which had seemed to be his all his life. Why! he, Philip Martin, would be a poor man, a man who must work for his living. This was a new aspect of the case, and one which aroused him from the deeper depths of his dismay. This discovery suddenly and completely changed his whole life.

It was not he who would some day be Philip Martin of Brackenburn—nothing would be his. Now he could marry Phyllis without opposition, for he would be as poor as she was. He was not afraid of poverty; he had no practical acquaintance with it, and Margaret had trained her sons into a fine contempt of mere wealth. There would be a worthy object in setting to work now, for he would have a wife and family to maintain. That was far better than simply making more money to invest or to speculate with.

But what ought he to do? This was a secret of momentous importance concealed by his father for nearly thirty years. It had come suddenly to his knowledge; and what must he do with it? And now, his heart having shaken off the worst of its burden, his mind was clear enough to recognize the hideous and insane selfishness of his father's conduct. Before he knew who it was that had deserted this young girl and her unborn child, he had felt a strong indignation at his baseness and cowardice. What could have made his father, who seemed the soul of honor, act in such a manner? He had been guilty of a great crime, and the man sent to discover it was his own son.

Lifting up his eyes from the ground, on which they had been gloomily bent, Philip saw the uncouth figure of his elder brother crouching and half hidden under one of the thieves' crosses. His bare feet had brought him noiselessly along the road; and he shrank a little from his observation, as if he was afraid of some sharp rebuff. The deep-set eyes glowered at him much as a dog's will do when he is not sure of what reception he will get. There was something wild and desolate about this solitary figure which touched Philip's inmost heart; and yet he could give him no welcome to a place there.

Must he tell his mother? It would be like piercing her to the soul with a sword. He knew well what keen and tender sympathy she had felt for the Goldsmiths, both when Sophy first

disappeared and during all the succeeding years of alternating hope and despair. It was this sympathy that had won Rachel Goldsmith's profound devotion to her beloved mistress. How his mother must suffer when she learned that the husband she loved and honored so perfectly had been living a base and cruel lie at her side, witnessing all the sorrow of the family he had wronged, and pretending to share in it. He could imagine her bearing his father's death, but he could not imagine her bearing his dishonor. His mother must suffer more than he did.

Philip roused himself at last to go down into the valley; the afternoon was passing by, and his mother would be getting anxious at his absence. He said "*Addio*" to his silent companion; but he was conscious, without looking back, that Martino was following him. He felt glad when he reached Cortina, on glancing round, to see that he was at last alone. Dorothy was standing on the balcony outside his mother's bedroom, and she leaned over, with a laughing face, to reproach him for being away so long.

"The very first day, too!" she said. "And oh! if you only knew how vexed I am! There is a telegram from your father, very pleasant for you, but most disagreeable to me."

He ran upstairs at hearing this news, no longer afraid of meeting his mother, and she gave to him the telegram.

"Going to Munich on business," it ran; "proceed immediately—meet there. Taking Phyllis."

“But there is a great *festa* in the village to-morrow,” said Dorothy, “and as it is too late to proceed immediately, we are going to stay for the morning and go on to Toblach in the afternoon. We shall reach Munich before your father and Phyllis can be there. And oh, Philip! the bells are ringing carillons as if they were chimes in heaven.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A VILLAGE "FESTA."

PHILIP went down to the presbytery and had a short interview with the padre. Chiara was dying at last; the sacraments had been administered to her, and her life could not linger on through many hours. What did the English signore propose to do for his penniless countryman?

Philip answered briefly that he would take steps to restore him to his family. He then went to the telegraph office and dispatched another message to his father. "Received yours. Urgent reasons for your presence here."

He would accompany his mother to-morrow to Toblach; but he could not quit the neighborhood until something could be decided about his brother. His brother! He stood still abruptly in the village street, with a half laugh of stupefied amazement. His brother! It must be some egregious blunder of his own imagination; his brain had been weakened by the fever. He turned away into a by-road and cautiously took out the letter and the morocco case. No, that was his father's portrait; he recognized it too well. The eyes looking out of the faded daguerre-

otype resembled the sad, frank, frightened eyes of the oppressed and persecuted outcast.

He did not venture indoors again until dinner time, and immediately after dinner he complained of fatigue. Margaret went to his room before going to bed herself, entering very softly through the door between their two chambers lest he should be sleeping. He knew she stood for a minute or two beside him, shading the lamp with her hand ; but he dared not move or speak. She bent over him and laid her lips on his hair that she might run no risk of awakening him. He had never loved her so much as at this moment, and he longed to throw his arms round her neck and tell her what was troubling him, as he had done when he was a boy not so very long ago. But he could not tell her this sorrow ; would it not crush her to death ? Would to God he could die if his death would save her !

The morning was wonderfully bright and sunny, and through the transparent thinness of the air the most distant peaks shone clearly, with their soft colors and delicate tracery of snow. The *festa* began early with the ringing of bells and the firing of musketry. Long files of peasantry came down in troops along the narrow tracks leading from the valley to the mountains. Margaret and Dorothy hurried over their coffee and rolls to hasten down to the church. But it was already full, and hundreds of women and children were kneeling outside the western door, and a similar crowd of men outside the northern

door. Some women sitting on a bench offered a seat to Margaret, whose beautiful face was lit up with an expression of sympathy with their devotion. The women, like the men, were praying with their hats in their hands, bareheaded under a burning sun. Margaret shared a prayer book with the peasant woman beside her, and read the prayers and meditations in Italian; while here and there the woman marked with her thumb some special words, and looked up into her face to see if she was "*sympatica*"; and she and her companions smiled as they saw Margaret's lips move with the uttering of the same prayers they were themselves repeating.

Presently, amid the ringing of the bells and to the music of a brass band, a procession was formed, and all the congregation thronged out of the church, and those who had been praying without fell into their places—men, and women, and children. There were altars erected in the streets, at which mass was to be celebrated; and the long procession filed away with many banners fluttering along it. Last of all, and at a little distance from the rest, there came a man whom Margaret had already noticed as standing aloof, half hidden behind a corner of a wall. He was an uncouth creature, tall and ungainly, with uncut, matted hair, and a coarse beard; yet there was something in his whole appearance that reminded her of somebody she knew.

"Why!" exclaimed Dorothy in accents of

surprise. "Look! look! How like that poor fellow is to Andrew Goldsmith!"

Yes, that was it. This awkward Tyrolean peasant, who hardly knew how to use his great limbs, was like Andrew—oddly like him; he might have been Andrew's own son. She smiled at the oddity of such a resemblance; but apart from this, the man's solitariness and aloofness interested her greatly. She turned to the old woman beside her, who was sitting still, waiting for the procession to accomplish part of its route before she joined it.

"Who is that poor man?" she inquired.

"He is English," replied the woman, "an Englishman who was born here in the very hotel itself where the signora is staying. Will she wish to hear all the circumstances? Because I know; I was a servant there when Martino was born."

"Is his name Martino?" asked Margaret.

"Yes, signora," she went on eagerly; "I will tell the English lady. It is nearly thirty years ago, a little later than this *festa*. An English signore and signora came to the hotel, and the name written in the register by the signore was Martino. So when the child was born he was named Martin; and Saint Martin is his patron, but the saint has done nothing for him, because his parents were heretics, and not Christians."

"Martin!" repeated Margaret, with growing interest; "but what became of the parents?"

“The little mother died, poor soul, in giving him birth,” said the old woman, “and lies buried yonder in the cemetery, and Chiara took the boy for her own. Chiara was the head servant in the hotel, and folks say she made money by it in some way ; but there was not much money in the signora’s trunks—only enough to bury her ; or if there was money, it never did Chiara any good, poor soul ! They say she lies dying this morning up yonder in a hut on the hills, and all she will hear of the *festa* is the ringing of the bells and the firing of the cannon. She’s no older than I am ; and you behold me !”

“But the father of Martino,” said Margaret, “what became of him ?”

“An old story,” she answered ; “he had forsaken her three or four weeks before the boy was born. He was a fine, handsome signore, and she worshiped him. But what then ? Young signori cannot trouble themselves about girls. Why should they ? Girls are too plentiful. He went off one fine day, and nobody ever saw him again.”

“But did no one try to find him on account of his child ?” asked Margaret.

“Once,” said the woman, “about six years after, a strange Englishman came here in the winter, and made inquiries, and saw the boy. But he went away again, and no more was heard of him. Chiara brought the boy up to be her servant. Her servant ? Her slave ! His life was worse than a dog’s. We are poor here, signora, but Martino is the poorest creature of us all. He

never had as much as he could eat ; not once in his life. Old Chiara is a skinflint."

The procession was out of sight, but the monotonous chant droned by thousands of voices came plainly to their ears. Margaret listened to the strange sound, with eyes dim with tears for the poor fellow, whose life was so desolate and hard.

"Will the lady wish to see the grave of the pretty English girl?" asked the woman, with an eye to a possible gratuity. "It is not far off in the cemetery, and we shall be there before the procession passes."

"I will go," said Margaret in a pitying voice. "Dorothy, stay and bring Philip to me."

The murmur of the chanted prayers filled the quiet air as they passed down a side lane toward the cemetery, broken only by the clashing of the bells and the firing of cannon at the moment when the Host was elevated. This triumphal burst of noisy sound came as they passed through the gates of the neglected burial ground, and Margaret's guide fell down on her knees and waited until the chant was renewed. Then she led the way to the corner, apart from the other graves, and somewhat more overgrown with weeds and nettles, where Sophy lay buried.

There was a rude cross at the head of the grave, made of two bits of wood nailed clumsily together ; and round it lay an outline of white pebbles. To-day, a handful of blue gentians lay upon it. There was a pathetic sadness about

these awkward efforts to care for the grave, as if some bungler had done his best to express his grief, and had scarcely known what to do. The tears fell fast from Margaret's eyes as she laid her hand reverently on the rough wood of the cross.

"Has that poor fellow done this?" she asked.

"Yes, signora," was the answer, "it's his mother's grave. The pretty English girl is buried here. I can recollect her well, with blue eyes and gold hair, and a skin like roses and lilies. He called her Sophy."

Margaret started. A sudden pang shot through her heart. After all these years was she to discover the fate of the poor girl, whose loss she had mourned so long, in this remote spot? Could this be Sophy Goldsmith's grave? And oh! how sorrowful beyond all their fears must her sad lot have been! Dying, alone, deserted; leaving behind her a child who had grown into this miserable pariah of the mountains. Swiftly the thought of Andrew Goldsmith, and his dark, deep grief when he learnt all, passed through her mind.

The refrain of the chant came nearer, and the long procession had reached the doors of the church close to the cemetery. Suddenly the peasant woman broke the silence with which she had respected Margaret's tears.

"Will the signora pardon me if I leave her?" she asked. "They are going into church now. My God!" she cried in a tone of terror, "here

is the young English signore himself! the signore who forsook the poor English girl. Oh, my God!"

Margaret turned round, with a sickening sensation of terror, such as she had never felt before, as if she would be compelled to see some dreaded vision. Coming slowly toward them down the weedy path of the cemetery was Philip, with Dorothy at his side. Both looked grave, as if they felt the desolation of the neglected spot; but there was an air of moody pre-occupation about Philip, as though his thoughts were dealing with some subject a thousandfold more sad than the uncared-for dead.

"No, no," continued the woman, "it cannot be! The signore would be an old man now; it is thirty years ago. But just so he looked, and just so he walked. Did the signora know the poor girl who is buried here called Sophy, Martino's mother?"

"Hush! hush!" cried Margaret, in an agony of apprehension; "say nothing more now. This is my son. Go away to church, and I will see you again some time soon."

A moment afterward Philip was standing opposite to her, looking down on the rudely outlined grave and the rough cross. Neither of them spoke. He did not ask whose grave it was; and her parched lips could have given him no answer.

"It looks like a God-forsaken spot," said Dorothy, pityingly. "Oh, how can people leave

their dear ones in such a desolate graveyard? I always fancy 'the field to bury strangers in,' which was bought with the money Judas flung away, must have been such a place as this."

But neither Margaret nor Philip answered her, and she looked up in surprise. Margaret's face was like that of one stunned and almost paralyzed by a sudden shock; her eyes were fixed, and her lips half open, as if she was gazing on some sight of horror. It was but for a brief half minute; then she sighed heavily, and tears fell fast and thick down her pale cheeks.

"O Philip!" cried his mother, "let us go away quickly from this place. Let us start at once. I am not myself here. Take me away as quickly as we can go."

"Yes, mother," he answered, drawing her hand tenderly through his arm. He did not dare to ask her any question. He guessed whose grave this was by which she was standing, and felt sure that she knew something of the dread secret that oppressed himself. But it was impossible for him to ask her. She stood nearer to his father even than he did. The close, inseparable, sacred nature of the tie that unites man and wife struck him as it had never done before. Any sin of her husband would be an intolerable burden to her.

He hurried their departure from the hotel, though it was difficult to get a carriage on a *festa* day like this. But at length they started, and he felt that every step taking them away

from Cortina was a gain. They passed little groups of peasants going homeward; and the sound of church bells ringing joyous peals pursued them for several miles. But they left the valley behind them after a time. The drive they were hurrying over was one of the most beautiful in Europe, but only Dorothy saw it that day. Once, when she saw a red peak, with clouds rolling across it, and the spots of crimson gleaming like flames beneath the vapor, and a pale gray rock close by looking ghostlike beside it, she turned to Margaret with a low exclamation of delight. But Margaret's eyes were closed, and her ears were deaf. A vague, undefined terror in her soul had almost absolute rule over her. She must have been blind and deaf to the glories of heaven itself, with that fear of an almost impossible crime in her husband which was haunting her.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A FORCED CONFESSION.

IN fleeing as swiftly as she could from Cortina, Margaret had no intention of deserting Sophy's son. But it seemed essential to her to get away from the spot for a little while, that her brain might be clear enough for thought. They stopped, then, at Toblach, at the entrance of the Ampezzo Valley, and only half a day's journey from Cortina. It was a relief to her to hear that Philip had already telegraphed for his father, and as he must pass through Toblach they waited for him there.

The tumult in Margaret's mind calmed a little, but still she shrank from gathering up the threads of what she had heard at Cortina and weaving them together. Sophy Goldsmith lay buried there, and her son was living and bore the name of Martin. Philip had been recognized as being like the man who had deserted her and left her to die. Her mind constantly recurred to these points. She reproached herself vehemently for suffering any doubt of Sidney to invade her love for him. Her love was so deep and vital that it seemed impossible for doubt to undermine it. If any human being could know another, she felt that she must know her husband's

nature; and treachery and vice were abhorrent to it. She did not call him faultless, but she had seen none besides the little flaws and errors which must always hang about frail humanity—such as she was herself guilty of. “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults,” was a prayer often in Margaret’s heart; and she had never been prone to mark little sins, such as men and women outgrow, if their path be upward. Sidney’s whole life lay before her in the clear and searching light of their mutual love and close companionship; and looking at it thus she refused to believe any evil of him, and tried to shut her eyes to the black cloud dimming her horizon.

But there could not but be times when doubt and suspicion stole like traitors into her heart. There was no doubt in her clear brain that it was Sophy Goldsmith who was lying in that forsaken grave, and that the wretched pariah she had seen was Andrew Goldsmith’s grandson. That was terrible enough; a most mournful discovery to come upon after so many years of faint hope, and of constant grief. But if the man who wrought all this misery, and was guilty of this base treachery, should prove to be Sidney! It was incredible; it was madness to believe it.

All this time Margaret did not cease to trust in the love of God, and in his love toward all men. Though fierce tempests troubled the very depths of her soul, below them was a deeper depth, not of her own soul, but of that Eternal

Spirit in whom she lived, and moved, and had her being. She was conscious of resting in this love. But a child resting in its mother's arms, and on her breast, may suffer agonies of pain. So Margaret suffered.

Sidney was in London when Philip dispatched his first message from Cortina. It was evening when he sent it, and the first thing the next morning it reached his father's hands. Margaret had written from Venice as soon as their departure had been decided upon ; but Sidney had not as yet received the letter. Philip's telegram, therefore, came upon him like a thunderbolt falling out of a clear blue sky. He had felt no forewarning of this danger. Their route on their return from Venice had been settled before he left them, and so accustomed was he to arrange and direct the movements of all about him, that no apprehension of any change of plan had crossed his mind. It was only of late that the conviction that his son was a man, and one who would assert and enjoy the freedom of manhood, had been thrust upon him. It was evident that Philip had felt himself man enough to change his route homeward as it pleased him.

They were in Cortina ; but if they were merely passing through there was but little risk of them learning Sophy's fate. He must get them away from the dangerous place immediately. For a few minutes he was at a loss how to do this. Then the plan of setting off himself for Munich on business occurred to him ; and to ensure

Philip's prompt compliance he resolved to take Phyllis with him. He sent a messenger to bring her hurriedly to London, and they started at night, Phyllis in a whirl of delight and triumph at Sidney's surrender to her. They were well on their way to Munich before Philip's second telegram reached London.

But when they arrived at Munich, instead of his wife and son awaiting him at his hotel, he found Philip's message repeated in a telegram from his confidential clerk. Then his heart sank and was troubled. This summons to Cortina indicated too plainly that his sin had found him out. His sin! From one point of view—the lenient judgment of a man of the world—it did not seem a very grievous one. It was nothing worse than the too close concealment of a boyish blunder. His first wife had been dead years before he married Margaret; and he had confessed this secret marriage to her father. With most women there would be tears and reproaches, followed by forgiveness. But Margaret would have a point of view of her own. What would she feel about the ugly fact when she learned that Sophy had died alone and deserted? Still more, what would she feel about the prolonged concealment as it affected Andrew Goldsmith and her favorite maid, Rachel? But for these things he might have reckoned upon her full pardon.

Phyllis was traveling with him, and demanded a good deal of his attention. She was a little

exacting as a companion, and could not sit in silence for an hour together. Her spirits were high, for she felt that now indeed Sidney's objections to her marriage with Philip were overcome, and that he must consent to an early date for it. When she kept silence for half an hour she was settling weighty questions about her *trousseau*, and wondering if Sidney could not be managed in such a way as to be persuaded to give her a handsome sum toward the purchase of it. She knew her father could not spare her a tenth of the money she would wish for. How delicious it was to be rich! Sidney never gave a second thought to any of the expenses of their luxurious mode of traveling; and before long this would be her own experience. "Sovereigns will be like shillings to me," she said to herself, and the thought made her very happy. Every whim of her heart would be gratified when she was Philip's wife.

In the meanwhile Philip was suffering less than his mother, but with more certain knowledge of facts. There was no conflict in his mind between love and suspicion. His love for his father, whom until lately he had loved passionately, seemed to be scorched up in the fierce fire of his indignation. He had been guilty of the meanest perfidy, and all his after life had been one of shameful hypocrisy. As Philip wandered solitarily about the beautiful pine woods at Toblach, he wore himself out with thinking of old Andrew Goldsmith, and his lifelong grief, with his loyal

devotion to the man who was dealing treacherously with him, who month after month, and year after year, had let him hunger and thirst for the knowledge of his daughter's fate, and had withheld the truth from him. He thought of his mother, too, whose steadfast, tender affection for his father had been his ideal of a happy married love. How would these two, who were most closely concerned with it, bear the discovery? How would their lives go on after they knew it?

When Sidney and Phyllis arrived at the little station at Toblach they found Philip and Dorothy there to meet them. Dorothy welcomed him with her usual frank delight at seeing him, and she received Phyllis with shy friendliness. But Sidney saw in an instant that, as far as Philip was concerned, his worst fears were realized. He looked as if years had passed over him; and not even the coming of Phyllis brought a gleam of pleasure to his face.

She unwound the long gauze veil in which she had enveloped her head, and looked up at Philip with a coquettish grace.

"All this way have I traveled to see you," she said archly, "thousands and thousands of miles, and you look as grim as if I was a horrible fright."

"No, no, Phyllis," he answered, taking both of her hands in his. "If I could feel glad at anything it would be to see you again. But my mother is ill——"

“Ill?” interrupted his father. “Your mother ill? Take me to her at once.”

“I have something to tell you first,” said Philip in a low voice. “Dorothy will take Phyllis to the hotel; and, if you are not too tired, will you come with me a little way along the road yonder?”

“I am not tired,” answered Sidney.

They walked away from the station toward the entrance of the Ampezzo Valley. Every step of the road was familiar to Sidney, for it was at Toblach he had waited for Sophy, when he had left her in a boyish passion so many years ago. The boy walking beside him was the very image of what he had been then. He glanced at him again and again, in the promise of his immature manhood, scarcely a man yet, but full of a force and vigor, both of mind and body, not yet tempered and solidified by the experience that later years would bring. Philip strode along with the sternness of a youthful judge. His heart was very hot within him. It was his father on whom he sat in judgment, or he would have poured out his wrath in uncontrolled vehemence. He did not know how to begin to speak to his father.

“Well, Philip,” said his father, at last, when they were quite out of sight and hearing of their fellow-men.

They had wandered down to the margin of a little lake, in which the pale gray peaks were reflected faultlessly. The wind moaned sadly in the topmost branches of the fir trees surrounding

them, and overhead a vulture was flying slowly from crest to crest, and uttered a wild, piercing cry as Sidney's voice broke the silence.

"Philip!" he repeated, looking imploringly into his son's face.

"Father," he said, "I have found out what became of Sophy Goldsmith."

They were simple words, and Sidney expected to hear them, yet they came like a deathblow from his son's lips. There was in Philip's voice so much grief and wonder, such contempt and indignation, that his father shrank from him as if he had given him physical pain. If his sin had but found him out in any other way than this! For Philip was dearer to him than all else—except, perhaps, Margaret. His love, and pride, and ambition, centered in his son. He had discovered how precious he was to him during that long journey to Venice, when the dread of his death had traveled with him. And now it was Philip who spoke in those unmerciful tones, whose stern face was turned away, as if he could not endure to look at him. The bitterness of the future would more than balance the prosperity of the past if his son was alienated from him.

"Philip," he said in hesitating words, "I loved her—just as you love Phyllis. I was as old as you. I could not give her up. And my uncle would never have consented. It was a boyish infatuation. I did not love her as I love your mother—my Margaret!" he cried with a sharp ring of pain in his voice; "but just as you love

Phyllis, I loved Sophy, and I dared not run the risk of losing her. I cannot cut you off from your inheritance, let you marry as you please, but my uncle could have thrust me upon the world a penniless man."

"Do you think I could ever forsake Phyllis?" asked Philip with scorn.

"Not as you are; probably never," answered his father; "for she could never be so unfitted to be your daily companion as Sophy was to be mine. To be linked with a woman who is immeasurably your inferior is a worse fate than any words can tell. She was not like her father, or Rachel. She was vain and ignorant, vulgar and passionate. We had terrible scenes together before we parted; and I did not intend to forsake her. Listen, and I will tell you how it came about."

"I was but a boy, no older than yourself," he said as he finished his account.

"But when did you know that she was dead?" inquired Philip.

"Not till after I knew your mother and loved her," he answered. "I let things drift till then, always dreading that Sophy would make her appearance and claim a position as my wife. Then I sent out a confidential man to make inquiries, and he learned her sad fate. I sinned, Philip; but my punishment will be harder than I can bear if I lose the love of my wife and children."

"But why did you desert your son?" Philip asked.

“My son?” he repeated.

“Yes,” continued Philip bitterly, “your first-born son, the child of Sophy Goldsmith! How often you have called me your first-born son! Oh, father, why did you desert my elder brother?”

Sidney stood speechless. His first-born son, the child of Sophy Goldsmith! This beloved boy here, in whom he had taken so deep a pride; who had been all he could wish for in a son; his heir, for whom he had worked and striven so hard to make for him a great place and a great name in the world, was not his first-born. There was an Ishmael risen up to dispute his inheritance with him.

“Philip!” he exclaimed, “you are deceived, cheated. There was no living child.”

“But I have seen him,” persisted Philip. “He is living near Cortina still. And I recognize a likeness to you. All the people know that he is the son of the English girl who died there thirty years ago. I have a letter here from Sophy Goldsmith; and there are no proofs missing to establish Martin’s claims.”

He gave the letter into his father’s hands, and strolled away along the margin of the lake, that Sidney might be alone as he read it. Philip felt how terrible a moment this must be in his father’s life; and a new and pacifying sense of compassion sprang up amid the fierce fire of his indignation. It was no longer a man in the prime of life, with the shrewdness, and wisdom,

and experience of life, who had been guilty of this base act, but a youth like himself, who had drifted into it through the adverse current of circumstances. When he heard his father's voice calling to him presently, he went back with a feeling of fellowship toward him. His father's face was gray and drawn, as if he could hardly bear his anguish, and his voice was low and broken.

"My boy," he cried, "forgive me! Have pity upon me!"

"Oh, I do!" said Philip, clasping his hand and holding it in a grasp like a vise, while the tears came into his eyes. "I pity you, father; I pity you with all my heart!"

"Does your mother know all this?" inquired Sidney after a while.

"She knows something," he answered, "but not through me; and she has not spoken to me. I made up my mind to see you and tell you all before you met her."

"That was right," said Sidney.

There was another silence, for their hearts were too full for words, and their thoughts were busy. It was Sidney who spoke first.

"It would break your mother's heart to know all," he said, "and we must not acknowledge this man as my son. Listen to me before you speak. He is a man now; and he would be miserable if we took him away from all his old surroundings, his home, and his friends. It would be good for him to remain as he is. I will make

him a rich man ; richer than any of his neighbors. But he must not come to England ; he cannot take your place. Does anyone but you know that he is my son ?”

“No,” answered Philip.

“Then for the sake of everyone concerned we must keep this secret to ourselves,” continued his father. “I would not ask you to do it if we had to sacrifice this man’s happiness or welfare ; but he would be tenfold happier and better off here, in his own place, than in England as my son and heir. That must not be, Philip. Do you think he could be otherwise than wretched in England ?”

“He is wretched now,” said Philip, as the recollection of the poor, persecuted outcast of the little hamlet came vividly to his mind.

“I will make him a rich man,” said his father, “rich and prosperous. He shall have all his heart can desire ; but I cannot acknowledge him as my son.”

“Oh, father !” exclaimed Philip, “no money can undo the wrong you have done him. He has led the life of a brute, and is as ignorant as a brute. He has been browbeaten and trampled on all his life. They have made a slave of him, and money will do him no good. It is we who must lift him out of his misery, and care for him, and teach him all that a man of thirty can learn. Don’t think of me. Surely I can bear this burden ; I have no dread of being a poor man. But I could never forsake my brother. If he is your

son, he is my brother, and I owe him a brother's duty."

"Your mother must know, then?" said Sidney in a tone of entreaty.

"Yes," he answered.

"It will break her heart!" exclaimed his father.

"My mother would rather have her heart broken than that any wrong should be done," replied Philip.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BEGINNING TO REAP.

SIDNEY found himself too unprepared for an immediate interview with Margaret to return with Philip to the hotel. He felt that he must be alone to realize the full meaning of his position. It was a matter almost of life and death to him. The country round was familiar to him, though it was thirty years since he had seen it, and he soon found a path which led him away to such a solitude as he sought. Busy as his brain was, he was at the same time intensely alive to all the impressions of nature. He felt the scorching heat of the sun, and saw the shapes of the lofty peaks surrounding him, and heard the humming of insects, and the trickling of little brooks down the mountain side. It was a magnificent day, he said to himself. Yet all the while his mind was plotting as to how he could arrest the storm that was beating against that fair edifice, which he had been building for himself and for Philip through so many years. It was a house without a foundation, built upon the sand, and he, the architect, was discovering too late that there was no foundation to it. But it must not be. If he could only bend Margaret to his will, convincing

her reason—for she was a reasonable woman—he did not fear failure with Philip. It was so easy and so rational a thing to leave this man where he had been brought up, of course providing amply for him. It would be so difficult and so inexpedient to acknowledge him, and to place him in the position of heir to large estates. Surely Margaret would see how irrational, how impossible it was to deprive Philip of that which had been his birthright for so many years, in favor of one who was ignorant that he had any birthright at all, and who would be placed in a miserably false position if it was granted to him.

He argued the question over with himself till he was satisfied of the ground on which he based it. It was not for himself, but for their first-born son, he would plead. Surely she would keep this secret for Philip's sake if not for his.

He turned back along the mountain path down into the valley, amazed to see that it was already the hour of sunset. Margaret must have been wondering what had kept him so long away from her. Was it possible that she could have been so near to him, after an absence of some weeks too, and he had not yet seen her? He thought of the strong, smooth current of their love for one another, which had known hitherto no break or interruption, no suspicion or shadow of disappointment. She had been more to him than he had ever dreamed that a wife could be. She was a thousandfold dearer to him now than when she became his wife twenty-three years ago. If she

was estranged from him, what would his life be worth?

He saw Dorothy and Phyllis sitting together in their little balcony overhead, and heard them chattering and laughing together with the light-hearted laughter of young girls. This reassured him; for Dorothy would not be so merry if Margaret was very ill or very sad. He passed on to her room and entered it. She sat in the twilight alone, her hands grasping the arms of her chair as if for support, and her face, ashy pale, turned toward him, with no smile or look of gladness upon it. He stood still at some distance, looking across at her as if a great gulf lay between them.

“Margaret!” he cried at last.

Her face quivered and her lips trembled, but she did not speak; only her dark eyes gazed searchingly on him, as if she longed to understand him without words. She shrank from hearing his confession.

“Margaret,” he said, “you have discovered the fate of Sophy Goldsmith!”

The color mounted swiftly to her white face, and she bent her head; but she kept silence. Sidney felt that he must still remain at a distance from her.

“My darling!” he said mournfully, “you were only a child when I married her; I was little more than a boy myself, not older than Philip.”

“You married her?” she asked, lifting up her head with a deep sigh of relief; “oh, how much

better it will be for her poor father and my Rachel!"

"Yes, she was my wife," he replied, "but I never loved her as I have loved you, Margaret."

"But why did you not tell?" she asked; "why did you not let me have your boy to bring up with my own? How could you live with me hiding such a secret from me? I let you read the inmost thoughts of my heart. How could you hide this secret from me?"

"I told your father," he answered, "and he agreed it was better kept secret."

"How many more secret chambers in your past are there which I must never enter?" she said. "And this secret, the most sacred of them all, that you were a father before I knew you—how could you keep this from me?"

"But I did not know it," he replied. "I concealed my marriage out of fear of being disinherited by my uncle. Sophy had driven me mad by her temper, and I left her at Cortina, but I stayed here for some days expecting her to follow me. She had plenty of money, and knew very well how to manage for herself. Though I went on without her I left at each place a letter directing her where to go and what to do. Certainly I ought to have gone back, but I thought she was sulking with me. I know she was but a girl; I also was but a boy. I could not feel toward her as a man feels toward his wife; she was more like a playmate, who, if she took offense, made me offended. Then I let things drift

on, afraid always of my uncle discovering my secret. But I never knew till this day that her child had lived."

"But you knew that she was dead?" asked Margaret.

"Good Heavens! yes!" he exclaimed. "I loved you the first moment I saw you, but I could never have owned it before learning that she was dead. The messenger I sent here wrote to me that she was dead, though he said nothing about a child. I suppose he intended to tell me on his arrival, but he was killed in an accident to the diligence crossing the Arlberg pass. I knew nothing of this until Philip told me just now."

"But oh! if you had but seen Sophy's son!" cried Margaret with tears, "the most miserable, the most degraded of all these peasants; a drudge, a slave to them. O Sidney! how can we atone to him for all this misery? We can never give him back his lost years."

"No," he said in a faltering voice, "nothing could ever fit him now for an English life; it would be all misery to him. We must make him happy in the only way happiness is possible for him. I will make him a rich and happy man in his own sphere, here among the people who know him. They will exalt him into a little king when he is the richest of them all, instead of the poorest. Do not speak, Margaret; listen to my reasons. He can never fill the place for which we have trained Philip so carefully. How could he

be a good landlord and magistrate? How could he become the husband of such a woman as ought to be our daughter-in-law, and the mother of my heirs? It would be for his good as well as ours to leave him here. Think of Philip, of me, of the poor fellow himself. No one knows this secret except ourselves; let it be as it has always been. I cannot think of Sophy as my wife. I implore you for my sake, for Philip's sake, our first-born son, let this secret be kept."

He was still standing where he had first arrested himself, as if a gulf lay between them; and she was looking across at him with infinite sadness in her eyes. There was something miserable in her steadfast gaze, blended with profound reproach.

"And what of Andrew Goldsmith?" she asked, "the poor old man who will never cease to mourn and wonder over the fate of his lost child. Do you think I could bear for him to go into the next life, and hear for the first time, perhaps from her own lips, the story of your treachery and mine? Would not that tempt him to hatred and revenge even there? And my dear friend Rachel. Could I look her in the face and feel my heart saying, 'I know now all the sad secret that has troubled you,' and not utter it in words? O Sidney! how can you lay such a burden upon me? God is the judge of our conduct, and we are not more His children than this poor old father and your deserted son. No,

we cannot keep such a secret ! We must take the neglected outcast into our very hearts, and see what atonement we can make."

In all their past life Margaret had yielded her judgment to his ; but Sidney felt that from what she had now said she would never swerve. It was useless to appeal to her on the score of the malignant gossip and painful dishonor he must bear himself ; it was equally useless to represent the loss to Philip of rank and fortune. These were worldly considerations, and Margaret would not stoop to notice them. He must seize the only weapon of defense which lay at home.

"I cannot bear it," he said, lashing himself into a rage. "I will disown the marriage, and defy the Goldsmiths to prove it. Philip shall be my heir. This base-born son of mine shall never take his place !"

"And I," said Margaret, with a tremor in her sweet voice, "will never live with you again until you own your son. I will own him ; and Philip, when he knows of his existence, will own him as his elder brother,"

Her face was white with grief as his was with rage. She rose from her seat and stood looking at him for a moment, as if they were about to separate forever. He had just returned to her after one of the rare absences which had come but seldom during their married life. She could not recognize in him the husband she had loved so perfectly and trusted so implicitly. There was

baseness and selfishness, treachery and utter worldliness, in this man; she acknowledged it, though it broke her heart to do so. Her grief was too great for words; and with a silent gesture of farewell she went away into an inner room, leaving him in a stupor of dismay.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN THE PINE WOODS.

AFTER Philip left his father on the shore of the little lake he, too, wandered about in loneliness for the rest of the day, unable to bear his anxiety and trouble in Phyllis's presence, and equally unable to conceal them. She and Dorothy concluded that he was gone with his father on some hurried excursion. But early the next morning he knocked at the door of the room where the two girls were sleeping, and begged Phyllis to get up and go out with him into the pine woods lying behind the hotel. She grumbled a little, telling Dorothy in a sleepy tone that she could not bear going out before breakfast; at his urgent and reiterated entreaties, she relented, and, after keeping him waiting for nearly an hour, she made her appearance in a very becoming and very elaborate morning costume.

They were soon out of sight and hearing of the hotel, wandering slowly along the soft, dewy glades of the beautiful pine woods, with the morning sunlight streaming in long pencils through the openings of the green roof far above them. Here and there, through the rough, tawny trunks of the trees, they caught a glimpse of the great gray pinnacles of rock, with their

fretwork of snow, rising high into the deep blue of the sky. Phyllis was enchanted with everything except the dew, which was spoiling the hem of her pretty dress, and taking the gloss off her little shoes.

“It is as beautiful as the scenery in the “*Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Lyceum,” she said. “Do you remember it, and that delicious music of Mendelssohn’s? If it was moonlight I should expect to meet *Oberon* and *Titania*.”

Phyllis felt that she was making herself very charming. Philip was an ardent admirer of Shakspeare, and what could she say more agreeable to him than this allusion to one of his favorite plays? But, to her great surprise, he seemed not to hear what she was saying.

“My Phyllis,” he said, “I have something really terrible to tell you.”

“Not that they are going to separate us again!” she cried. “I thought your father must have taken me into favor once more, or he would not have brought me all this way with him. He is not going to be tiresome again?”

“No, no!” he answered, pressing her hand, and keeping it in his own as they sauntered on; “we shall have no more trouble on that score. We need not fear any more opposition from my father. That is the one good thing in this trouble, for if I am not my father’s heir, he will not expect me to marry an heiress.”

“What do you mean?” she asked in a tone of excitement.

“I mean that my father has another son older than I am,” continued Philip. “You know all about poor Sophy Goldsmith as well as I do. Phyllis, it was my father who ran away with her, when he was no older than I am; and they had a son, who has been living not far from here, at Cortina, ever since. He is eight years older than I am.”

“Philip!” she exclaimed, standing still, and fastening her eyes upon his face with an air of incredulity, ready to break into a laugh as soon as the joke was repeated.

“I cannot bear to speak of it, even to you,” he said gravely. “I wish to God it was not true. But I have read Sophy’s last letter to Rachel Goldsmith, and there is no mistake. It is undeniably true. What is worse, my mother is going away this morning. She sent for me last night, and said I must take her away by the first train this morning. She looked as if it would kill her. She wishes to go, and I see it is best. It is best for her and my father to be separated for a while.”

“Separated!” ejaculated Phyllis. “Your father and mother!”

“For a time only, I trust,” said Philip. “It has been too great a blow for her. Don’t you understand, my Phyllis? She has loved the Goldsmiths so much, and she remembers Sophy quite well, and has always been deeply interested in the mystery of her disappearance. And now the sudden discovery of this secret of my father’s

is too much for her. I have telegraphed for Rachel to come to Berne, and I am going to take my mother there at once, and then come back here to you and Dorothy.”

“But are you quite sure there is a son living?” inquired Phyllis.

“I have seen him, and spoken to him,” he replied. “He has some resemblance to my father, and he is very like old Andrew. Dorothy saw the likeness in a moment. The worst of it is that he has lived among the lowest of the people, and seems almost imbecile. He is about thirty years of age, and is as ignorant as a savage. Poor fellow! poor fellow!”

His voice fell, and the tears smarted under his eyelids. Phyllis’s finely penciled eyebrows were knitted together with a quite new expression of profound and painful thought. He said to himself he had never seen her look so pretty and charming, and he bent his head to kiss the furrow between her eyebrows.

“You are sure it is all true?” she asked. “You are not inventing it?”

“How could I invent anything so horrible?” he said in amazement. “Think of what it means! Think of what my father has done! If it were not for you and my mother, I should wish I had never been born.”

“Then you will never be Philip Martin of Brackenburn,” she continued, “and Brackenburn will not be your estate. It will belong to this other son?”

“Of course,” he answered, “the estate goes to the eldest son. But I do not care about being a poor man. They have christened him Martino. Martino Martin he will be.”

“Gracious Heavens !” she ejaculated.

“So there will be no more opposition to our love for each other,” he went on in a more cheerful manner ; “and I must set to work now to earn a living for you and myself. It will be very pleasant to work for one another—I for you, and you for me. You will wait for me, Phyllis ?”

There was no tone of doubt in the half question ; it was only asked that some sweet answer might be given. He was as sure of her love as of his own ; for had they not grown up for one another ?

“But there is Apley,” she said, after a short pause. “If this man takes your estate, you will take Hugh’s. It is Hugh who must work for his living.”

“Oh, no !” he replied ; “Apley is settled on my mother’s second son, so it belongs to Hugh. My father had no idea that he had a son living, and it seemed fair for Apley to go to the second son.”

“But is it quite certain that they were married ?” asked Phyllis, with all the premature knowledge of a country clergyman’s daughter. “If they were not legally married, this man could not take your place.”

Philip dropped the hand he still held. She

had struck hard upon a chord in his nature which vibrated under her touch in utter discordance. Now and then she had jarred slightly upon him, and he had hastened to forget it, but here was a discord that would turn all his life's music into harshness.

"Phyllis, you do not know what you are saying," he cried.

"Oh! yes, I do," she answered, half petulantly and half playfully. "It is not likely that your father would marry a girl like Sophy Goldsmith. And if he did not, you will still be the heir, and some day I shall be Mrs. Martin of Brackenburn."

Philip walked on beside her in silence, his eyes fixed on the ground.

"That is the first thing to find out," continued Phyllis shrewdly. "I don't believe there was a legal marriage, or if there was, the Goldsmith's must prove it. Of course, your mother will be very mad about it for a while, but it will come right in the end; and 'All's well that ends well,' you know. But isn't it strange that, after all these years, we should find out about Sophy Goldsmith? And your father knew all along, the naughty, naughty man!"

So smooth hitherto had been the current of their short lives that Philip had never seen Phyllis in any circumstances of great trouble or difficulty. She was still a young girl, and how shame or sorrow would affect her no one could have foretold. But at this crisis, with all his

own nature overwrought with shame for his father and sorrow for his mother, he felt how vast was the distance between them. They were dwelling in different worlds. Was it a premonition of this disparity between them which had made his mother oppose their marriage?

He turned back abruptly toward the hotel, and they did not talk much on their way. Phyllis's brain was busy, too busy for much speaking. If this terrible thing could possibly be true—though she rejected such a supposition—then, indeed, she must bid farewell to all the bright schemes she had laid for her future life. Philip would be a poor nobody, and she really was not fitted to be a poor man's wife. She loved him, of course, and it would be intense misery to give him up. How she could part from him she did not know; her mother must manage it for her, if the necessity ever arose. But to be plain Mrs. Martin, of nowhere in particular, living on a few hundreds a year! That would be impossible. Still, what folly it was to be looking forward to things which would never happen! She turned a bright face to Philip as he left her at the hotel door.

“Take courage, and be comforted,” she said. “It has all got to be proved first.”

He turned away with a feeling of utter discouragement. All his world seemed shaken to its very foundations. His father had been guilty of a deed of the deepest baseness, and his intended wife was blind to that baseness. But he

had no time for musing on it. Dorothy's voice arrested him, and, looking up, he saw her coming quickly to him, dressed as for a journey. Her face was troubled, and she spoke to him in imploring tones.

"Your mother is leaving here by the first train," she said, "and she says I must not go with her. Something has made her very unhappy; her face grieves me more than I can say. Persuade her to let me go. She ought not to travel alone."

"I shall be with her," he answered, "and Rachel Goldsmith will meet her in Berne. No, Dorothy, it would be a greater comfort to my mother if you stay here with my father. He is very fond of you, and he, too, is unhappy. You must stay with him and comfort him."

"Yes," she said, weeping; "what has happened I do not know, but I will do what you and Mrs. Martin think best. I do not know which I love the most. Is it anything very dreadful?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Is there nothing I can do besides staying with your father?" she asked. "Philip, we all know how very, very rich I shall be—too rich. If any money is wanted, tell him to recollect how much there is of mine, more than any girl could use. But money losses would not make you miserable."

"No," he said; "no loss of money would break my mother's heart."

"That is how she looks," resumed Dorothy,

“as if her heart was broken; and oh! I cannot bear to lose sight of her. If I was her own child she would tell me all about it, and I could comfort her. But now, at the very worst moment, I feel what a stranger I am among you all.”

“No, dear Dorothy,” he answered; “you are as dear as a daughter to her and my father. You will know all by and by, and you will see then you were of more use staying here than going away with my mother.”

“And is Phyllis going with you?” she asked.

“Phyllis? Oh, no!” he said.

“I’m afraid I was feeling a little jealous of Phyllis,” she said, smiling through her tears.

“Of course, I know she is nearer and dearer to you all, except Mr. Martin, than I am; but I think she could not bear trouble as I can do.”

“Trouble!” he repeated, “yes; but could you bear shame?”

“Willingly,” she answered.

“Not shame only, but sin. Could you help us to bear our sins?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said gravely; “if our Lord came into the world to take away our sins by bearing them himself, surely we ought to bear the burden of one another’s sins—we, who are all alike sinful. Have you any such burden to bear? But I shall not have to bear either shame or sin for your father or mother—or for you,” she added softly, after a moment’s pause.

“Thank you, Dorothy,” he said.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

REMORSE.

SIDNEY was unaware of Margaret's intention, and was only awaiting some message from her to see her again, and try once more what persuasion, backed by authority, could do to break down her resolution. The morning train came in and steamed away again, carrying Margaret and Philip in it, before he returned from a miserable stroll through the well remembered pine forests. Dorothy met him on her return from the station, with traces of tears on her face, and was the first to tell him that Margaret was gone.

“She need not have done that,” he said to himself bitterly.

But when he entered the room where he had seen her the night before, a great dread seized him. He felt as he would have done if she had been dead. There was the chair she sat in only last night; that was the book she had laid down; those flowers she had gathered and arranged for herself; and now she was gone! There was something of the desolation of death about the vacant place.

A letter lay upon the table, and he seized it eagerly. Margaret was not one who used many words of endearment, or many caresses. She

thought that love, like religion, should show itself in deeds, not speeches. Hitherto she had never begun her letters to him in any other way than the almost formal one of "My dear Sidney." This was different.

"My beloved husband," it ran, "it is because you are dearer to me than any other human being, dearer than my own life a hundredfold, dearer even than my own soul, that I cannot just now bear your presence. How I love you I cannot find words to tell; my love for you is myself, my life. There is no bitterness in my heart toward you; only an immense grief—an abyss of gloom and heaviness, which nothing but God's love can fill. All my life, since I first saw you, you have seemed to me one of Christ's true followers; in the world but not of it; a real disciple, a faithful soldier of the cross. I never saw in you the shadow of a lie. You were to me truth and faithfulness personified.

"And now it would be difficult, almost impossible, to see clearly what you have been, as long as I am near to you. My brain is confused; and it is necessary for me to get away, lest my feebleness should enfeeble you in doing what is right. There can be only one right way; and I hope to stand beside you in the sorrowful years that are coming. I promise to do this—to come back and hold your hand, and walk by your side, sharing the burden with you. But do not think to avoid this burden, and these sad years. The harvest of a seed sown long ago is come, and we must reap

it, whether we do it humbly or defiantly. But I must go away now from you, my dearest one—from whom I never thought to separate till death should part us.—MARGARET.”

Sidney read these lines through again and again; at first in such a paroxysm of anger as he had never felt since he had deserted Sophy, when he was in his early manhood. Was there not a kind of fanaticism in his wife's religion—that blindness which is said to prevent devotees from seeing a thing in its own light? She demanded of him to encounter the gossip and wonder of the vast circle of his acquaintances in the City and in society, to bring a slur on his fair fame, and, worse than all, to place his low born son in the position which her own boy had hitherto occupied as his heir. She asked him to doom Philip to the life of a comparatively poor and obscure man. And for what? That an old man and woman, who for thirty years had lived in suspense about their child's fate, should at last hear that all this time she had been lying in her grave. If he could bring Sophy back to life, it would be different. It must make Andrew and Rachel Goldsmith more miserable to learn the truth since the truth was what it was.

Margaret did not think of the dishonor this discovery would bring upon religion. For he was distinguished in the City, and in Parliament, both as a philanthropist and a religious man. He had been both since he had known her, and this sin, committed in his boyish indifference to all religious matters, must fling the shadow of a

total eclipse upon his career. Why should he make his fellow-Christians ashamed? No scandal has so much charm as a scandal against a prominent Christian. And how easy it was to avoid it if Margaret would but consent! No one would be any the worse, for he would keep his promise of making his eldest son a rich man in the station now belonging to him. Nothing but misery could come of any other course.

Yet as he read again Margaret's letter, with its strong and mournful expressions of her love, his anger subsided, and the idea of denying the legality of his first marriage grew slowly more and more repugnant to him. He saw, too, quite clearly, that he must lose Margaret if he pursued this plan. What measures she would adopt, if he carried out such a purpose, he could not tell. But in any case he would lose her; she would never live with him again if he denied his marriage with Sophy Goldsmith. Still he would not decide definitely what he would do till he had seen Sophy's son.

There was still time to reach Cortina that day, and after a hasty meal he set out, taking Dorothy and Phyllis with him. He should see this eldest son of his in time to telegraph to Margaret, before Rachel Goldsmith could join her at Berne; and she would not refuse his entreaty to keep silence, at least for a few days. He was pondering over this new step, as they drove through the wonderful valley, where the clouds resting upon the crests of the mountains caught, in many-colored hues, the rays of the evening sun. It was

twilight when they reached the hotel; but the twilight is long there, for the sun sets early behind the rocky walls which hem in the valley. The village lay tranquilly in a soft, gray light. How well he remembered it! He shrank from entering the hotel, for it seemed almost certain that Sophy herself was awaiting his arrival there.

Yonder lay the broad pathway through the fields, leading to the half ruined fortress where he had last parted with her. He turned down the familiar track as if urged by some irresistible impulse. It was about the same season of the year; the same flowers and weeds were in bloom, and the crops were at nearly the same stage of growth. It might have been the same evening. Was the past blotted out, then? Would that he could take up his life again as it was thirty years ago, and sow the seed of the future—oh, how differently!

But even now he turned with aversion from the idea of a life spent with Sophy Goldsmith. He fancied he could see her sitting on the flight of steps which led up to the church door, and that he could hear her shrill voice bidding him go away, and never return. Yet if he had been a true man, as Philip was, he could not have forsaken her. If Philip had found himself caught in such a mistake, a mistake so fatal to all happiness, he would have accepted the consequences, and done what he could to make the best of the future. But he had built all his life on a blunder and a lie. "I have pierced myself through with many sorrows," he said to himself.

He was standing still, pondering over this long forgotten and very dreary past, and now as he uttered these words he lifted up his head and saw that he had paused under a wooden crucifix, one which he remembered distinctly. The image of the Lord hanging upon it was worn and weather-beaten, the wood was bleached and pallid as if it had stood there long centuries; yet still the bowed head, with its crown of thorns, possessed a pathetic sadness, as if this man also, Christ Jesus the Lord, had been pierced through with many sorrows—yes, with one vast sorrow unlike any other sorrow. He felt, as he had never felt before, that this grief beyond compare, this crucifixion of the soul as well as of the body, was his own doing. They were his sins which the Lord had borne in his own body on the tree; and what he planned to do would crucify the Son of God afresh.

“God be merciful to me, a sinner!” he cried.

It was late before he returned to the hotel; but his mind was fully made up now. If he had never been a Christian before, he would be so from this hour, and whatever it might cost him, there should be no more hypocrisy, no more playing of a part, in his life. A bitter harvest was before him, but he would reap it unflinchingly to its last grain. The sting of his sin was that he could not save others from reaping it with him. And how large was the number of reapers! Directly or indirectly how many persons must suffer from this early sin of his!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CHIARA'S HUT.

PHYLLIS was gone to bed, but Dorothy was waiting for Sidney in the bare and comfortless dining room of the hotel. She looked up wistfully as he entered, for all day her thoughts had been anxious and troubled by the mystery which had so suddenly surrounded her ; and seeing his pale and haggard face she ran to meet him, and put her arms round his neck, kissing him fondly as a daughter might have done. He kept her hand in his as he sank down weariedly into the chair next to him, and he bowed his head upon the small, fond fingers, and she felt his tears falling on them. Presently he looked up at her.

“Dorothy,” he said, “you will never forsake me !”

“Never !” she exclaimed vehemently, “never ! not if all the world forsook you.”

“Even if you heard I was a base scoundrel, a selfish villain ?” he asked.

“Oh, but you are not that !” she answered, kissing him again ; “there would be some mistake. But if it was true, I should never forsake you ; you would want me all the more.”

“That is true,” he said.

“There has been a priest here,” she continued,

after a pause, "asking for Philip, and saying he must see him about some letter, and a man called Martino."

"I know all about it," said Sidney, "and I will send him a message."

At sunrise the next morning Sidney set out for the hamlet where Chiara had lived. It was the fourth day since she died. Martino had followed the funeral procession, which he was not allowed to join, and had stood aloof seeing the coffin laid in the open grave. This woman had never been kind to him, she had led him the life of a dog, but she was the only person to whom he had in any way belonged. He knew no other home than the squalid hut, in which all his life had passed. In a dim sense it was as dear to him as a den is to a wild creature that inhabits it. The litter of leaves and straw in the corner where he always slept seemed the only place where he could sleep. Chiara's hand had been the hand that fed him. There was a void left by her death, a blank that his dull mind could in no way imagine filled up. But he was shrewd enough to know that his enemies would not let him return to the hut if they could help it, and as soon as he saw Chiara's coffin lowered into the grave, he stole away from the cemetery, and hastening up the mountain he secured possession of the wretched hovel, barricading the door, which was the only means of entrance. Here he remained deaf and dumb to the threats of his neighbors and to the entreaties and commands of the priest. The long years of

persecution and tyranny which he had undergone had produced the ordinary result of a dull and embruted nature. Those among whom he lived were little better than savages, with the lowest conceptions of duty and religion. Of humanity either to man or beast they knew nothing. Some of them were less cruel and harsh toward Martino than the rest ; there were women who had never struck him ; but he had been the miserable butt of the others until his bodily strength was great enough for his own defense, excepting from the brute force of men stronger than himself.

At the bottom of his soul there was a profound sadness, a certain susceptibility inherited from his educated and civilized parentage, which had made him less callous under tyranny, than he would have been if he had been a foundling of their own race. In his childhood this susceptibility had displayed itself in bursts of passion and almost insane excitement ; in his manhood it changed to long fits of dumb and sullen lethargy. Since Chiara's funeral he had lain motionless on the litter of straw in the hut, regarding the attacks of his neighbors outside with as much indifference as he would have felt under one of the terrific thunderstorms which now and then threatened the little hamlet with imminent destruction. His benumbed mind was almost as lethargic as his body. But this morning his enemies had exhausted their small stock of patience, which so far had been eked out by the presence of the padre, who wished to

enter the hut alone and peacefully, in order to make sure that Chiara had given up the whole of her penurious savings to the Church. He had urged upon her in the last solemn moments before death the duty of withholding no portion of her beloved booty; but he knew the peasant nature too well to trust implicitly even to the power of superstition where money was concerned, and he was anxious to search for himself among the accumulated rubbish of her last home. He had been compelled, however, to return to Cortina the night before, leaving strict commands that Martino should be left unmolested.

When Sidney entered the high, secluded valley and the hamlet came in sight, a strange scene lay before him. Round one of the wretched hovels the whole population was assembled in a wild circle of yelling savages, attacking it in every direction. There were not more than five or six men, but there was twice the number of women, as muscular and sinewy as the men, and a host of children. All of them were scantily clothed and their sunburnt limbs looked as hard as iron. A heap of enormous stones was piled up near the door of the hut, and the heavy thud as they were flung against it by brawny arms was echoed by the wall of rock behind. Sidney was still at a little distance when a loud shout of triumph reached his ears. One of the women was coming out of a neighboring hut with a lighted fagot in her hand, which she thrust up into the dried thatch of the roof. In another minute

half a dozen other fagots were fetched from the hearths, and the reek of the smoke rose up in a column in the pure morning air.

Sidney hurried forward, wondering if he should find his son amid this maddened crew, when the door of the hovel was flung open suddenly from within, and a man stood in the low doorway—a man, a wild beast rather! His long, matted hair hung about his face like a mane, and his bare limbs, scorched almost black with heat, and frost-bitten into long furrows by cold, looked hardly human. He was gasping for air, as if all but smothered by the suffocating smoke; and as he stood there, blinded by the sudden light, a sharp stone flung by one of the women struck him on the temple. A yell of mingled exultation and abhorrence followed the successful blow, and the miserable creature would have been stoned to death like a dangerous wild beast if Sidney had not cried out in a tone of authority, to the utter surprise of the assailants.

The lull would have lasted only a moment if Sidney had not bethought himself of a ready and effective means of diverting the angry mob. He thrust his hand into his pocket and flung into the midst of them a handful of bronze and silver coins. There was an instant diversion and scramble for the money, and before any of them gave heed to him Martin rushed away, and with the speed of a scared and hunted animal fled up the precipitous rocks near at hand. When

all the coins were picked up his enemies looked round for him in vain.

“I have no more money with me now,” said Sidney in Italian, “but there is plenty more in Cortina for those who come down for it; and the man who tells me where Martino is, Martino who was Chiara’s adopted son, shall have a golden——”

“Martino!” interrupted the most intelligent looking of the men, “that was Martino we were burning out.”

“Oh, my God!” cried Sidney, staggering as if he had been struck by a blow as heavy as that which had wounded his son. For a moment or two he felt faint and stunned, unable to move or speak, and the circle of faces and figures around him appeared to whirl dizzily about him. He was conscious of the stare of their inquisitive and savage eyes, which were fastened upon him with unfriendly gaze, and he could hear the muttering of their uncouth voices. The hovel was blazing behind them, and the thick smoke was blown down in clouds upon him and them. He felt almost suffocated. Was it possible that he was about to die here among these terrible men and women? He made a superhuman effort to shake off the deadness that was creeping over him.

With his consciousness there returned to him the habit of authority and command. He drew himself up and looked round at them all with a keen gaze, from which they shrank a little, sulkily

and abjectly. His knowledge of their language came back fluently to his aroused brain, and made it easy to address them.

“Your padre told me I should find Martino here, in Chiara’s house. What right have you to set that house on fire? It is not yours.”

“He would not come out,” answered one of the women, for all the men were silent. Certainly they had no right to destroy the hut, and the law was stern on offenders such as they were.

“And why did you want him to come out?” asked Sidney.

“Because he shall not live among us any longer,” replied the man who had spoken to him before; “he is accursed, and he has the evil eye. His mother is in hell, and no mass can be said for her soul; and he does not belong to us. No man of us will give him a hand, and no woman will give him a look. Would any woman here be the wife of Martino?”

There was a roar of contempt and abhorrence, a laugh such as Sidney had never heard before.

“But where is he gone?” he asked.

“Up yonder,” answered the man, pointing to a peak standing high and clear in the morning sky; “there is a cave up there good enough for a wolf like him. Let him stop there.”

“I am come here to take him away,” said Sidney; “he is my son.”

The words sounded in his own ears as if spoken by some other voice. This poor, hunted, despised and wounded outcast his son! It seemed as if

before him was unrolled the record of the sad, desolate, neglected, most unhappy years through which his first-born son had passed, while every year of them had been crowned with prosperity and happiness to himself. The thought of it passed swiftly though vividly through his brain, as such remembrances do in the hour of death. A profound and uneasy silence had fallen upon the crowd around him. This rich Englishman had caught them in an unlawful act, and had witnessed their savage treatment of Martino. They knew how much influence such wealthy foreigners had with the mayor in the town below, where such men were treated with servile respect, and they were in dread of some terrible vengeance for their treatment of his son.

“I did not know he was living till the day before yesterday,” said Sidney at last, speaking to himself rather than to them.

Was it only so short a time ago? It appeared to be ages. He had lived through a century of troubled emotion since he reached Toblach.

“I will reward any man well who brings him to me,” he added, “and now you had better put out this blazing thatch, if you wish to save your own huts.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AT BAY.

WHEN Martino escaped from the burning hovel, he fled like a wild beast hunted by enemies. The precipitous rocks had ledges and stepping-stones familiar to him, and his naked feet took firm hold on every point of vantage ground. He was quickly beyond all chance of being captured. In his boyhood he had often taken refuge in an almost inaccessible cavern, which he had found for himself, and where he could hide like a wolf in its lair. In later times, when Chiara's hard yoke grew too galling, he had sometimes established himself in this den, and stayed in it till famine had driven him back to his miserable home. There was no means of getting food up there, for on the Dolomite rocks not even a blade of grass will grow; and Martino knew well that if he became a marauder on the scanty fields below, so difficult to keep in cultivation, his neighbors would shoot him down as relentlessly as they would destroy a wolf or a vulture. He had carried up there, with much trouble and at a great risk, a small store of wood and turf, and he had made for himself a rude litter of dried leaves and straw. As there was no vegetation there was no animal life on these barren rocks;

there was no chance of catching a bird or a rabbit. But he could bear hunger for a long time, and here he was at least in safety.

He slept the long hours of the day away, and awoke toward night; then he went to the entrance of his cave and sat down on the ground, his knees being almost on a level with his shaggy head. Very far below him lay the valley and the twinkling lights of Cortina, glistening in the distance like so many glowworms. The stars sparkled in the sky above like little globes of light. The watchman was already on the clock tower, striking the quarters of the hour upon the great bell, and its clear note came up to his listening ear. A thousand feet beneath him, so vertically below that he could have cast a stone on any of the roofs, lay the hamlet where he was so much hated. Now and then he saw a figure carrying a lantern flitting uneasily from hut to hut. All the day he had heard voices calling, from time to time, "Martino! Martino!" but he had paid no heed to them in the depths of his cave. Now once more, before the people settled to their night's rest, he heard a voice, pitched to a high, piercing note; it was a woman's voice, a young woman, whom once he had loved in a rough fashion and who had scouted him as if he was indeed an outcast and a pariah.

"Martino!" she cried, "come down. We will not hurt you. Here is a rich English signore, and he says he is your father."

Martino laughed a low, cunning chuckle.

They meant to snare him, and put him to death out of their way, and this woman thought she could betray him to them. He made no answer, and gave no sign of life. Presently all the lights were put out, and every sound ceased in the hamlet, save the bleat of a kid now and then as it pressed nearer its mother's side for warmth. Far away he could hear the howling of a wolf answered by the furious barking of a watchdog. A moon near the full was rising over the cliffs, and shed a white light on the sharp, needle-like peaks. There was an incessant play of summer lightning on the northern horizon, throbbing behind the long and jagged outlines of the mountains. All about him was solemn, impressive, and mysterious. If Philip had been there he would have been filled with the most profound admiration and awe. But Martino was too savage to feel either; the aspects of nature had little more effect upon him than upon a wolf. When all was at last still and dark, even in Cortina, he rose, and cautiously descended toward his old home.

The few watchdogs knew him too well to be disturbed by his soundless footsteps as he passed among the silent huts as if he had been a ghost. The foundations of the walls alone remained of Chiara's hovel, and there was still some warmth where the roof had been left smoldering on the ground. Martino squatted down in the midst of the ruins. It had been nothing but a squalid and dreary home to him, but it was the

only one he had ever known. This was the one spot on earth that had been his dwelling-place, and his enemies had destroyed it with an utter destruction. There was no roof now to shelter him, no door he could shut in the face of his foes. He felt it with a vague bitterness, as some beast might feel the destruction of its hole, and tears filled his eyes, and rolled slowly down his rough and furrowed face.

He roused himself after a while, for he knew the nights were short; and, being fleet of foot, he ran down the steepest paths to Cortina, to pick up any food he could find for the coming day. There were roots growing in the fields there on which life could be sustained for some time, and his dull brain was untroubled by forebodings of the distant future. He prowled round the hotel, where Sidney was sleeping a troubled sleep, and picked up some fragments of food, which the wasteful servants had thrown through the window as the easiest way of getting rid of them. The dogs would have eaten them in the morning, but they were a Godsend to Martino, who carried them away in his ragged clothes. When he reached his cave at dawn, and the rising sun shot its earliest beams into it, they fell upon as poor a wretch as the sunlight would find out during the livelong day.

Once more he slumbered all day, hearing at intervals the attempts made to reach him in his fastness, and the voices calling to him repeatedly, all with one accord saying that his father was

come and was searching for him. He laughed to scorn their attempts. Not a man among them would dare to scale the precipice ; and he did not believe that there was anyone on earth who would claim him as a kinsman. His father ! He had heard too often of his mother and her accursed fate, but no one had ever spoken of his father. His mother's grave he knew ; and once, when there was in his heart a strange, confused springing up of tenderness—it was when he felt a sort of love for the girl who scorned and repulsed him so indignantly—he had reared a rude cross at the head of it and collected white pebbles from the river to mark its outline. But his father !

At night he stole down to Cortina again, and picked up any fragments thrown outside the doors for the scavenger dogs. But he did not go to the desolate ruins, which were no longer a shelter for him. And so two or three days and nights passed by, Martino living as wild a life as any wild and noxious beast, while Sidney used every means that could be thought of to capture him. Not Sidney alone. All the population of the Ampezzo Valley knew something of the errand that had brought the rich English signore to Cortina, and every man was eager to gain the reward he offered, but no one knew a safe approach to the cave, and, if Martino was on the watch, it seemed certain death to make any further attempt to seize him.

At last Sidney himself ascended as far as any man could climb on the almost sheer face of the

peak, and drew as near to his son as was possible, calling to him in his pleasant and persuasive, but unfamiliar, voice, so different from the voices he was used to hear that there was some chance of his paying heed to it. But Martino was sleeping soundly at the time, and did not hear his father's voice; and, possibly, if he had heard it he would have thought it a fresh snare. Sidney retraced the perilous path, disheartened.

"He will die of famine," said the guide who was with him. "Perhaps he is dying now, and cannot move himself to answer."

It was a terrible thought to Sidney; yet it seemed only too likely. Sophy's son was perishing like a wounded creature that creeps for shelter into its den and dies a lingering death of famine.

"We must save him," he cried. "I will give anything you ask if you will save him."

"If we knew for certain he was dying," said the guide, scanning the rock carefully, "I would do it; but if Martino is not dying he is as strong as an ox. It would be death to any man who climbed up to his cave. We will get him when he is dead," he added cheerfully.

Sidney went down into the valley hopeless and heavy-hearted. Yet underneath the heaviness of his heart lay a vague and wordless impression that after all it would, perhaps, be best for Martin to die. For, if he lived, would it be possible ever to civilize this wild peasant, and bring him in any degree into harmony with the life of civilization and luxury to which he by birth belonged?

The position and career for which Philip had been educated with so much care must be filled by this incapable, untrained, utterly ignorant savage. It would be impossible to fit him, at his age, for the position of an English farmer; he was below the level of the lowest English laborer. The sin of his father had been so visited upon him that nothing could atone to him for it in this life. Sidney acknowledged that it was his sin which fell so heavily on his son; he repented of it in bitter contrition of heart. But would it not be best for all if Martin was dead?

He had nearly reached Cortina, disheartened and perplexed beyond measure, when Dorothy's clear young voice roused him from his sad thoughts, and he saw her coming up the steep and stony path to meet him.

"Good news!" she cried blithely; "good news! Philip is come back. Mrs. Martin has sent Philip back to us. That is good news to bring you."

Good news, and yet unwelcome. For on no one more than Philip, excepting Martin, would the burden of his early error fall. If he could have borne all the penalty himself it would have been easier to bear; but he must see Philip crushed beneath it. Philip's speedy return was a sign that neither his wife nor son entertained any bitterness of anger against him, and so far it was good news. But their unselfish sympathy made his own conduct appear more base. It placed them too far apart from him. It seemed

as if he could almost better have borne their resentment.

“He is coming after me,” said Dorothy. “I only ran on to tell you.”

She ran down again, leaving the father and son to meet each other alone ; and she was not out of sight when Philip reached him. There was a subtle change about him ; Sidney felt that he had lost him as a son, but gained him as a friend. He was his comrade, ready to help him in every difficulty, and loyal to him with an immovable loyalty. The grave yet cordial sympathy of his manner went to Sidney’s heart ; and yet it chilled him. This passionately loved boy of his was a man, looking at him with a man’s eyes, and the feeling latent in this clear, affectionate gaze was pity, not reverence. The change was a subtle one hardly to be seen, yet very painful to him.

“Phyllis has told you?” he said.

“All she knows,” answered Philip. “I conclude that my brother has made his escape to the mountains, and cannot be captured.”

He uttered the words “my brother” simply, but Sidney winced on hearing them.

“I have not spoken of him to Phyllis or Dorothy,” he said. “If they know anything it must be through the chambermaid. It was impossible to speak to them about it, though all the people in Cortina know.”

“I told Phyllis I had an elder brother living,” replied Philip. “I told her at Toblach.”

“And what did she say ?” he asked.

“She talked like a girl who has read nothing but novels,” he replied, evading a more direct answer.

And now, as Sidney saw his son standing before him, such a son as his whole heart could take delight in, the thought of disinheriting him in favor of the untrained and probably untamable savage, who possessed his birthright, came back to his mind with irresistible force. It seemed impossible to do it. This boy, whom he loved with passionate ardor, to be displaced by a man whose existence was a shame and a sorrow to him! He himself was in the prime of life—too old to retrieve the past and shake off its burden, and too young to escape from its consequences for many years—years of comparative dishonor and of keen disappointment. His voice was broken as he spoke again to his son.

“Philip,” he said, “must we sacrifice all? Is there a necessity to own this man?”

“Yes,” he answered unhesitatingly.

“I cannot see it,” said his father. “I am like one walking in darkness. My conscience says nothing, except that I have sinned. If I do this I act by your mother’s conscience.”

“And mine,” responded Philip. “My mother and I have but one mind about it.”

“I will yield to you,” he said, “but my punishment is greater than I can bear.”

They went on their way down into the valley; and Sidney told him of the perilous place in which Martin had taken refuge, and the opinion

his guide had given that the poor fellow must be dying of famine. It was impossible to attempt anything that evening, but the next morning at sunrise, Philip said, a scaling party must go to the precipice and ascend it, under his own directions. He was a member of the Alpine Club; and to leave any fellow-creature perishing through hunger and faintness from wounds would be infamous. He must hasten to make his preparations, and learn who were the most courageous and adventurous guides.

CHAPTER XL.

PHYLLIS AND DOROTHY.

BUT as they passed the small public garden, lying on the steep slope of the river banks, Philip caught sight of Phyllis sitting alone on one of the benches. He had seen but little of her at Toblach, and that was after a separation of some months. It was an opportunity not to be missed, and his arrangements could very well be made an hour later. Though the sun was gone down behind the mountains, the air was still warm and balmy, and the sky was of that deep blue which is caused by the absence of mist and vapor. Far away on the highest peaks the sunlight lingered, making all their soft colors glow with a delicate bloom and luster. Phyllis's pretty face, as she looked up at his approach, was a little sulky.

"Your father is making a tremendous fuss about this man," she said, looking up into his face with a hard expression in her bright eyes; "all the world is talking of it here. Is it prudent?"

"My darling!" he answered fondly, "this man is my elder brother—my father's son. How can we make too much fuss, as you call it? We must do all we can to compensate him for the past."

“But you can never reclaim him from his savagery—never!” she rejoined. “A man of thirty! He must remain a monster all his life. Is it certain that your father really married Sophy Goldsmith?”

“My father says so,” he answered shortly.

“But they could not prove it,” she continued with eagerness, and a shrewd expression in her face which made it look almost hateful to him, “and he is not compelled to own it. Why could he not have left him here in peace? It is the only wise thing to do. I don’t say leave him in such poverty and misery as you find him in; no! that would be cruel and unjust. It is not too late yet to act sensibly. Why do not you all quietly hush it up? The Goldsmiths need never know; and you can provide comfortably for him. You will only work misery all round by taking him to England as your father’s eldest son and heir. A monster like that to become an English gentleman! Good gracious!”

Philip made no answer. Such considerations had presented themselves to his own mind, and he had dismissed them hastily, as hateful temptations arising from the evil that was in his nature. Now that Phyllis uttered them they seemed more hateful from her lips. He did not know what the future might bring, but the present brought to him a clear and simple duty. Justice must be done to Sophy Goldsmith’s son.

“Is it too late, dearest Philip?” asked Phyllis persuasively, both of her hands clasping his own.

“Will not your father listen to reason? Don't you see what an enormous, enormous difference it makes to us! To me as much as to any of you. You are sacrificing *me*. I have turned it over and over in my mind till I am sick and weary of it. Have you never thought of what such a change must mean for me?”

“I have thought of it, my dear one,” he said gently. “You are always first in my thoughts. But I must act according to my conscience.”

“I know you cannot say much about it,” she urged, “but shall I tell your father that I know all, and reason with him? He may be too excited to act wisely. Let me speak to him.”

“No! no!” he exclaimed, “there is but one course before us; my mother pointed it out clearly, but I hope I should have taken it of myself. Martin must come home with us to England, and we must do what we can to reclaim him, and fit him in some degree for the future. You must help us, Phyllis—you and Dorothy.”

“You had better go and tell Dorothy of her fine task, then,” said Phyllis peevishly.

Philip was not long in finding Dorothy, who had sauntered away, following the little tracks that crossed the open fields, to gather the wild flowers which were blooming in profusion. She saw him coming toward her, and retraced her steps to meet him. She had hardly spoken to him before, so eager had she been to carry the good news of his arrival to his father. Her face was lighted up with a very pleasant smile.

“How glad I am you are come back!” she exclaimed. “Your father has been so wretched and low-spirited. O Philip! is it true that Andrew Goldsmith’s daughter is found at last? How did she come here? and is she dead? and what had Mr. Martin to do with it? If I might only know the truth I should be so thankful.”

“I will tell you, Dorothy,” he said. “My father married Sophy Goldsmith when he was a young man about as old as myself. Secretly, for fear of his uncle; and they came here, as we did, out of Italy, thirty years ago. They quarreled, and he left her, expecting her to follow him; but she died, leaving a child behind her, and he never knew it.”

“He did not know that she was dead!” exclaimed Dorothy.

“He let things drift,” answered Philip with an unconscious accent of scorn, “because he was afraid of his uncle discarding him. He made no inquiries after her till he wanted to marry my mother; and then his messenger sent him word that Sophy Goldsmith was dead, but said nothing about the birth of their son. And my father was satisfied! But the child grew up here among these peasants. He was the man you saw at the *festa*, who was like Andrew Goldsmith.”

Dorothy walked on beside him in silence, and, somewhat surprised by it, Philip looked down into her half averted face, and saw the tears streaming down her cheeks.

“Oh, poor Andrew!” she sobbed at last;

“poor old man! And poor Sophy! How he has mourned for her! and how he has almost worshiped Mr. Martin! How will Andrew bear it, Philip? How can your father bear it?”

“He is all but broken-hearted,” he replied, “and so is my mother. They look already years older, Dorothy. It is we younger ones who must go to their help now. We must make them feel that the future will not be a failure, even after this blow. Why cannot we in part reclaim my brother? He can never be an educated man, not a civilized man according to our notions. But after all, civilization is as much a fashion as reality. He need not remain a brute or a savage. The grandson of Andrew Goldsmith and my father’s son must have something in him which will make him not altogether irreclaimable. You will help us, Dorothy?”

“Do you remember how wild and uneducated I was when your father found me?” she asked. “I know I can never have such dainty ways as Phyllis; and this poor fellow can never be like you. But he will improve as I have done.”

Philip could not help laughing as he looked at her, and thought of the rough, uncouth man his brother was. The tears filled her eyes again.

“I have seen him,” she continued, catching her breath, as if she could not quite control her sobs, “every night since we came back. Oh, how dreadful it is I cannot say; and I never thought he was Mr. Martin’s son. He is just like a wild creature prowling about the houses. The first

night I heard him I was awake, and I stole quite quietly on to the balcony, wondering if I should catch sight of a wolf down in the street, and there, in the moonlight, was a miserable man searching in the gutters for food. Ever since I have taken some bread from dinner and let it down to the ground just under my balcony, and he has come for it every night."

"Thank God!" cried Philip in an accent of unutterable pity and amazement; "then he is not dying of famine. And that is my brother!"

"I just spoke a word to him last night," she went on. "I spoke very softly. 'Poor man,' I said in Italian, and he lifted up his head and threw his hands above it. Then he ran away very swiftly, without making a sound."

"Oh, if my father had only known!" he said.

"I did not tell him, he seemed so absent," replied Dorothy; "but the poor fellow will come again to-night most likely. We will sit in the dark watching till he comes, and you can see him from my balcony. The moon rises later every night, but there will be light enough."

The vision he had seen the previous night had haunted Martin's dull brain all the day. He had stolen under the windows of the hotel, where he had never failed to find food from the first night he had sought it in the streets. Suddenly a white, quiet form, standing in the moonlight on the balcony above him, like some image of the Blessed Virgin, such as he had often seen in

shrines and churches, spoke to him in a low, soft, sweet voice, such a voice as the Blessed Virgin might have. The vision hardly frightened him, and yet he fled from it, and hurried back to his place of refuge. He pondered over it in a confused way all through the day. Legends of the apparition of angels, but more often of demons, had been told to him and the other children in his earliest days. It was not strange that such a blessed vision should be seen, but it was strange that it appeared to him, whose mother was accursed in hell. Was it possible that this white angel had come to tell him better news of his mother? Why had he fled so swiftly, when he felt so little fear of it? Would he see it again if he went down into the valley?

CHAPTER XLI.

MARGARET'S CONFLICT.

MARGARET had sent Philip back to the Ampezzo Valley as soon as she reached Berne, and before Rachel Goldsmith could join her there. The feeling that she had left her husband apparently in anger—though it was no ordinary anger that had possession of her—made her anxious that their son should return to him as soon as possible. Philip was disinclined to leave her; but they talked together quietly and fully of this terrible discovery, and of all its consequences, and she pointed out to him what, in her eyes, his path of duty clearly was. He must accept the past, with all its present outgrowth, and not make the harvest more bitter than it was by ineffectual reproaches and regrets. What did it really matter, for the brief span of this life, whether he passed through the world as a poor man or rich, distinguished or obscure? He was running the race set before him, and far other eyes than those of man were witnessing his career. Margaret, from her lofty point of view, was nearer Philip in his youthful idealism than Sidney could be, and his mother's counsels gave to him the courage and hopefulness which seemed to his father so strange and pathetic.

But Margaret herself was passing through the fiercest and most painful crisis of her life. The blow that had fallen had struck at the deepest roots of her being. It seemed as if she had linked her whole existence, down to its innermost fibers, with a nature absolutely at variance with it. This husband, whom she loved so perfectly, had been living all these years beside her a life of base treachery and dissimulation. She marveled as she thought of his daily intercourse with her maid Rachel, Sophy Goldsmith's aunt, and of his constant friendliness toward Andrew. How could he bear to see their grief and suspense, nay, even pretend to share it, and to pursue the search after their lost child? Was it possible that human nature contained such depths of duplicity? He had kept silence amid all their mourning, and made his silence seem full of sympathy. To be guilty of such infamy, for any reason whatever, seemed inexplicable to her. But to do it for the sake of money and position! If he had not owned it with his own lips, no force of accumulated evidence could have compelled her into belief.

Yet her heart was very tender toward him. His sin seemed to stain her own soul, so closely was she bound to him; for still she loved him. Rather she felt as if she loved him with a deeper fullness, because of her unutterable pity for his misery. She did not know for certain what he would do; but she would hope, even against hope, that he would pass through this gulf that lay between them, and reach her on the clear heights

from which she looked down upon his wrongdoing. He was fallen indeed; but she would rather be his wife than fill any other position in the world. He could never be less dear to her than he had always been.

She blamed herself for her too great reticence and silence as to her own spiritual experience. It was so sacred, and yet so natural to her, that she had rarely attempted to put it into words. If she loved her husband's soul it must show itself in deeds, not speech. Her love to God, her discipleship toward Jesus Christ, must be displayed in the same way; if those around her could not see it in her daily life, it would be useless to proclaim it. What she felt herself she attributed to others. God was nearer to every soul than any fellow-creature could be, and his dealings with each soul was wrapped in a veil impenetrable to the understanding or comprehension even of those closest and dearest to it. What God was saying to her husband's soul she could not know. And no action of Sidney's life had taught her that they were worlds apart in their spiritual experience.

Now she saw in a new light that sin which Christ denounced above all sins—hypocrisy. In a book she had read a short time before she had come across these sentences: "Howbeit now I know well that Jesus came not to prophesy smooth things, but to teach us the truth. Therefore was it most needful that he should speak the truth, and nothing less than the truth, con-

cerning the Pharisees, to the intent that the eyes of all mankind might be opened, even to the generation of generations, that they might discern that the sin of sins is hypocrisy. For other sins wound, but this sin slayeth, the conscience. Peradventure, also, Jesus foresaw that a time might come when certain even among his own disciples would err as the Pharisees erred, shutting their eyes against the truth, as being unfit and not convenient. He, also, that came to redeem all the children of men from all evil, was it not most necessary that he should make clear in the sight of all men what was the greatest evil? For if men knew it not, how could he redeem them from it?"

This had been Sidney's crowning sin. He had so acted a part that, unawares, he had grown to consider it his real nature; it had almost ceased to be hypocrisy, save in the sight of God, whose eye saw the false foundation on which the building was raised. For surely Sidney had not altogether feigned his enjoyment of the privileges and duties of Christianity. He had gone with her to the table of the Lord; he had given generously, not only of his wealth, but of his time and talents, to the service of his fellow-men. He had taken his stand in public life as a religious man. "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." This was the condemnation of her Lord against the man who was dearer to her than her own soul.

She felt that she was right in facing this crisis alone, free from the distracting affection of Sidney. To have stayed near him would have taxed her strength too heavily; for all life was under an eclipse! Was it not an abiding darkness, which could not pass away on this side of the grave? Was he not in an abyss of gloom, into which she must go down, and dwell with him there? Gloom and sorrow and remorse she would share with him, but not the infamy of a new sin.

Even in the deepest abyss God would be with her. This was the hope she clung to. She recalled the vision she once had of the love of God. There was absolutely no limit, no change, in that Divine love, though it might take the form of an apparent vengeance. "Even in hell thou art there!" she said, and she felt strong enough to go down to the nethermost depths, if underneath her she were still to feel the Everlasting Arms.

The nethermost depth to her would be to separate herself from Sidney. But if he persisted in carrying out his threat, and being guilty of this new iniquity, even if her heart broke she would no longer live with him. She knew what the world would say of it: that it was only a foolish woman's jealousy and prejudice, a straining at a gnat, if she could not forgive so boyish a sin as that of which he would seem to have been guilty. But she took no account of the world. If he persisted in his threatened injustice to Sophy's memory, if he brought this bitter shame upon the heads of her dear old friends, it would be a base

act of perfidy, showing him absolutely unrepentant toward God and man. It would be impossible to her to resume her former wifeness with him.

Rachel Goldsmith could not be ignorant of the fact that her beloved mistress was passing through some great sorrow. But she was a reticent woman, with great natural refinement, and she said nothing either to express her own sympathy or to lead Margaret to confide her troubles to her. She was older than her mistress by fifteen years, and she cared for no one in the world so much as for Margaret and her two sons. Philip and Hugh had grown up under her eyes, and she was almost like a second mother to them. To her strong affection was added that loyal and faithful respect with which an old servant looks upon the future masters.

Margaret spent most of her time in her own room in the hotel at Berne, through the windows of which she could see the wonderful range of snowy Alps, that stretched across the horizon, and, catching the evening light, looks so unearthly in its marvelous purity and beauty. It seemed to her as if beyond those white and rosy peaks lay "the land that is very far off." That strong yearning to be gone thither, safely shut in from the vanities and vexations of life, so often expressed in old Latin hymns, had taken possession of her, and it seemed to her as if she had only to will, to rise up, and cross over the invisible threshold of the other life. Should she go or

stay? The choice was almost given to her. Would she depart at this moment, and be forever with the Lord? Or would she stay to fight the sore battle her beloved ones were engaged in? "Let me stay!" she said half aloud.

At that moment Rachel entered the room quietly with a letter. It was a thick packet, addressed to her in her husband's handwriting, and Margaret opened it with trembling fingers. A number of yellow, time-stained pages fell from it as she seized a little note written by Sidney.

"My Margaret," he said, "I have seen my son, and I will acknowledge him. But unless you stand by me my punishment will be greater than I can bear. I am like a man walking in darkness amid pitfalls, without guidance. I will be guided by you. Do not forsake me, my wife. The letter I enclose was written thirty years ago by Sophy to Rachel. Would to God it had been sent to her then! To-night we expect to find Martin, who has fled from us to the mountains."

Margaret gathered up the scattered leaves, and called to Rachel, who was just leaving her again alone.

"Rachel!" she cried, "I can tell you my sorrow and my secret now. It concerned you more than me, perhaps. And yet, no; it cannot, it cannot. We have found out what has become of Sophy."

"Oh, it is Mr. Martin!" exclaimed Rachel; "God bless him! I knew he would find it out

some day; and how shall we ever thank him for it, Andrew and me?"

"Hush! hush!" said Margaret; "it is too dreadful. Rachel, he sends you this letter, which Sophy wrote to you before she died, thirty years ago, and he says, 'Would to God it had been sent to you then!' Take it away to read it: I cannot bear to see you reading it."

Rachel carried the faded letter away. She was an old woman now, with white hair, and eyes that were failing a little, and needing a brighter light than when Sophy had written that long letter. But she remembered Sophy's handwriting well, and tears blinded her dim eyes. Oh, what anguish of heart would have been saved them if this letter had but reached them thirty years ago! It was the suspense of the long, long years that had broken Andrew's spirit, and made an old man of him while still in the prime of life. Many fathers lose a beloved child by death, and they lay them in the grave, and go their way, and presently the sharp grief is healed. But he had lost her more cruelly, by that cruelest way, an unaccountable and mysterious disappearance. It was well to make the discovery of her fate even now; but if it had only been made thirty years ago!

Rachel read the letter slowly, gathering in its many new impressions vaguely, like one puzzled and bewildered. It seemed a confusion to her. Who could this Sidney be of whom Sophy wrote—this young man who had deserted her in a pas-

sion, as it appeared, just the thoughtless passion of a young man? Sophy's temper had often been very provoking, and she freely confessed that she had provoked him out of all patience. Sidney? She knew only one man of that name.

And he was Sidney Martin, her master, the husband of her idolized mistress. He was the rich man, the magistrate, the member of Parliament, who belonged to quite another world from that lower world in which she and Andrew lived, the world to which Sophy had belonged. To think of him in connection with this young man, Sophy's husband, who had deserted her, was impossible; it was an unjustifiable liberty—a crime.

She put the letter down and took up some sewing, as if she could think more clearly while her fingers were busy. But her hands trembled too much, and a crowd of memories came rushing through her brain. O Sophy! Sophy! how sad an end to come to with your willful ways and foolish fancies! Dying there, alone, among strangers, who did not know what you were saying with your dying lips! No hand you knew to hold your hand as it grew cold, and no voice you could understand to speak words of comfort as you went down, step by step, into the chill river of death! Alone! utterly alone!

Then she read the letter again. And now the name came clearly to her—Sidney Martin. There must be some other man, then, of that name. It was incredible that Mr. Martin, who had joined

them in their search and inquiry with such friendly sympathy, could have held the knowledge of her fate in his own heart. She thought of all his kindness to Andrew and herself—a kindness that had never failed. Yet—Sidney Martin! And a secret marriage! It was he, too, who had sent her this letter, and a strange message with it. If this could be true, what would be the end of it?

She made her way to Margaret's room with trembling limbs and a sinking heart. Margaret was still sitting where she had left her, with her face toward the window; but it was dark, and the long range of mountains, that seemed only a little while ago the glistening boundary of a brighter world, lay pallid as death against the somber sky.

“Miss Margaret!” cried Rachel in a voice of sorrowful uncertainty.

Margaret stood up and stretched out her arms, and the two women clung to one another in a passionate embrace, which seemed to knit together all the joys and sorrows of their lifelong affection. Rachel knew that her dreaded surmise was true.

CHAPTER XLII.

CAPTURED.

THAT night, at Cortina, Sidney was watching in the hope of capturing his son. Philip was with him, concealed in a dependance opposite to the hotel, ready to intercept Martin if he took fright, or to pursue him if he made his escape. Phyllis and Dorothy sat in their dark room, with the window open that they might step noiselessly on to the balcony.

Phyllis had not seen Martin ; and no description given of him by Philip and Dorothy led her to imagine him in any way different from the peasants who inhabited the cottages near the little town. That he was rougher and less civilized did not for a moment enter her brain. She noticed these mountain laborers closely, wondering which of them would be most like her unknown cousin, who so greatly altered her own future prospects. It was plain to her that Philip and Margaret were Quixotic enough to acknowledge the claim of this deserted son of a lowborn mother to his rights as the eldest son and heir of his father, but she was not sure of what Sidney meant to do. He might still listen to reason and common sense. But she began to wonder, with a sinking heart as she thought of marrying a comparatively poor man, how soon and how

much would this usurper acquire a fitness for his distinguished position.

To Sidney, the cheerful loyalty with which Philip came to aid him to rescue his son was full of reproach. He felt, too, that Dorothy and Philip were taking the affair out of his hands, and that his part was almost a passive one, that of a spectator. These young creatures who a few months ago looked up to him as an infallible oracle and the arbiter of their lives, now stood beside him, nay, even before him, covering with the strength of their youthful hopes, and their certainty of success, the feebleness of his own doubtful and perplexed judgment. They talked of Martin as though sure of redeeming him from his ignorance and savagery, and fitting him to fill the position he was born to ; while Sidney could see in him only a man whose habits of mind and body were unalterably rooted, a monster to whom he had given life, and who was about to become his master. They, youthful and idealistic, with no knowledge of the world, and but little of their own nature, were ardently pursuing their object, blind to what he saw so clearly, the long monotony of slowly passing years to come, when Martin, with his ingrained savagery, would become a daily burden, full of care and shame to all of them. If only he could save Margaret and his boys from that burden !

The long, silent hours of watching passed on, and Phyllis grew fretful with the tedium of waiting. Every quarter of an hour sounding from the clock tower made the time seem longer. The

stars glittered in the almost frosty sky ; and the moon, now waning, threw a sad, white light upon the sleeping town. There had been no sound for an hour or more, when at last a stealthy, creeping footfall reached their straining ears. The two girls stole silently to the balcony, and leaned cautiously over the parapet. In the dim light Phyllis saw a wild, half naked creature, bare-headed, with long, rough hair matted about his face, scraping together the fragments of food thrown out into the street for the dogs. It was a horrible sight to her, and she uttered a low scream as she fled back into the room, which startled his frightened ears. He was darting away when Dorothy called to him : “ Martino ! ”

It was his own name that this white vision of an angel was calling ; and he hesitated in his intended flight, looking up again to see if she was still there, and did not vanish away.

“ Martino ! ” she said again in her foreign accent, “ we are your friends. ”

“ Si, signora, ” he answered.

“ Martino ! ” repeated a friendly voice beside him, and he felt a hand laid gently on his bare arm, “ we are your friends. ”

He turned round with a start of terror ; but the face he met was that of the young English gentleman whom he had seen a few days ago, before Chiara died, and who had given him the silver coin, which he carried carefully concealed in his rags. He knelt down again to him, laid his hands on his feet, muttering and mumbling

his recognition and delight. Philip glanced round to the dark doorway where his father stood unseen. What must he be suffering in seeing such a sight as this?

“Get up, Martino,” he said, trying to raise him from his abject posture, “we are your friends,” he repeated, at a loss for words. “Father,” he continued in a low voice, “come and speak to him. You know his language better than I do. Oh! if I could only make him understand how much my mother and I pity him!”

Sidney approached his sons cautiously. For a moment Martin stood as if about to take a sudden flight; but the sight of an Englishman alone pacified him; there was no need to be afraid of him. They were very rich, these English; Chiara had always said so; they could give him enough money to buy the right of building a little hut for himself in some place on the mountains, where he could keep goats and sheep. He stood quietly, therefore, watching them from under his shaggy eyebrows, while Philip still held him by a slight yet firm grasp, of which he was unconscious, so light his touch was. They waited, both of them in silence, for their father to speak.

But Sidney could not speak. He had seen Martin for only one moment before, when he fled past him from the infuriated mob that had burnt Chiara's hut over his head. Now he stood close beside him: a strongly built man, with thews and sinews of iron, yet worn looking, with

bowed shoulders and stooping head, as though even his great strength had been overtaxed with too many labors and hardships. His squalid face, the almost brutish dullness of its expression, the untamed savagery of his whole appearance, were too revolting to Sidney. Here was his own folly, his own sin personified. He could have hated this monster but for the remembrance of Margaret.

“Mr. Martin,” said Dorothy’s clear young voice from the balcony overhead, “take him into the dependance, and tell him he must sleep there to-night, and you will talk to him in the morning. See, I have some food in this satchel. And Philip will keep watch lest he should try to escape. I am so glad we have found the poor fellow.”

“The signora says you must stay here to-night,” repeated Philip, as he saw Martin looking up at Dorothy, and listening attentively to her unknown language, “and to-morrow we will show you we are friends.”

“Are the signori rich?” asked Martin.

“Very rich,” answered Philip.

“Will the signori give money to me?” he asked again.

“As much as you like,” said Sidney, “if you will obey me.”

“As much money as Chiara had?” he rejoined.

“More,” replied Sidney.

“Then I will obey you,” he said, with a rough laugh.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A POOR MAN.

BUT now that Martin was captured, what was to be done with him? Sidney found that the immediate direction of affairs was taken out of his hands by these young people, who had been but children yesterday. Martin attached himself to Philip, as a dog attaches itself to some chosen master, and followed him about, obeying all his commands with a doglike fidelity. He squatted in a corner of the room while Philip took his meals, and the next night he stretched himself on the floor of Philip's bedroom across the doorway, as if to guard him. At Dorothy's sensible suggestion the garb of a peasant of the better class was procured for him, and he put it on with an air of pride in spite of its discomfort.

"It would be nonsense to dress him like you, Philip," she said sagaciously; "he would look ridiculous. It must all come by degrees, as it did to me. I was quite a wild girl when your father found me; and I know how miserable poor Martin will feel at first, especially when we go away from here. It will be like another world to him."

"We cannot go till Phyllis is quite well," said Philip anxiously.

For Phyllis had been overcome by the shock of finding Martin such a monster, and by the apparent determination of his father to own him as his heir. She was keeping to her room, and filling Philip's heart with dire anxiety and concern. Only Dorothy saw her, and to her she maintained an ominous silence.

"I think," said Dorothy, "that if he went to Brackenburn first, not to Apley, it would be best for him. There are so few people about, and the moors lie all around, where he could roam about just as he liked, and nobody to notice him. Brackenburn will belong to him some day, and he will grow accustomed to it. When he is a little more like an English gentleman he may go to Apley."

"I will suggest it to my father," replied Philip.

"He will go peaceably with you as your servant," resumed Dorothy, "and it is better to let him think himself so just at first. The sooner you start the better. But not with us; Sir Sidney will take care of Phyllis and me."

"I cannot start till Phyllis is well," he said.

But in a day or two Philip saw the necessity of taking Martin away immediately. All the valley became acquainted with the strange circumstance that Chiara's drudge was the son of a wealthy Englishman, who had come to claim him as soon as he heard of Chiara's death. Everyone sought an opportunity of seeing Martin, and of speaking to him. The richer people addressed

him in a half joking manner ; but the peasants, especially his old neighbors, paid him servile attention. The woman who had scorned and flouted at him as a pariah, when he dared to love her, haunted his footsteps. Martin himself strutted to and fro in the village street, proud of his new garb, and bearing heroically the pain his strong, high boots gave him ; and the third night after they had captured him Philip found him lying dead drunk in one of the lowest inns in Cortina. It was full time to remove him from his old surroundings.

Sidney accepted the plans proposed by Philip and Dorothy with a sort of numb pain. He was no longer worthy to be their guide, and they were softly yet unconsciously setting him on one side. The burden was falling on their shoulders ; and how readily, how courageously they were bearing it ! There was as subtle a change in Dorothy as in Philip, inasmuch as there was an undertone of pity for him in all she said and did—a pity that was taking the place of the pride she had hitherto felt in him. She was very gentle and tender in her manner, hovering about him, and volunteering her companionship when he was setting out on the lonely walks with which he made away his time. But Sidney felt that all at once, in the prime of his life, his career was over. An ever increasing sense of separation and isolation crept over him : Sophy and her son stood between him and every other relationship. Possibly his public career would not greatly

alter ; his days in the city would pass pretty much as they had done. He would amass more money, and be thought well of as a rich man. But at home all was changed. His beloved son was no longer his firstborn ; and even Margaret must feel keenly that Sophy had been his wife before she was.

The plan of traveling homeward in two parties was a wise one, for it would not do to subject two young girls like Phyllis and Dorothy to any annoyance from Martin's extreme savagery. Philip, too, acknowledged the prudence of Dorothy's suggestion, though it parted him from Phyllis, who gave him permission to see her on the eve of his departure with Martin.

She was sitting in a large, high-backed chair, covered with crimson velvet, against which her pale cheeks looked whiter, and her face more delicate, than they had ever done, and she spoke in a faint and languid voice, as if the exertion was too much for her.

“ You will not be long after me, my darling ? ” he said anxiously. “ I would have given all I have to have saved you this sorrow ; and yet it is a comfort to me that you have been here. Now you know all about it, just as you have known all my life hitherto. There were never two people, not being brother and sister, who knew all about the other as you and I do.”

“ But, Philip,” she asked languidly, “ what do you suppose your future life will be now ? ”

“ Oh ! I must go into my father's business,” he

answered, "and set to work seriously. Or if my father would give his consent I should like most of all to walk the hospitals, and become a surgeon. I should like to be a famous surgeon."

"Good gracious, Philip!" she exclaimed, roused by such a proposition out of her listlessness; "and am I to be a doctor's wife? A doctor's wife, only having the brougham when you are not visiting your patients! And you would never be sure of going out with me. Perhaps I should not be in society at all!"

"Perhaps not," he replied, "but you will be my own Phyllis always."

"A fine compensation," she said, pouting and shrugging her shoulders. "I don't know what my mother will say about it all."

"But your father?" suggested Philip, with a smile.

She was silent for a minute, and her face clouded.

"He will say I am less worthy of you than ever," she replied gravely. "Oh, yes! my father will be on your side; he is as incautious as any of you. But I never thought your father would be so rash. You think you know me, Philip, but all you are doing proves that you are mistaken; you do not know me at all. I could never, never marry a poor man, however much I loved him. And you will be poor."

"Poor!" he repeated, "no, no! I shall not be a rich landowner, but I shall have ample means for all your wants and my own. We shall be

poorer than my brothers, of course, but not as poor as yours. They have their living to get, and so have I."

"It is not all quite settled yet?" she said plaintively.

"What is not settled?" he inquired.

"Nobody knows yet but ourselves," she continued; "everything is not lost. No one can know unless you proclaim it. I have been thinking all day long while I have been lying ill, and I see all the ruin and misery it will bring upon you all. The monster himself will be wretched; if you wish to secure his happiness you should leave him here. Taking him off to England would be ridiculous."

"There is nothing else to be done," said Philip briefly.

But he left Cortina in charge of Martin with a heavier heart for this conversation with Phyllis. The clumsy form and uncouth gestures of Martin, who refused any other seat than the box of the carriage, struck him the more forcibly now they were starting on their way to England. He looked a middle-aged man, scarcely younger than his father. Would it be possible to mold him, even by little and little, by the slowest degrees, into anything like the form of an English gentleman? It was too late for that.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SOPHY'S SON.

RACHEL GOLDSMITH heard the full story of Martin from Margaret's lips as far as she knew it herself. She listened to Margaret's description of the poor wretch, standing aloof from all his neighbors, and not daring to enter the church, or to join the procession in the great *festa*; and she shed many tears over the fate of Sophy's son. But it did not once enter her mind that this unknown nephew of hers would usurp the place of the young heir, whom she loved with a passionate devotion. When Margaret began to speak of it she interrupted her hurriedly.

"Oh, no, no!" she cried; "his grandfather and me would not hear a word of such a thing! It's a good thing that our Sophy was married rightly, and that's quite enough. That will satisfy Andrew and me. Let him come to us, poor fellow, and we will provide for him. Andrew has saved money, and so have I. It would never do, my lady, for Sophy's son to live at the Hall in Mr. Philip's place."

"But we cannot hinder it," said Margaret, smiling somewhat sadly; "since Martin is my husband's eldest son, he must inherit the estates entailed upon him. But, Rachel, it is not his

poverty we must deliver him from, it is his ignorance. He has never known what love is, and we must make him know it. He knows nothing yet of God, and we must teach him. We have to reclaim him from heathen darkness, possibly from heathen sinfulness. All his past thirty years have to be atoned for, and no one can do it as we can—his father, and his brothers, and I.”

“Couldn’t Andrew and me do it?” asked Rachel.

“Do you think you can?” rejoined Margaret. “My husband was guilty of the wrong; who else can put it right?”

“Will you wait till I can speak to Andrew?” she asked again.

“It can make no difference,” answered Margaret; “Andrew’s grandson is my husband’s eldest son.”

But all the way homeward Rachel was pondering over the way in which she should tell Andrew these tidings, and in what manner it could be managed that Mr. Philip should not be dethroned. Though Margaret talked little about it, Rachel saw that her spirits flagged, and that she was more sorrowful than she had ever seen her before. Margaret and her boys filled all Rachel’s heart. In early days Sophy had always been a trouble and perplexity to her, though the sadness and mystery of her fate had made her forget all these cares. Sophy’s son was coming to be a still greater trouble and perplexity to her in her old age. By dint of casual questions

asked of Margaret at odd times, Rachel drew to herself a picture of her great-nephew which filled her with dismay. A man who could neither read nor write, who went about in rags, bare-headed and barefooted—above all, a man who, if he prayed at all, prayed to images; such was the usurper who was about to seize Philip's birth-right.

The evening of the day when Margaret and she arrived at Apley, Rachel set off to tell her brother of Sophy's fate. The little street, so familiar to her all her life, seemed to put on a strange aspect as she sometimes hurried, and sometimes lingered, along it, in the unusual tumult of her spirit, which was eager, yet afraid, to tell her news. At last, the small, low window of the shop, and the three hollowed stone steps leading to the door, were reached. The old journeyman, grown old and infirm in their service, was putting up the shutters, and the bell tinkled loudly as he went in and out through the half open door. She was just in time to enter and pass through the darkened shop unheard, to the kitchen behind it.

It looked very homelike and cozy to her, much more so than the grand rooms at the Hall. Though it was summer a clear fire was burning in the grate, and its dancing light flickered pleasantly on the polished oak of the dresser and the old clock, and on the brass candlesticks and pewter dishes, shining like silver, ranged on the dresser shelves. Andrew sat in a three-cornered

chair inside the chimney nook, resting himself with an air of tranquil comfort now the shop was closed and the day's business done. He was a hale looking old man, with a good deal of strength in him still, though his hair, which had turned gray thirty years ago, was now of a silvery whiteness. In Rachel's eyes he looked little older, and far happier, than he had done thirty years ago.

"So you've come back again from foreign parts," said Andrew, greeting her cordially, after her sister Mary had kissed her again and again. "You're welcome back, Rachel; but it's been only a flying visit, not more than a week or so. I wonder the quality don't get worn out with flying about like that."

"It was business this time," she answered gravely, "not pleasure. You're quite well, Brother Andrew? You've got no rheumatism such weather as this?"

"Not a twinge of it," he said. "I never reckoned on being a strong old man like this. Thanks to the folks at the Hall, Mr. Martin, and Mr. Philip, and Mr. Hugh, and Miss Margaret most of all. If ever folks mended a broken heart, they've mended mine, God bless them!"

"Ay! God bless them," she echoed in a tremulous voice. "Brother Andrew, do you often think of Sophy now?"

"Often think of Sophy now!" he repeated; "ay! every day, every hour! When you came through the shop, I thought, 'Suppose that is my

girl!' She may come home yet, Rachel. Some night, when all the shops are shut, and the neighbors safe indoors, she'll steal in and ask if she may come home again. If it wasn't for thinking she might do that, I'd have quitted the old house years ago ; but I've stayed on for fear she might come back and find no home, and be ashamed of inquiring where we've gone to. I think of Sophy!" he murmured in a tone of wonder and reproach.

"She would be a gray-haired woman now, fifty years old," said Mary; "we should hardly know her."

"Then you don't give up the hopes of finding her?" asked Rachel.

"Never!" he answered. "I've asked Almighty God thousands and thousands of times to let me live till I knew what had become of her. And I've pleaded his promises with him, and I cannot think he'll disappoint me. I am sure I shall know before I die."

"But it might be best for you not to know," she suggested.

"But I chose to know it," he said, a gleam of almost insane excitement burning in his deep-set eyes, "I chose to know it. I did not leave it with God. I said, 'Let me know even if it kills me. Let me know if I go down to hell to find her.' I say so now. Rachel," he cried in a loud and agitated voice, "have you come to tell me something? Have you found her? Do you know anything about my girl?"

He sprang up and seized her hands in his own. They were both old people, with but few years to live, yet at this moment they felt as if they were thirty years younger, and in the early prime of their days, when Sophy had disappeared, and the trouble first crushed them. If she had opened the door and entered among them with her pretty face and saucy manner, they would have seen her without a shadow or touch of surprise.

“Yes, I have heard of her,” said Rachel breathlessly.

Andrew fell back in his chair, and his withered face went ashy pale. He only cried, as if to himself, “My God! my God!”

“But, Brother Andrew,” continued Rachel in a forced, monotonous manner, “she is dead. Sophy died thirty years ago.”

“Sophy died thirty years ago!” he repeated, gazing at her with dim eyes, from which all the light had faded.

“Very far away, in foreign parts,” went on Rachel; “and before she died—the very day before she died—she wrote a letter to me, a long letter, that was never sent.”

“Died thirty years ago,” murmured Andrew, as if his brain could understand nothing more.

“Rachel,” said Mary eagerly, “just sit down and tell us all about it. Have you brought the letter? Was she married? Who did she run away with? Be quiet, and tell.”

“First,” answered Rachel, “I want to know

if you can forgive the man who persuaded her to run away, Brother Andrew?"

"No! no!" he exclaimed.

"Not if he were a mere boy, like our Mr. Philip, who did not know the harm he did?" urged Rachel.

"If he married her," he said hesitatingly.

"Oh, he married her," replied Rachel.

Andrew's white head sank into his hands, and the tears trickled slowly down his face. Sophy had been married. For the sting of his sorrow had been the dread that his child had lost her innocence. The tears he shed were tears of gladness and thankfulness. True, she was dead; but he, too, would soon die, and he would meet her with no shame upon her head. He was not afraid of dying now, for the secret he dreaded had been revealed to him. Rachel drew out of her pocket Sophy's letter, and laid it on the little round table, where a candle was lighted.

"But who did she run away with?" asked Mary. "If you know she was married, you know who she was married to."

"Yes," she answered, sighing heavily; "he was no older than Mr. Philip, a mere boy, with no thought of the harm he did. He'd been visiting at the Hall, and saw our Sophy, and he ran away with her and married her. It was Mr. Martin himself."

"Mr. Martin!" exclaimed both Andrew and Mary at the same moment.

Across Andrew's mind came the recollections

of the last twenty-three years. Sidney had seen and known all their sorrow and bewilderment; he had seemed to share it; he had diligently aided them in their inquiries, and all the time he knew! At any moment he could have rolled the burden off their hearts. He, who had seemed their friend and benefactor, had been the very enemy they were seeking. The gloomy and fierce light blazed again in Andrew's sunken eyes, and he raised his arm, trembling with excitement, and looked mournfully at it, as if he was stricken with palsy.

"Would to God my right arm was what it used to be!" he cried. "But I'm an old, worn-out, broken-down man, with no strength left. I've only strength to cry night and day upon God to avenge me. And he will avenge me."

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed Rachel. "In cursing him you curse those who are dear to us as Sophy was. You curse Philip and Hugh, and our own Miss Margaret. And you love them."

"Yes, I love them," he replied fiercely; "but not like my own girl. You don't know what it is to have given life to a child, and see her life destroyed by another man. It tugs at my very heartstrings. Oh, my Sophy!"

He dropped his head again so that they could not see his face. But his shrunk and trembling hands were clenched till the sinews stood out white and rigid, and his bent shoulders heaved with deep and bitter sobs. It was the treachery

of his idolized master which was burning his wrongs into his very soul.

“But he is punished more than you could punish him,” said Rachel, “for Sophy left a child behind her, a son, and my lady says he is heir in place of Mr. Philip.”

“How can that be?” he asked, looking up with a puzzled gaze.

“Because Sophy was Mr. Martin’s first wife,” she continued, “before our Miss Margaret; and Sir John Martin’s estates in Yorkshire are settled on his eldest son. Sophy’s child is a man of thirty now, and my lady says he must be the squire when Mr. Martin dies.”

“Sophy’s son is my grandson,” said Andrew, after a long pause.

“Yes,” answered Mary.

“Then where is he?” he asked impatiently. “I want to see Sophy’s son. I must see that he gets his rights. My grandson will be the squire some day. But I shall not live to see it, and then Mr. Martin will cheat him, as he has cheated me.”

“No,” said Rachel, “Mr. Martin owns him, and they are bringing him home from the far-off place where Mr. Philip found him. But, Brother Andrew, it would be best for him not to take Philip’s place. Think of it! You and me aren’t fit to be the grandfather and the aunt of Mr. Martin’s heir. We shall have nothing to do with him; he cannot come and visit us here in this little house, and we couldn’t go and visit him at

the Hall. We shall all be upset, and he will be no more than a stranger to us, though he is Sophy's son."

"But I shall be proud of him," answered Andrew. "I shall like to see him ride past the shop window, like Mr. Philip does. And when he lifts his hat and smiles at me, as Mr. Philip does, I shall say, 'That's Sophy's son, my grandson.' Ah! and Mr. Martin will be finely punished. What is his name, Rachel?"

"They christened him Martino," she replied; "he will be Martino Martin."

"Martino Martin," he repeated; "that is my grandson! He will be squire of Brackenburn, but *I* shall never see it. I shall be dead before then; we shall all be gone. But he will be a rich man—richer than Mr. Philip."

"You always said you loved Mr. Philip as if he was your own," said Rachel sadly.

"Ay! but this is different," he answered; "this one is really my own flesh and blood. He belongs to me, and I belong to him. I shall see Sophy again in him. Mr. Philip calls me 'Goldsmith,' but he will call me 'grandfather.' As soon as he comes home, and has a horse to suit him, I will make him such a saddle as the highest gentleman in the land might covet. I long to see him—as fine a gentleman as them all."

"But you forgive Mr. Martin?" asked Rachel.

"Forgive him!" he exclaimed. "Forgive a traitor like him! A man who pretends to be your friend, and comforts you for the sorrow he is

making! Forgive him for stealing away my only child, and hiding my grandson away in foreign parts! Forgive him all these years of grief which almost broke my heart! Why should I forgive him?"

"Because you pray to God to forgive you as you forgive others," she said.

"But I've never trespassed against God," he answered, "as this man has trespassed against me, God Himself being the judge. Let me be for a while. Perhaps some day, when I see my grandson riding by with gentlemen like himself, rich, and prosperous, and happy, and, maybe, a member of Parliament, then I may by chance forgive his father. But I cannot do it now—not now. I've a great deal to sum up and get over before I can forgive him."

Late on in the night Andrew Goldsmith was poring and brooding over every word in Sophy's letter. He lived over again the years of distraction, bordering upon insanity, which had intervened between Sophy's disappearance and the return of Colonel Cleveland to the Hall with his daughter Margaret and her husband Sidney Martin. He called back the memory of the singular fascination Mr. Martin had exercised over him; and his old, troubled heart was very sore as he thought of all his loyal friendship to the man who had so deeply wronged him. "And he was my son-in-law all the time," he said to himself. If he had owned his marriage, and brought his son to his own house to be

educated as his heir, Andrew would gladly have kept in the background, content with an occasional sight of his grandson. But now he would spread the story far and wide. Mr. Martin, who had been ashamed of his lowly marriage, should be more bitterly ashamed of his treacherous secrecy. His love for Margaret and her sons was swallowed up in his hatred of her husband, his own son-in-law.

CHAPTER XLV.

BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.

NOTHING could exceed the rage of Andrew Goldsmith when he heard that his grandson was about to be taken to Yorkshire, instead of being brought to Apley. What measures he had expected Sidney Martin to take in order publicly to acknowledge Sophy's son he hardly knew. But to send him to so distant a spot, without any open recognition of his rights, was a step that filled the old man with suspicion. Sidney came back to Apley, but Andrew refused to see him, feeling that it was impossible to forgive his enemy, and equally impossible to control his impotent wrath. Sidney passed up and down the village street daily, but Andrew sat no longer in his shop, for fear of catching a passing sight of the prosperous traitor, whom he could not punish. He would not even see Margaret or Dorothy. He held himself altogether aloof even from his sister Rachel, who was so completely on his enemies' side.

In a few days after Sidney's return Mary told him that his grandson had reached Brackenburn, and that Philip was staying with him. His indignation and suspicion made him restless to see Sophy's son with his own eyes, and to confer

with him as to the claiming of his rights. An attorney in the neighborhood, whose opinion he asked, advised him to go down into Yorkshire without letting the family know of his purpose. He told Mary that he was going away on business for a few days, and she and Rachel rejoiced that he could give his mind to business at such a time. They, too, were anxious and overcurious to see their great-nephew, but it did not occur to either of them that their brother should undertake any secret enterprise. By and by, when Martin was getting a little used to the change in his surroundings, Margaret intended to go to Brackenburn herself, taking Dorothy and Rachel with her. But for the present all agreed that it was best to leave Martin to free and unrestrained wanderings about the moors.

Andrew traveled northward with excited and extravagant visions of his grandson. He could think of Mr. Martin's eldest son and heir only as being like Philip and Hugh—young men whom he had always regarded with mingled deference, admiration, and affection. He had been proud of “the two young gentlemen from the Hall.” This elder brother of theirs no doubt resembled them, though he was his grandson.

His heart was full of tenderness toward his lost Sophy's child, as passionate as the bitter resentment he felt against Sidney. It would be impossible to say which was the stronger. His whole nature was in a tumult. The keen and profound anger he felt against Sidney when his

mind brooded over his treacherous friendship to himself, alternated with a still keener exultation as the thought flashed across him that he was Sidney's father-in-law, and the grandfather of his heir. He, the old saddler of Apley, insignificant and poor, was still the grandfather of the future squire. He wished that Sophy's son had been the heir to Apley, which was a finer place than Brackenburn. What a glory and a joy it would have been to pace down the village street and up the broad avenue to his grandson's Hall! Though this glory could never be his, his spirit was greatly exalted within him at the thought of his grandson being the owner of Brackenburn in the future.

He walked the few miles between the station and Brackenburn, for he was a vigorous old man, and not accustomed to hiring conveyances. But he was tired by the time he reached the point in the road from which the black and white, half timber house was first visible. It disappointed him more now than it had done before, when he visited it on Philip's coming of age. This old, irregular pile of buildings, with its many gables and the old golden-gray stone wall shutting it in, which so delighted Dorothy and Philip, contrasted unfavorably in Andrew's eyes with the massive frontage and mullioned windows of Apley Hall. It seemed more than ever a studied and suspicious injustice to hide his grandson out of the way in this solitary farmhouse.

From the point where he stood the great

moors, putting on their robes of purple heather and golden gorse, could be seen stretching behind the house up to the horizon. It was early in July, and the midsummer sun lighted up the undulating ground, displaying every patch of bracken and of gorse, with the rough, jagged teeth of rock thrusting themselves upward everywhere in their midst. To Andrew's eyes, accustomed to southern cultivation, the moors seemed a dreary and wild desert, fit only for tramps and gypsies to squat in. He could see no path across them; the road on which he stood ran down to the house in the dingle, but stopped there. All the deserted region beyond was bare and trackless moorland. It seemed to check his exalted visions of his grandson's glory. This place was the inheritance of Sophy's son.

But he would see him righted, if Sidney meant to wrong him. This deserted child should not be cheated of his birthright. He strode down the long road in the hot afternoon sunshine, weary and sore at heart. But he was about to see his grandson, and to tell him, if no one had yet told him, of the prosperous future that lay before him, of the riches that had been accumulating for him, of the place he would take in England. All his suspicions and bitterness did not prevent his troubled heart from beating with high hopes, or his aged frame from trembling with eagerness to embrace his daughter's son.

He approached the house with some caution, for in spite of his love for Philip he could not

shake off the misgiving that he would be willing to supplant his unwelcome elder brother. The high, gray wall which surrounded the house hid him from sight until he reached the double gates hung upon massive stone pillars. Beyond them lay the forecourt, paved with broad slabs of stone, and opposite to the gates stood the wide, hospitable wooden porch, which protected the heavy house door, studded with nails. Andrew paused for a minute or two, gazing through the iron gates. On the steps of the porch lay a man basking in the sunshine like a dog. He had kicked off his boots, which lay at a little distance from him, and his bare feet were stretched out on the heated pavement. They were bruised and scarred, as if they had never been protected against winter frosts, or the piercing of sharp rocks. This man's hands were even worse than his feet: misshapen, clumsy, frost-bitten, covered with warts and corns, one finger altogether gone, and his nails worn down into the hard skin. His face wore the same disfiguring marks of constant exposure to extreme changes of heat and frost. His front teeth were gone, and his skin furrowed with coarse wrinkles. His hair was cut short, but it was scanty, tangled, and matted. Many an English tramp would have looked a gentleman beside him. Andrew gazed at this strange figure with curiosity. Probably this man, if he belonged to the place, as he seemed to do, for he was comfortably smoking a pipe, was one of his grandson's foreign servants. Yet he looked too

uncivilized, too savage to be even a servant. He ought not to be lying there in front of the house—the stables were too good for him. Down south, nearer London, no gentleman would put up with such a scarecrow about his place. But his clothes were good, though he had divested himself of most of them, and laid them under his head as a pillow. Martin must learn that such a rough fellow must not lie on his front doorstep.

Passing through the gates, Andrew approached this wild figure with somewhat slow and hesitating steps. No one else was in sight to whom he could speak, and all the sunny house seemed asleep, except this strange, uncouth man. But there was something in the sad, marred face which appealed to his very heart; a dumb, pathetic appealing gaze, such as looks out of the eyes of a dog, and that seems yearning to express in words the feelings that lie forever imprisoned in his almost human nature. The eyes of the stranger, gleaming from under his shaggy eyebrows, looked into his own with a gaze that was familiar to him. It shook Andrew to his inmost soul.

“Who are you?” he asked hurriedly. “You cannot be anybody I ever saw before. I am come to see Mr. Martin, Sidney Martin’s eldest son. Where is he?”

The man rose to his feet and lifted up his hand in salutation, standing before him in an almost abject attitude. The skin on his bare arms and breast was tanned to a deep brown and covered

with short hair. He mumbled some indistinct syllables in reply, but not a word that Andrew could comprehend.

“Who are you? what’s your name?” asked Andrew, raising his voice as if he fancied the foreigner was deaf. In another minute footsteps were heard in the silent house, and Philip himself stepped out of the hall into the porch.

“Andrew Goldsmith!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, me, Mr. Philip,” said Andrew excitedly, “I’m come to claim my grandson, the child of my only daughter, my poor lost girl Sophy. I know all about it, Mr. Philip, and my lady herself told Rachel. Why didn’t he come straight home with them to Apley Hall? What is he hidden away here for? What are you going to do with him? I am his grandfather, and have a right to know. Next to his father, he belongs to me, and his interests are mine. Why did you bring him here?”

“Look at him, Andrew,” said Philip.

Martin was standing a little way off, intently watching his brother, with such a look of faithful love on his face as an intelligent dog might have. Philip smiled at him, a sad smile enough, but it made Martin laugh with delight. So dreary and insane was this sound, as if Martin’s lips had never been taught to laugh, that it always made Philip’s heart ache to hear it.

“No, no!” cried Andrew, retreating from the two brothers with an expression of terror, “that cannot be my Sophy’s son! No, Mr. Philip, it is

impossible. He's a savage, a Hottentot ! he isn't my grandson. Why ! the poor fellow is almost an idiot. He can't be my Sophy's boy. Tell me you're only playing a joke upon me."

"He is my brother," said Philip. "See ! I will tell him so."

He said a few words in a language strange to Andrew, and Martin seized his hand and held it to his lips, covering it with kisses. Then he fell back into his customary attitude of abject submission.

"Sit down, Andrew," said Philip in a tone of authority. The old man's face was pallid, and he was swaying to and fro as though unable to stand ; but he caught the sense of Philip's words, and stretched out his hands like one groping in the dark. He felt it seized in Philip's strong grasp.

"Sit here," he said, drawing him into the porch, "and when you are yourself again I will explain it all."

It seemed to Andrew as if the hour of death was come. He had lived to have the desire of his heart, had lived to know his girl's fate and to see her child with his own eyes. Now let him die. Not as Simeon died when he said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." He was about to depart in bitterness and desolation of soul, having seen that which he had longed for ; and behold ! the sight was a horror and a curse to him. There was a thick darkness gathering around him. Why, then, did he not

die? Philip's strong young hand was grasping his, and his clear voice was speaking to him.

"O Andrew!" he said, "I was coming down to Apley to tell you, and prepare you for seeing Martin, and then to bring you back here with me. He is neither a savage nor an idiot. He is improving rapidly, and by and by we shall bring him to Apley. But you would not have him there at present, would you?"

Andrew felt his heart beat again, and the darkness began to give place to the familiar light of day. He opened his eyes, and the ashy paleness passed from his aged face. Now he looked up into Philip's face, that face which had been so dear to him for many years.

"I will tell Martin who you are," he said.

But Martin seemed incapable of understanding it. He knew well that he had had a mother, for had not everyone about him, from his earliest childhood, given him an extra kick because she was lost in hell? But that this unhappy mother should have had a father, who was still alive, was more than he could comprehend. He stood looking vacantly at the old man for a minute or two, and then crept away bareheaded and barefooted to the gates. As soon as he was through them he set off at a run, and they watched his tall, bent figure scudding over the moorland till they could see him no longer.

"Yes, Mr. Philip," cried Andrew, with a groan, "yes, you're doing the best for him and me. But I shall never lift up my head again, never more."

CHAPTER XLVI.

PUBLIC OPINION.

ANDREW would not stay at Brackenburn even for the night. He could not endure the sight of his grandson again, until he had readjusted his ideas and schemes, and had reconciled himself to his terrible disappointment. Philip drove him to the station, doing his best to comfort and cheer him, but he reached Apley the next day, after a long night's journey, a broken-spirited and embittered old man.

Though this grandson of his could never be the fine English gentleman he had been dreaming about, still Andrew was resolved there should be no infringement of his birthright. Though he could never attain to even a faint resemblance of Philip and Hugh, yet he was the eldest son, the firstborn; and if the law of entail meant anything in England, it must secure the inheritance to Martin. He laid the whole case, as far as he knew the circumstances, before a firm of respectable solicitors in the nearest large town, and was assured that if the next heir was of sound mind, there was no doubt that he must succeed to Mr. Martin's entailed estates. But was he sure that he was of sound mind? That was the question. The description he gave of his grandson favored an opposite conclusion.

It was a question that Andrew could not answer satisfactorily, even to himself. Possibly the mind was there, but it was altogether undeveloped. The life Martin had passed through was that of a cruelly treated brute, cowering under cold and hunger, neglect, and oppression, and hatred. He possessed scarcely more intelligence than an intelligent dog. This, then, would be the loophole through which Sidney would escape from the net he had woven for himself. He would evade doing justice to Sophy's son by treating him as an idiot or a madman.

Day after day Andrew went about the neighborhood, for a circle of ten or twelve miles, telling the story of Sophy's wrongs with a publicity strangely at variance with his dignified and melancholy reticence in former days. He became a garrulous old man, ready to pour the history of his troubles into every ear that would listen to it. And the story was an interesting one. Many an old resident within some miles of Apley recollected the incidents connected with the mysterious disappearance of the saddler's pretty daughter, and the morose distress of her father. Now that the almost forgotten mystery was solved the solution proved to be more interesting than the secret. Andrew found no difficulty in gaining listeners.

In these days public confession and public penance are impossible. Sidney had no intention to act unjustly by his unfortunate firstborn son,

but he could take no steps to make his intentions known. He had made his confession, with secret shame and grief, to his own solicitors, and to one or two of his most intimate friends. The rector, of course, had been acquainted with every detail, and had looked more deeply into his heart of hearts than any other eye, except Margaret's. But he could not defend himself from aspersions. A general election was at hand; and Andrew, maddened by the remembrance of the eager aid he had given to Sidney in former times, redoubled his efforts to prejudice his constituents against him. But on the eve of the dissolution Sidney addressed a letter to them, resigning his office as their representative, and recommending as his successor the son of a neighboring landlord. No reason was given for his resignation.

This omission Andrew seized upon. Garbled statements of the recent events in the life of their late member of Parliament appeared in the county papers taking the opposite side in politics—statements full of venom and rancor. These were among the many penalties which Sidney could not bear alone, but which fell heavily on Margaret and his sons. The romance of Sophy's life and death contained so much truth that it was not wise to enter into any contradictory or explanatory statements. The son of Sidney's first wife was described as a helpless imbecile, rendered so by the untold miseries which he had suffered with his father's knowledge. A demand was made that the guardianship of this unhappy

heir should be taken out of his father's hands, and placed in those of the Lord Chancellor, as the legal protector of idiots. A commission should be immediately appointed to inquire into the present condition, both physical and mental, of Sidney Martin's heir.

This blow struck home. Not only did Sidney suffer from it, but Philip and Hugh, who were now together at Brackenburn, whither Hugh had gone for the long vacation. Rachel Goldsmith was filled with indignant anger. Andrew himself was dismayed at the storm he had raised, and the use made of his bitter complaints by the "other side," as he called those opposed to his own political views. He had not wished to play into their hands. Besides, he knew that whatever concealment Sidney might have been guilty of, or whatever subterfuges he might have been tempted to, his grandson's welfare was safe in Margaret's hands. That Margaret should swerve from the right path, however strait and narrow, was incredible to him.

There was one person, however, so deeply interested in these malicious suggestions, that she hoped they might be carried into effect, at least so far as the appointment of a commission to inquire into the physical and mental condition of Martin. Laura was filled with anxiety about Phyllis; it would never do for her to marry Philip if he was to be an almost penniless man, coming between two rich brothers. Margaret's estate went to Hugh, and if Martin was sound in

mind and body, there was no chance for Philip. But in case he was really an imbecile, of course Philip would succeed. She must find out the truth.

She seized an opportunity when they were dining at the Hall with no other guests present. It was a summer's evening, and after dinner they sat out of doors on the terrace. Phyllis, in obedience to previous orders, carried Dorothy out of the way. Laura began with a little trepidation.

"We saw old Andrew this morning," she said, "and he could talk of nothing but his grandson."

Laura knew there were times when the fewest words were best, and she spoke these with an air of innocent frankness.

"Yes, Sidney," said George, "the old man is angry with himself at giving rise to these vexatious reports. Would it not be best to bring Martin here for people to see him for themselves?"

"No, no; it is impossible," answered Sidney.

"But why?" pursued George. "It is always best to face a difficulty as soon as possible. You cannot keep him out of sight forever. Is it true, then, that the poor fellow is imbecile?"

"Not at all," replied Sidney. "The simple truth is that he is a savage. He has no more idea of our modes of life and thought than a savage has. His vocabulary is that of a savage; at the most he knows less than three hundred words, and he cannot learn the English equiva-

lents of those. His brain is almost utterly undeveloped, and his mind is almost as much closed against us as if he was only a dog. But there is no reason to suppose him imbecile, and, in time, he may yet learn a good deal."

"Is he strong in body?" asked Laura.

"As strong as a giant in some ways," said Sidney. "His hard life has made his muscles like iron. He can sleep out of doors amid snow and frost that would kill any one of us, and he can eat food that would sicken us. Yes," he added, in a tone of unfathomable regret, "my eldest son is a savage and a heathen, but he is not an idiot.

"And must he really be your heir?" asked Laura with a trembling voice.

"Certainly," he replied; "he is old enough to cut off the entail, but until he can understand what that means it cannot be done, and that is a very complex idea for a savage brain. There is no ground for dispossessing Martin. Two of our most eminent mental specialists have been to Brackenburn, and they discover no mental incapacity excepting that of an altogether undeveloped brain. They found him more dull and ignorant than the lowest type of English laborer, but they attribute it solely to neglect, not to brain weakness. He may be unfit for his position, but there is no reason why his son should be."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Laura, aghast.

"You think, then, he will marry?"

"Why not?" asked Margaret. "Nothing

would tend to civilize him so much as a wife and children, if only we can find some good and nice village girl whom he could love, and who would consent to marry him. But no lady would become his wife."

"Of course not," assented Laura; "but what, then, is to become of poor Philip?"

"Philip wants to become a surgeon," said Margaret, smiling, "and I am willing, even glad; but Sidney hesitates. I do not want my boy drowned in commercial cares, and dealing chiefly with money all his life, as Sidney has been. I do not think money worth the sacrifice. I cannot help believing that our Lord meant what He said: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' It is true. Tell me, Sidney, is it not true? I shall be glad to have Philip out of the race for wealth. They will not be poor—Laura; my boy and your girl. They will have enough to secure everything worth having—everything that tends to health and culture and rational pleasure. They will only have to do without superfluities."

"Philip a surgeon!" exclaimed Laura; "not even a clergyman to take the family living!"

"That would be impossible," replied Margaret; "he feels no call for it, and he could not go into the Church for the sake of the family living."

"That would be a sin against God," said George; "next to the unpardonable sin, if it be not that sin itself. Let Philip become a surgeon;

my Phyllis will love him as much as if he was the owner of Brackenburn."

But there were at least two persons there who doubted it, and with good reasons. A smile that had grown rare on Sidney's face lit it up for a moment, as the thought flashed across him that Philip would soon see the real nature of the wife he had chosen, and that Dorothy would also appear to him in her true light. Laura inwardly vowed that neither persuasion nor authority on her husband's part should keep Phyllis bound to a man who entered the insignificant career of a surgeon. It would have been a knotty question whether Phyllis could have married him, even if he had entered into partnership with his successful father; but she should never become the wife of a professional man.

And Martin? It was possible that Sidney and Margaret were exaggerating his deficiencies. Laura felt no doubt that they painted him worse than he was; it was Margaret's habit to overstate any opinion she formed. If he was only a boor, why could not Phyllis civilize him? She might, in any case, keep her boorish husband in the background and still enjoy the distinction of being Mrs. Martin of Brackenburn. Before she bade them good-night she had constructed for herself a tolerable image of Martin, which might be quite easily tolerated by a girl like Phyllis. She might still live to see her the wife of Sidney's eldest son.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ANDREW'S PRAYER.

PHILIP and Hugh, with their cousin Dick, passed the long vacation at Brackenburn. These young men did their best to make a companion of Martin; but he could not understand their friendly efforts. He was willing to accept Philip as his master, and to obey his commands; but he could not, even for his sake, accept the shackles of a civilized life. To bask all day long in the sunshine, with as little clothing on as possible, to have a large plateful of food served to him out of doors two or three times a day, and at nightfall to steal quietly into some dark outbuilding and sleep all night upon sweet-scented hay, was his ideal of well-being. Anything more was irksome to him.

Sometimes, in obedience to Philip's call, he went with them when they were shooting on the moors, shambling behind them with his awkward gait, and seeing and hearing nothing, unless a far-off speck in the sky, all but invisible to them, caught his eye, and filled him with excitement in the fancy that it was a vulture. If they came upon the track of any wild creature, a track altogether imperceptible to them, he could follow it with unerring skill till they traced it to its

lair; then Martin laughed with an uncouth and cruel laugh, and with savage eagerness and incredible rapidity the animal was caught, and killed, and skinned before their eyes. At all other times his face bore an expression of deep melancholy. He was content only in Philip's close vicinity. As long as Philip was in the Hall he lounged at his ease in the sunny forecourt; but when Philip was absent, as he was occasionally for a day for two, Martin grew restless and anxious, and moped about the empty rooms vainly seeking for his master.

But this could not go on much longer. Philip's life must not be sacrificed to Martin; and it was not practicable for him to take Martin to London.

Sidney had not yet felt courage enough to see his eldest son again, and Margaret shrank from urging him to it. He was greatly changed these last few months. The air of prosperity that had been wont to sit so lightly and so becomingly upon him, the happy graciousness of his manner, his felicitous speeches, his confidence in himself, and his successful career—all these had passed away. He grew silent, and cared little for his life in town, seeking more and more, though he felt her farther from him, the constant companionship of his wife.

It was late one evening, after all the shops were closed, when Sidney and Margaret together knocked at Andrew Goldsmith's door. It was opened softly by Mary, and they stepped inside

the dark shop, standing there [while] she stole back and knelt down at a chair just within the kitchen door. Old Andrew was at prayer, and as soon as Mary re-entered his quavering voice resumed its solemn petition.

“We beseech Thee, O Lord,” he said, “to take under the shadow of Thy wings that poor child of mine, my lost girl’s son, who is now in sore straits and great trouble. He has no friend save Thee ; there is nothing in him to make folks love him. But nothing has been done for him, Thou knowest. The man that deserted my girl deserted his own flesh and blood. And he is no better than a heathen, worshiping stocks and stones. Let us see Thine arm stretched out to save him, and to punish that man, his father, who left him to perish, body and soul. Vengeance, O Lord ; let us see Thy vengeance on him.”

Sidney heard nothing more. It was a terrible thing to hear a fellow-man appealing to God against him. Margaret’s heart was melted with pity toward them both. If only either of them knew the infinite love of God ; if they could but realize how small a moment in their endless life the brief passage through this world was to every soul of man ; if they could only understand how much closer God is to every soul he creates than we are to one another—what need would there be to pray in this manner, even for Martin ?

“We are come to answer your prayer, Andrew,” she said, stepping forward as soon as he had finished ; “not your prayer for vengeance,

but for your grandson. He is my husband's son, and mine. We all care for him. My dear boy Philip is doing all he can for him; and now we want you and Mary to help us."

"What can we do, my lady?" he asked, despondently; "the past is past. He can never be like Mr. Philip and Mr. Hugh."

"Not like them," she answered; "but do you suppose he is less precious to God than they are? God makes no difference between them. Christ died for him as truly as for them. You are too much troubled about small things, Andrew. But you can help Martin. Listen to our plans for him. It is best for him to live at Brackenburn, because that place will always be his own; and we want you and Mary to go and live there with him as master and mistress of his household. You will naturally care for him more than anyone else can do; and you know it is not possible for us to go to live at Brackenburn; it is too far from London. We think, too, of getting somebody who will be a sort of tutor to him, who will teach him all he is able to learn."

She paused a moment, but Andrew did not speak.

"You will make this sacrifice for Sophy's sake," she resumed. "Your grandson has suffered a great wrong, not altogether from my husband's fault, and we must all do what we can to set it right. My husband did not know of the existence of this son."

“Not know of him!” repeated Andrew.

“He knew only that Sophy was dead,” said Margaret.

“But you knew she was dead!” he cried, turning fiercely upon Sidney; “you knew it while you were pretending to comfort me, you scoundrel! you hypocrite! You made promises to me of searching for her, and making inquiries, and all the time you knew she was in her grave. God grant I may see you punished!”

The impotent anger of the old man was painful to witness. His white head shook as if with palsy, and his trembling hands clutched the back of a chair for support. Mary ran to his side as if afraid of his falling to the floor.

“I am punished, Goldsmith,” said Sidney. “Do you think it is nothing to be branded, as you have branded me, with infamy? But I have come to ask your forgiveness, and your aid in saving Martin from further consequences of my sin.”

“Forgive you!” he answered. “I cannot, neither in this life nor the life to come. But I’ll do what Miss Margaret asks. I’ll quit my old house, and go away, and die among strangers, as my poor Sophy did; and every time you go up and down the street you’ll see how desolate you’ve made my house. I’ve got a long lease of it, and it shan’t be let to anybody else. We’ll put up the shutters and leave it empty, and every time you see it you’ll remember Sophy and my curse on you.”

“Andrew!” said Margaret, “you are casting yourself away, out of the light of God’s love, and all your path will be dark to you. You will cease to know him as he is; and you will find how terrible he can be in his anger.”

“I repent bitterly of my sins against you,” urged Sidney, “and I own how treacherous they were. But, Goldsmith, believe me when I say that I am changed, that I could not sin against you now as I did then.”

“Changed!” said the old man scornfully, “changed! How can you show it to me? You’ve been found out; and we are changed toward you. But I can see no difference in you. You’ve not lost your riches and your lands. You’re not punished in any way that I can see. Yes, you are a grand son-in-law for an old saddler like me.”

“Let us go away,” said Margaret sadly.

She took her husband’s arm, and walked silently along the streets and up the long avenue, so familiar to them through many happy years. But now their hearts were heavy and cast down. The difficulty had come to Sidney which comes upon men whose outward life has been at variance with the inner. There was no mode by which he could prove to his fellow-men the reality of the change within him. He had seemed to be a Christian so long that there was no way of manifestly throwing off the cloak of hypocrisy. He must wear the livery of Judas to the end.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A LOST LOVE.

PHILIP rejoiced at being set free from an irksome and almost hopeless task. He had been absent from home for many months; and though he had written often to Phyllis from Brackburn, her replies had been growing more and more meager and unsatisfactory. Her brother Dick drew his attention to the fact that half of Phyllis's missives were written on post cards, and might be read by all the world. They came very near a quarrel; Dick's depreciatory tone in speaking of his only sister always amazed Philip.

As soon as possible after his arrival at the Hall he hurried down to the Rectory. It was usual for Phyllis to be awaiting him at the Hall; but after his long absence she probably preferred to welcome him alone. He had not seen Phyllis's father and mother since he lost his inheritance, but he did not anticipate any change in them because his circumstances were so greatly altered. The rector received him with more than usual cordiality and tenderness. He put his arm affectionately about Philip's shoulders.

"I'm pleased with you, my boy," he said; "you are fighting a good fight, and coming out the victor."

Philip grasped the rector's hand tightly. His mother had never seemed to recognize the real hardship of his position; and his father made worse of it than it actually was. The rector spoke of it as a fight in which he would win the victory, and yet suffer some loss in doing so.

"You are a man now," resumed the rector, "a man I approve of and honor with all my heart. It will be a glad day to me when I give you my richest gift—Phyllis."

"A richer gift than anything I can lose," said Philip.

Philip left the rector's study one of the happiest men in the world, and went away to the drawing room, where Phyllis and her mother were sure to be found at this hour of the night. He heard the voices of the boys in their smoke room, and congratulated himself on the chance of Phyllis being alone with her mother. It was just what he had hoped for.

But Phyllis was so entangled and encumbered with some fancywork when he opened the door, that she could not spring forward delightedly to meet him. She sat still; and he stooped over her and pressed his lips to her soft cheek, and then turned to kiss her mother, who also did not greet him with her accustomed rapture.

"How could you run away from your mother so soon after getting home?" she inquired reproachfully.

"Did you think I could keep away till tomorrow?" he rejoined. "My mother knew I

was coming here, and she is not jealous of Phyllis. She knows I love Phyllis as much as herself, though differently. I do not love my mother less because Phyllis is so dear to me."

He lingered on the name Phyllis, slightly emphasizing it, with a delicate caress in the tone of his voice. The color flushed her pale and grave face, and her sight grew a little misty; but she went on with her embroidery as if she did not hear him.

"Now, Philip," said Laura, "sit down, and let us talk sensibly. Everything is so changed, so shockingly changed by this sad discovery. Your father made a false step, and cannot retrace it; but it alters all your position and your prospects."

"Yes," he assented.

"I want you to look at it as the world looks at it," pursued Laura. "After all, we are living in this world, not in the next, as your mother fancies. You are now comparatively a poor man; you are, in fact, a penniless man, for you are altogether dependent upon your father. Formerly you were the heir, and no caprice of your father's, or any failure in his business, could deprive you of the inheritance. You were quite secure of the future. But now you have not a penny, either in possession or prospect, which does not depend upon your father. And city businesses are so uncertain; you may be rolling in wealth one day and a bankrupt the next. Suppose your father failed, he would be all right for his life, and Martin

would be all right, and so would Hugh. But where would you be?"

Philip made no answer. His eyes were fastened upon Phyllis, whose fingers went on busily with their work as if she had heard her mother's words over and over again.

"So far as I can see," continued Laura, "you are in a dreadfully precarious position—in such a position as would make an older man reflect seriously before he thought of marriage. What can you offer to a wife? A most uncertain prospect; possibly, even probably, absolute penury. Penury! You come to Phyllis, and say, 'Give me your love, which is most precious to me, and, in return, I will share with you my poverty and troubles.' It seems to me a strange way of showing affection."

"But am I in a different position to your sons, who have to make their own way in the world?" asked Philip in a slightly faltering voice.

He moved his seat to the sofa on which Phyllis was sitting, and took possession of her hand, which lay in his, limp and listless, making no return to its warm clasp.

"No," answered Laura; "but they know they must marry girls with money. If Phyllis had a fortune I should not say a word. But your father refused his consent to your marrying a girl without a fortune; you know that only too well, Philip. I am not quite so worldly as that. But Phyllis, poor girl, cannot marry a poor man; she is not fit to cope with poverty, as I have done. I know the rector will not be wise enough, or firm

enough, to refuse you as your father rejected Phyllis. But I am her mother, and I have an equal right to a voice in the matter. I cannot see her throw herself into life long difficulties through a foolish fancy that you love one another. You are both far too young to know your own minds."

"I was wrong in saying I was in the same position as my cousins," said Philip, in growing agitation; "you know that both my father and mother are rich. It is true I am not the heir of either of them, but they have a large income; and I feel sure that if I desire it they will make me such an allowance as will provide all rational comforts and enjoyments to my wife."

"An allowance that must cease with their lives," replied Laura, "and nothing is more uncertain than life. I do not wish to alarm you, my dear Philip, but your father is much, very much shaken by this unfortunate discovery of yours. You must not count upon him living to old age. I have talked all this over with Phyllis, and she agrees with me."

"No, no," he said vehemently; "you may make her say so, but I will never believe it! Phyllis, who has been my little wife as long as I can remember; Phyllis, who has grown up for me—whom I loved as soon as I loved anyone! No; she will never forsake me. She would become my wife if I had only the poorest cottage to give to her as a home."

He clasped her hand between his own with a grasp from which she could not free it, though

she made a feeble effort to do so. Then she lifted up her tear-filled eyes, and looked very sadly into his eager face.

“I never could marry a poor man,” she said. “O Philip! why did your father own he was married to Sophy Goldsmith? Nobody could have proved it, and nobody would have believed it; and then, you know, there would not have been all this fuss.”

“Phyllis!” he cried, “you don’t know what you are saying.”

He dropped her hand and turned away from her. These few words of hers were horrible to him. All that her mother said passed by him almost as if it had no meaning. Some time ago he had begun to doubt the disinterested nature of her affection for him; but he had no more doubted Phyllis than he did the rector. But at this moment her worldliness was more frank and outspoken than her mother’s. There was an unabashed openness about it that staggered him, if she knew what she was saying. But she could not know; it was incredible that she could comprehend the baseness of her speech. He turned back to her again.

“Phyllis,” he said earnestly, “tell me truly, do you agree to what your mother says?”

“Quite,” she answered. “We have talked it over again and again, and I agree with her. We should have been very happy together, but now I can only be sorry for you.”

He went away without another word, stunned and bewildered. The boys were still laughing

and talking in the smoke room, and the rector was reading in his study. It seemed to Philip as if he was dreaming some vexatious and incredible dream. This was his other home, as familiar to him as his father's house. He had scarcely known any difference between Hugh and the other boys, whose merry racket was in his ears. But now a sentence of banishment had been pronounced against him. He could never come in and out again with the free, happy fellowship of former times. It was many months since he had crossed the old threshold; it would be many months before he crossed it again.

He went home and told his mother briefly, in as few words as possible; and she said little to him, for she saw his grief was too fresh for consolation. Moreover, she was not herself grieved, and she knew it would be vain to touch his sorrow with an unsympathetic hand. Sidney was more pleased than by anything which had happened since Philip's engagement to Phyllis. It was a good thing for him to discover his mistake in time.

“Let us go to London,” said Margaret, “and make a home for Philip for the next three months. If we stay here either he will not come down, or he must meet Phyllis and her mother; for we could not break off all our intercourse with the rector. Dorothy has never been in London for more than a day or two, and we can find plenty to do during the winter. And, Sidney, let us go and keep Christmas at Brackenburn.”

CHAPTER XLIX.

WINTER GLOOM.

ANDREW and Mary Goldsmith left their old home in Apley, and went north to take charge of Sophy's son. It was a great change in the lives of people so old. Instead of their small, snug kitchen, and their shop, with its outlook on the familiar street, they dwelt in large, wainscoted rooms, separated by long, wandering passages and galleries, through which the autumn winds moaned incessantly, and from the windows they saw only the deserted moorland. The caretakers, who had been accustomed to have entire charge of the place, remained in it as gardener and cook ; and a groom and housemaid had been hired for the extra work, caused, not by Martin, but by the tutor who had undertaken to teach him the bare elements of learning and the simplest customs of civilized society. Mary Goldsmith found herself at the head of this little establishment, not without some feelings of pride in the importance of her position ; and Andrew was installed as master and guardian of his grandson. It was a great change from their homely life at Apley. Yet, with all the discomfort of the change, there was a lurking sense of pleasure in being the nearest of kin to the heir of the estate.

On the other hand, Martin was a source of constant anxiety and mortification to them both ; but Andrew took the mortification most to heart. He loved his uncouth barbarian, who was Sophy's son, with a very deep though troubled love. There could be no interchange of ideas between them, except by gesture : for Andrew was too old to learn Martin's stammering patois, and Martin appeared quite unable to recollect the few English words his tutor tried to fix upon his money. The tutor, who knew Italian well, though he was not versed in the patois of the frontier between Italy and Austria, soon learned Martin's very limited vocabulary, and also his narrow range of mental sensations. But between Andrew and his grandson there was no means whatever of communication by speech. The old man would sit patiently for hours watching the dull, coarse face of the clumsy peasant, whose favorite postures were lying huddled up on the ground, or squatting on his heels with his knees almost on a level with his ears. Sometimes he fancied his grandson responded to his wistful gaze with a gleam of intelligent affection in his eyes ; and now and then Martin would offer him a pipe if he was not provided with one. There was a certain amount of friendliness in this act.

Martin's tutor conscientiously spent a regular number of hours in attempting to teach him ; and he did his best to make him sit down to the table at meals and take his food like other people. But Martin was both obstinate and obtuse. In

his childhood he had not been permitted to imitate the children about him ; and the imitative faculties continued dormant in his manhood.

Occasionally, to please Philip, he had consented to sit down with him and Hugh to a meal, and tried to do what they told him, but for nobody else was it worth while to take so much trouble. He was learning, with the slow and weary progress of an adult, the difficult accomplishment of writing, his crooked and frost-bitten fingers traveling laboriously over the paper, forming characters he did not understand. He was learning, a little more easily, how to read ; but here again his progress was hindered by his want of comprehension. For, wisely or not, he was being taught in English, and, as yet, English was a tongue without meaning to him.

The best time for Andrew was when Martin accompanied him on the moors. The old man was still hale and strong, and could pass all the hours of the day out of doors, provided he was not always in movement. Martin, too, was only happy in the open air, and he liked lounging about, sitting for long spells under some moss-grown rock, as he had been accustomed to do when he was tending Chiara's herds. Like savages, he was capable of prolonged and extreme muscular exertion when necessary ; but necessity alone could drive him to make any effort, excepting when a wild impulse possessed him to try his great physical strength. Usually he was content to loiter about, with a pipe in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, the impersonation of slug-

gish laziness. For hours together these strange kinsmen—the vigorous old man, with his hot heart of indignant love beating in his time-worn frame, and his grandson, with all his faculties and affections undeveloped—strolled about the wide moorland, unable to exchange a word, and communicating with one another only by looks and gestures.

To Martin, all that had happened to him had the incoherence and marvel of a dream. Chiara's death had first broken the melancholy monotony of his life, and immediately followed this extraordinary change in his circumstances. He accepted it, but he could not comprehend it. He found himself supplied with all he wanted, without any effort of his own; he no longer worked for many long hours for coarse food in scanty quantities, nor was he roughly roused from his sleep at the first dawn of the morning. No voice spoke in angry tones to him, and no face scowled upon him. Yet he did not enjoy the dainty meals set before him at regular and stated intervals, instead of being snatched and devoured with a watchful, and anxious, and savage glee. He was called upon to submit to incomprehensible restraints upon all his actions. Moreover, he was sensible that there was a vast difference between himself and these strange people who surrounded him; a far greater difference than he had felt when living among the petty tyrants, whom he hated, but who were familiar to him. There had been a certain zest and enjoyment in hatred, which was missing in this new life, where

there were no enemies or oppressors. Besides this, though he had never consciously felt the spell of the mountain peaks among which he dwelt, the broad, wide sweep of the moorland, rising gradually up to a softly undulating line against the sky, was irksome and painful to him; why, he knew not. A deep, passive dejection fell upon his spirit, and drove every thought of his slowly awakening mind inward. There was nothing in him of the child's spontaneous action of the mind outward. He had suffered from tyranny and persecution; he was now suffering from nostalgia, and utter weariness of his uncongenial life.

The first day the snow began to fall Andrew's vigilant eye detected the tears falling down the rugged cheeks of his grandson. He ran out into the forecourt and stood still for the soft flakes to fall upon his bare head, and hands stretched out as if to give them a welcome—the welcome we give to messengers from a beloved land. He looked down at the print of his feet on the white carpet, and immediately took off his boots, and trod upon it barefooted, as if with reverence of its purity. All day long he wandered about the moors, his face lit up with an expression that was almost a smile. Andrew, who did not care to accompany him into the frosty air and bitter north wind, watched him from a garret window, now taking long and rapid strides across the snow-clad uplands, and now standing motionless for many minutes, his bare head bowed down and his arms hanging listlessly by his sides, until the

snowflakes had covered him from head to foot. What was he thinking of, this poor son of Sophy's? What did he remember? Was he really of sound mind; or was it true, as all the country folks were saying, that he was a poor, witless innocent? Could nothing be done to arouse him, mind and soul? Was there no way of undoing the wrong that had been done?

So the dark months of November and part of December passed by, and Rachel wrote that Mr. Martin and all the family were coming to keep Christmas at Brackenburn instead of Apley. To meet Sidney again, and stay under his roof almost like a guest, was more than Andrew could brook; so he took himself away to Apley to spend a lonely Christmas in his old home.

CHAPTER L.

FATHER AND SON.

SIDNEY had not seen his son since his arrival in England. There had been no necessity for doing so ; and he shrank from the great pain of coming again into close contact with him. But this meeting could not be avoided forever, and Margaret, who felt a keen sympathy with her husband while recognizing his duty toward his eldest son and heir, urged her plan of spending Christmas in Yorkshire. Nearly six months had elapsed, and she hoped that Martin would be in some degree reclaimed from his almost brute condition.

For days before the arrival of the family the old Manor House was undergoing a process of cleaning and beautifying which was bewildering and irritating to Martin. Carpets were laid down on all the floors, and large fires were kept burning in every room. Flowers were blooming everywhere, and ingenious decorations of holly and ivy and mistletoe hung upon all the walls. His tutor was gone away for the holidays, and Andrew had disappeared. The small, stagnant pool of his existence was being stirred to its depths, and this fretted him. He did not know at all what it meant ; and on the day when the family were expected, when everybody was ten-

fold busier than before, he wandered off early in the morning, and his absence was not noticed by the occupied household.

It had been dark for an hour or two, when Martin shambled across the forecourt and into the porch on his return. The large glass doors which separated the porch from the hall were uncurtained, and he crept in without noise to look through them cautiously. The place was altogether transformed. There was a huge fire of logs and coal burning brightly on the hearth, with a many-colored square of carpet laid before it, and chairs drawn up into the light and heat. Great bunches of red holly and pots of scarlet geranium gave bright color to the hall. A woman, grander and more beautiful than he had ever seen, richly clad in purple velvet, sat in one of the high-backed chairs, and standing near to her was the English signore, who called himself his father. It seemed to his dull and troubled mind, as he stood outside in the dark, that this must be the other world, where the saints dwelt, of which the padre had sometimes spoken. Could this be the Paradiso to which Christians went after masses had been said to get them out of the Purgatorio? There was the Inferno, where his mother was, and the Purgatorio, and the Paradiso. But this place was too beautiful to be anything but the Paradiso; and these grand and beautiful beings were the inhabitants of it. He was gazing, with a vague sense of it being impossible for him to enter in, when he saw other figures descending the broad, shallow staircase

slowly, side by side. The one was the gracious and radiant vision he had seen in Cortina, the other was his lost friend, his brother, his master, Philippo.

His joy was the joy of a dumb animal on seeing a beloved master suddenly reappear after a mysterious, inexplicable absence. He burst open the door impetuously, and rushed in, covered with the snowflakes that had been lodging half frozen in his hair and beard for the last hour or two. He flung himself before Philip clasping his knees with his arms, and uttering uncouth cries of delight and welcome. For the moment he had relapsed into the savage again; the heavy, clumsy frame, the ragged face, down which the melting snow was running, the bare feet and head, inarticulate cries, all seemed to show that no training, no process of civilizing, could make him other than the confirmed savage that he was.

“Margaret, I cannot bear it!” exclaimed Sidney, as if appealing to her for strength.

“It is only for the moment,” she said softly; “he is excited now. And see how fond he is of Philip. That is a good thing for him. Remember how short a time six months is to undo the work of thirty years. And Mary Goldsmith tells me he has no great faults, such as he might have had. She thinks he is learning every day to be something more like other people. He is your son, Sidney—our son; speak to him.”

She had not seen him since the *fiesta* at Cortina, and she regarded him now with intense

interest. His face was certainly more intelligent than it was then ; the scared look upon it was gone, and it bore a stronger likeness to Andrew Goldsmith. There was even a slight resemblance to Philip, by whom he was now standing, and on whose face his eyes were riveted with an expression of contentment. His hair and beard were cut short and trimmed, not hanging in matted locks, as when she saw him first. He wore a rough shooting suit, not unsuitable for Philip ; and the chief points of oddity in his appearance were his bare head and feet. But Mary was right, thought Margaret ; in time he would look like other people.

“Martin !” said his father in a raised voice, louder than he was himself aware of. Martin started and turned away from Philip, approaching Sidney with a cowed yet dogged air. He did not take his outstretched hand.

“Do you know who I am ?” asked Sidney in Italian.

“Yes, signore,” he answered, “my father.”

They stood looking at one another. The one man was twenty-two years older than the other, yet they seemed almost of the same age. Martin was prematurely aged, broken down by persecution, and weatherworn by exposure and want ; his father was unbent, strong, and vigorous in mind and body, still in his prime, and only during the last six months showing any sign of his fifty-two years being a burden to him. There was something so pitiful in the contrast, that Philip walked away out into the porch ; and

Margaret and Dorothy clasped each other's hands and looked on with tear-filled eyes.

"Oh, my father!" said Martin, speaking as if his soul had at length found an outlet in words, "this is the Paradiso, and I am not fit for it. I know nothing. You are a great signore, and I am nothing. We are far away from one another. My mother is in the Inferno; Chiara and the padre said it; no masses can be said for her soul. Let me go back to the mountains. I am not fit to live with great signori. My mother calls to me here," and he laid his hand on his heart, 'Come back, Martin, come back!' and I must go. Send me back to the mountains."

Dorothy loosed Margaret's hand and stepped swiftly to Sidney's side, putting her hand fondly through his arm. He looked down on her with an expression of irretrievable sadness.

"Listen to me, my son," he said, speaking very slowly and distinctly. "I did a great wrong when I left your mother, and I did a greater wrong in not seeking to know if you lived or not. I never knew you were born. If I had known it, you would have lived with me; and now you would be as Philip is, like him in every way. Look round you. When I die this house will be yours, and you will be a rich man. Do you understand?"

"Yes, signore," he answered, with excited gestures, "I shall have much money and much land. But now I have nothing. Give me some of the money now, and let me go back and buy a farm in Ampezzo. They will be my servants

now ; nobody will pelt me with stones, and shout after me, and turn me out of the church. They will give me a chair there, and the padre will take off his hat to me. Perhaps they will say masses for the soul of my mother, when I am a rich man. Send me back, oh, my father !”

“ Will you go away and leave your brother Philip ?” asked Dorothy in hesitating accents. For though she had been diligently learning Italian for some months, she was afraid Martin would not understand her. He looked at her in amazement, and a gleam lighted up his furrowed face.

“ The signora knows what I say !” he exclaimed ; “ these other people here know nothing. I want to speak, and they stare at me. I am a fool in their eyes. But I can speak now to the signora, and to my father, and to Philippo. It is better now.”

“ Martin,” said Sidney, “ you must stay here, in England, till you are more like an Englishman. In a year or two I will take you back to Cortina, and you shall choose where you will live. But this house and these lands are yours, and they will be your son’s when you die. It is best for you to live in your own house and your own country.”

“ Stay with us,” pleaded Dorothy, looking compassionately into his sad eyes. “ Nobody loves you there, and we love you. I will teach you to be like your brother Philip. I used to live here, and I will show you places you have never seen. Stay with us, Martin.”

“But my mother calls me,” he answered. “They will say no masses for her soul if they do not know I am a rich man.”

“I will send them money for it,” replied Dorothy. “Besides, it is a mistake, Martin; your mother is not in the Inferno.”

He listened to her as if she had been the Madonna he had fancied her when he first saw her. A heavy sob broke through his lips, and then a cry of exultation. The chief burden that had weighed upon his spirit slipped away and fell from him. The deepest stigma of his life was removed; and in this he was like other men, that his mother, whom he had never seen, was dwelling in the same place as the mothers of other men.

CHAPTER LI.

THE GROWTH OF A SOUL.

DOROTHY gave herself up to the task of humanizing Martin with great enthusiasm. Her success was naturally greater and more rapid than that of the tutor or old Andrew. She undertook to teach him to read, and arguing it was best to teach him in Italian until he knew more of English, she began to teach him from a little book she had bought in Italy, one which was a great favorite of her own for its quaint and simple legends. It was the "Fioretti di San Francisco."

A pretty picture it was to all the other members of the household to see Dorothy seated in a high-backed oak chair on the hearth, with the fire light playing about her, while Martin, squatting on a low seat beside her, read diligently from the book on her lap, marking each word with his rude forefinger. Often she read aloud to him in hesitating accents, for the language was still strange to her; but the very slowness and difficulty of her utterance made it easier for him to comprehend. Sidney and Margaret themselves sat listening to the gentle and childlike beauty of these "Flowrets of S. Francisco," and watching the kindling intelligence of Martin's face. His soul was developing under Dorothy's tender care.

On the snow-clad moors, also, Dorothy made herself his constant companion. In all weather, except when the snow was whirling in a bewildering network of closely falling flakes, she was ready to go out with him, and Philip, and Hugh, guiding them to places known only to herself. She could show them the winter dens of many a wild creature; and Martin learned from her that he was not to kill them. Once she led them to the edge of a deep, narrow dell, invisible from a little distance, and under the brow of it was a cave hewn out of the rock, a cave so similar to his place of refuge on the mountains, that Martin uttered a cry of mingled astonishment and delight. It was like a piece of home to him.

Later on, when the others had gone back to London, Dorothy persuaded Sidney to procure for him, from that far-off Austrian valley, one of the curious, quaint old crucifixes which stand at every point where crossroads meet. She had it placed near the entrance of this cave; for, she said, if it awoke a thought, or gave him a glimmer of religious light, it was right for him to have it. When he came upon it first, unexpectedly, he threw himself on his knees before it, and burst into a passion of tears. It was a symbol familiar to him from his earliest days; the only place of refuge, where, if he could reach it, he was safe from the blows of his tyrants.

So evident was Martin's rapid development, that Margaret decided to remain with Dorothy after Sidney and Philip had returned to London.

She was deeply interested in this growth of a soul under her own eyes. Martin was learning to make broken sentences in English; and she marked his progress with constantly increasing pleasure in seeing him overcome difficulties.

To Martin these winter months were less wearisome than the summer and autumn had been. The snow made the moors a more familiar ground, and in these long, dark afternoons, if Dorothy was out of the way, he could creep into the kitchen, and crouch down in the chimney nook smoking a pipe, undisturbed by the servants, who were still busy at their work. Margaret and Dorothy sat chiefly in the great hall, which Martin liked next best to the kitchen; large screens were drawn round the hearth, and huge fires kept burning, and there Martin would lie on the warm bearskins, with Dorothy's dogs around him, while she read the "Fioretti di San Francisco." Most things were irksome to him still; he could never wear the shackles of civilization easily. But he was changing and developing. By and by they would reap the harvest of the seed they were sowing.

The Easter holidays brought back Philip for a few days. In his eyes the transformation was marvelous. Martin had submitted to wearing boots and a hat; at any rate, when he went out with Dorothy. He sat down with them to their meals, and could even make his wants known to the servants in intelligible words. He was learning to ride, and he was willing to sit in the carriage quietly when they drove to the nearest

town. His eyes followed Dorothy, and he was obedient to her slightest sign. He watched her as if to see if he displeased her in any way. When she looked at him his dull face brightened with a rare smile, which had a strange and pathetic attraction in it, like a sudden and transient gleam of sunshine on a dreary, wintry day. The doglike allegiance he had displayed toward Philip was plainly transferred to her.

Was there any touch of jealousy in the uneasiness which Philip felt at this new phase of his brother's character? A vague, indefinable apprehension of some new danger took hold of him at the sight of this constant companionship between Martin and Dorothy. He recognized in his own mind that Martin was still a young man, and that there was a simple charm about Dorothy that few men of any rank in life could be indifferent to. Was Martin too dense a barbarian to feel it?

Though more civilized in other respects, Martin had not yet learned to sleep before he was sleepy. His hours of slumber were still as irregular as his hours of eating had been at first. Late one night, when all the rest of the household were long ago asleep, Philip found him on the hearth in the hall, sitting on his low stool beside Dorothy's chair. His deep-set eyes were glowing under his shaggy eyebrows like the embers on the hearth.

"My brother," he said, as Philip stood looking down at him, "tell me, am I now a rich English signore like the other signori?"

“Of course,” answered Philip, about to sit down in Dorothy’s chair; but Martin motioned him away, and drew another seat forward.

“This belongs to her, my signorina,” he said; “it is not for you or for me.”

“Why not?” asked Philip, half laughing. “She is only a girl like other girls.”

Martin made no answer, but repeated “like other girls” under his breath, as if it was a new idea to him.

“My brother,” he resumed, after a pause, “when I was poor, without a penny, long ago, there was a girl I loved. When a man loves a girl he wants her for his wife. I wanted this girl to be my wife, but she spat at me.”

“I am glad you did not marry her, Martin,” said Philip, thinking how far worse it would have been if he had discovered his brother with a wife and children.

“She wouldn’t spit at me now,” he continued proudly. “I am a rich signore now, and I should laugh at her being my wife. She is down there, in the mud. But, my brother, listen to me. You say my signorina is a girl like other girls, and I am a rich signore. Would she laugh at me if I love her and want her to be my wife, like the girl I loved long ago?”

For a minute or two anger and a strong feeling of repulsion kept Philip silent. It was too monstrous to think of patiently. This rude peasant, this scarcely reclaimed savage, to be lifting up his eyes to the sweet English girl, who

had only stooped to civilize him out of the pure compassion of her heart! But the feeling died out as quickly as it had been kindled. It was possible for Martin to love her, and, if so, how much he would have to suffer!

“She would laugh at me,” said Martin in tones of the deepest and saddest conviction; “she would not look at me. See, I am a dog to her. She would turn her face away from me, and never look at me again. She is so far away above me, but you are close to her. You are like her, very grand, and very beautiful, and very clever. I am down, down in the mud. I cannot learn your ways; they are too hard for me. Oh, my brother! if I was like you, my signorina would love me and be my wife.

Philip, looking down at the seared and melancholy face of his unfortunate brother, said to himself that this might have been true. If Martin had been trained and educated as he himself had been he would have been a suitable husband for Dorothy, and what would please his father and mother more than to have her for their daughter?

“She is like the Madonna to me,” said Martin slowly and hesitatingly, as if searching through his brain for suitable words to express the thoughts pressing busily into it; “*my* Madonna. I see her all day, and at night I cannot sleep. I sit all night on the mat at her door watching, listening. I do not sleep, but I am happy.”

“You must never tell her that,” replied Philip; “it would make her very unhappy.”

“I will never tell her, my brother,” he answered submissively; “she is too high above me. She is like an angel, and I am a dog. That is true. I am nothing; only a rich man. But I will give her all my riches—this house, these lands. They shall be hers, not mine.”

“But you are not a rich man till your father dies,” explained Philip; “they belong to him as long as he lives, and then they will belong to you as long as you live, but you can never give them away. They will be kept for your eldest son. It would be impossible for you to give any of them to Dorothy.”

“It is a lie, then,” he said; “it is a lie. I am not a rich man. They are of no good to me, this house and these lands. It would be better for me to have a farm of my own in Ampezzo, and marry a woman there. I did not dare to think the signorina would be my wife; but if I could give her this house and these lands, and live near her, where I could see her every day, I could be happy, perhaps, here in this strange country, though I do not know what the people say. I am not happy in Ampezzo; they curse me and throw stones at me. I am not happy here in these clothes, and this great house, and these fine rooms. Let me be a servant; your servant, or the signorina’s; then I might be happy.”

“That could never be,” said Philip pityingly.

“That is what I am fit for,” urged Martin. “Take me away from here; make me work hard. Say to me: ‘Martin, clean my horse;’ ‘Martin, do this;’ ‘Martin, do that,’ like Chiara did,

The days would not be long then, and I should sleep sound at night. I want to be tired out, my brother. See, I am very strong; my arms and legs are strong; and I sit all day in a chair smoking a pipe, and all they tell me to do is, 'Read a little book, signore,' or, 'Learn a little English,' or, 'Let me teach you how to write.' Only my signorina says: 'Let us go out on the moors, Martin.' But she is not big and strong like me, and I walk like a girl beside her, for fear she should grow tired. I feel like a wolf shut up in a stable and fastened by a chain. Make me work hard like a servant, or let me go back to Ampezzo."

Philip let his hand fall gently on Martin's shoulder, and he turned and kissed it—the smooth, well formed hand, strong and muscular, yet as finely molded as a woman's. Martin stretched out his own knotted and deformed hands, and looked at them, as he had never done before, in the fire light, with a half laugh and a half groan. Since Philip's arrival this time he had become more conscious of the vast difference between himself and his brother. He saw his own uncouthness and ugliness as they must appear in Dorothy's eyes. His close watchfulness of her had betrayed to him how different was the expression of her face when she was talking to him or to Philip. He had seen a happy light in her eyes when Philip was beside her, or even when she caught the sound of his voice about the house. These two, thought Martin humbly, were

fit for each other. Dorothy would be Philip's wife, not his.

"Yes, my brother," he said, speaking his last thought aloud, "my signorina loves you, and she will be your wife."

"Martin," exclaimed Philip, rising hastily, "you must never say such a word as that to me again."

He left him in solitary possession of the great hall; but looking out of his own room an hour later, he saw Martin stretched like a dog across the threshold of Dorothy's door.

CHAPTER LII.

LAURA'S DOUBTS.

PHILIP could not sleep, so great was his agitation. This conversation, the first Martin had ever held with anyone, filled him with consternation, almost to dismay. He had spoken to Dorothy of his delight over Martin's awakening soul, the soul of a child expanding under her influence, and a lovely expression of gladness had lit up the girl's face. But it had been a man's soul that was developing, not a child's. They had none of them thought of that. Martin was a man whose natural affections, so long thwarted and disappointed, were ready to flow swiftly into the first open channel. But to love Dorothy! If it had not been for his lifelong love for Phyllis, Philip would have loved Dorothy himself. How sweet and simple she was! how true! There was a fresh and innocent, almost a rustic charm about her which contrasted strongly with Phyllis's cultivated attractiveness. Philip, in his heart-sickness at Phyllis's worldliness, was open-eyed to Dorothy's unconscious disregard to custom and fashion. She valued the world as his mother valued it. With this thought there flashed across his mind an 'idea that brought terror with it. So unconventional was Dorothy that outward culture would not have as much value in her

sight as it had in his own. Moreover, there was a passion in her, as in his mother, for self-sacrifice, an absolute, unappeasable hunger to be of service to her fellow-creatures. Was it quite impossible that after a while Dorothy might not become Martin's wife? He vehemently assured himself that it was impossible; but the question tormented him. It was already a marvelous change that had been wrought on Martin. Yet he felt an unutterable horror at the thought, and for the first time a bitter repugnance arose in his heart against his unhappy elder brother. He might take the estate, that birthright, which had appeared to be his own through all these years. But he must not think of Dorothy. What could this repugnance mean? If he had not loved Phyllis so ardently and constantly, he would have said he was in love with Dorothy himself. But it was only a few months since all Apley, Dorothy also, were witnesses of his rejected love and bitter disappointment. Only a few months? They seemed like years! He had been deceived in Phyllis, of course; the Phyllis whom he loved was chiefly a creature of his imagination; there had never been such a being. Dorothy was nearer his ideal than Phyllis had ever been, but he could not tell her so when she knew how passionate had been his mistaken love for Phyllis.

Early in the morning he sought a private interview with his mother, letting Dorothy go off on to the moors alone with Martin. Margaret and he watched them walking side by side, Mar-

tin's bowed-down head turned attentively toward her.

"It is a wonderful change," remarked Margaret; "we have not wasted these last four months, have we, Philip?"

"Mother," he said abruptly, "suppose Martin has fallen in love with Dorothy!"

Margaret's eyes met his own for a moment, and then followed the receding figures till they were nearly lost to sight. The short silence seemed intolerable to him.

"Poor fellow!" she said in a tone of exquisite pity, "that might be, and it would be another misfortune for him. I believe his nature is a fine one, full of possibilities of nobleness. But he has had no chance hitherto; and if this is true his last hope is gone."

"Dorothy could not marry him!" exclaimed Philip.

"She would not marry him," said Margaret sadly; "if she would she could indeed do more for him than any other human being can. If he loves her that will partly account for his rapid development. There is no educator like love."

"But, mother," he cried, "Martin can never be anything but an ignorant, superstitious peasant. There can be no real culture for him. He can never be a gentleman. He will not be as well educated as our lodge keeper."

"I suppose he will always be ignorant of what we call knowledge," she answered, "but he need not remain superstitious. The light of God can shine into his heart as fully as into ours. He be-

gins to realize that we love him ; and what is our love but single drops from the unfathomable ocean of God's love ? As soon as he knows that God loves him, he will be wiser than the wisest man of the world."

"Then you would not oppose Dorothy marrying him ?" he asked indignantly.

"Not if she would do it," she replied. "I would heap upon Martin the best and worthiest of all the blessings of this life, if that would atone for the loss of all his childhood and youth. Think of it, my Philip. While you occupied his place, he was enduring the want of all things. We cannot do too much, or give up too much, for him. But no thought of loving him in that way is in Dorothy's mind."

"Thank God !" he said fervently.

Margaret smiled, and held out her hand to him fondly. A moment ago the thought had flashed through his brain that his mother was too high-minded and too visionary for this life. But the clear, steadfast light in her eyes, and the smile playing about her lips, were not those of a person rapt away from all earthly interests.

"No, Philip," she said, "Dorothy looks upon Martin simply as a brother, one whose sad lot she can brighten. I cannot wish it otherwise, though I am grieved for him. Tell me all you think about it."

He repeated almost verbally the conversation he had held with Martin the night before ; and Margaret listened with a troubled face.

"Dorothy ought not to stay here," he said.

“It is a pity,” she answered, sighing, “for it increases our difficulties a hundredfold. I was hoping the time would come when we could take Martin to London, and introduce him there to such of your father’s old friends who ought to know him, and who could understand the whole story. But it will not do for Dorothy to stay here much longer; and Martin would not improve alone with me, if I could stay, as he does with her. O Philip! I could almost wish, for your father’s sake, that she could care for Martin.”

“Impossible!” he ejaculated.

“Yes, you wise, blind boy,” she replied, “it is impossible. If Martin could be trained into a perfect gentleman, it would still be impossible.”

“Mother!” he exclaimed, the color mounting to his forehead as he turned away from her smiling eyes, “it is so short a time since Phyllis jilted me.”

“If I am not mistaken,” said Margaret, “Dorothy loved you before that.”

“Loved me!” he repeated, “why! I was nothing to her. I had no eyes for her before you came to Venice; I saw no one but Phyllis. I could never presume to tell her I loved her, when she knows how infatuated I was with Phyllis.”

“I judge only by appearances,” said his mother, “but your father thinks as I do; and nothing could please your father more. She is already as dear to him as his own child. He has suffered more than words can tell, and greatly

on your account, but he will feel that you have not lost all if you win Dorothy as your wife. I think the estate well lost if it saved you from an unhappy marriage."

"Oh, mother," he cried, "what a fool I was!"

"To be sure," she said smiling.

"But now I could see Phyllis again to-morrow," he went on, "and not feel grieved. Let us go back to Apley; at least you and Dorothy. You left home on my account; but it is too far away here. It would be better for my father to have you at home again, or in London. Come home again, mother."

"Poor Martin!" she said, with a troubled face.

But as she thought over what Philip had told her, Margaret felt that it was time to separate Martin from Dorothy. She took Rachel Goldsmith into her confidence, and she agreed with her. It seemed a preposterous thing to Rachel that Martin should deprive Philip of his birth-right, and that so much importance should be attached to his education at so late a period of his life.

"The best thing for him," she said, "would be to set him up in a little farm, and give him cows and sheep and pigs to tend; he'd be ten times happier than here. There's no common sense in the laws, if they say our Sophy's son is to take the place of your son, my lady; and to his own misery too. I'd say nothing if anybody was the better for it. But it is just the ruin of my brother Andrew. And to think of him falling

in love with Miss Dorothy! when the scullery maid would think twice before she married him!"

"Poor fellow!" sighed Margaret. "Poor fellow!" she said many times to herself during the next few days, as preparations were made for their departure. Dorothy also was full of pity for him, and devoted every hour of the day to him. She visited with him all their favorite haunts, which were growing to her more beautiful with the touch of spring upon them, though to him the vanishing of winter brought regret. She read to him once more the "*Fioretti di San Francisco*," and heard him read over and over again the first few chapters, which he had mastered under her tuition, or perhaps learned by heart merely. But Dorothy, though grieved and troubled for him, was glad to go south. Her spirits rose high at the thought of how short a distance would separate her from Philip, and the still more pleasant thought that he was willing to make Apley his home again, shrinking no more from the sight of Phyllis. It was with a light heart, saddened for a few minutes only by Martin's face of moody melancholy, that she quitted Brackenburn.

The old house fell back into its former dreary stillness. Andrew and Mary Goldsmith returned to take charge of it; and the tutor resumed his routine duties of educating and civilizing Martin. But Martin was duller and less apt than before. Dorothy had left with him her "*Fioretti*," telling him to ask his tutor to read to him, and to

let him learn out of it. But the book was too precious to him; alone he spelt through the chapters she had taught him, but he would let no one else touch it. If he must learn to read it should be in English, out of his dog's-eared primer. But he could learn no more.

There was again nothing to do during the long days which the advancing spring brought. When the east winds blew bitterly over the moor he lay silent and still in the warmth of the fire; when the air was heated by the rays of the sun, which was mounting every day higher into the heavens, he basked, silent and still, in its warmth. Andrew again attached himself as the constant companion of Sophy's son, though between them must ever stand the barrier of different tongues—a barrier which neither of them could cross. There were a hundred things Andrew wanted to say to him, especially to warn him against cutting off the entail, when he was dead, but it could not be done. The two were seldom apart, though they could exchange no thoughts. The persistent, dogged affection of this old man, his grandfather, won its way somewhat into Martin's heart. He grew accustomed to his presence, and missed him if he was absent.

The one person who rejoiced most in Margaret's return to Apley was Sidney. She had been more separated from him these last few months than she had ever been since he first knew her. It struck Margaret that his burden pressed more heavily upon him than it did at first. The parliamentary session had been running its

course, and he, who was an ardent politician, stood outside the arena. Many of his former colleagues, possessing only a partial knowledge of the events of the last years, treated him with thinly disguised contempt or studied neglect. Even in Apley and its neighborhood the faces of old friends were estranged, and their manner chilling. He was no longer the public favorite.

Sidney felt this change bitterly and profoundly. It had always been his aim to surround himself with kindly and smiling faces, which should meet his eye wherever he looked, even to the farthest circle of his sphere. His servants and dependents almost idolized him, and he had succeeded in gaining popularity among his equals. Now all faces seemed changed and critical. Even God's face was turned away from him. He was walking in heaviness and darkness of soul, such as he had not known before his sin had found him out, and while his conscience was satisfied with mechanical and superficial religion. His path was strait where it had once been broad and pleasant. Still, deeper down than this surface conscience of his, and this heaviness of soul, in his inmost spirit, touched by no other spirit than God's, there was a stirring of life and love such as he had never known before, which no words can shadow forth, and no mind save that which feels it can conceive.

It was a necessary consequence of this intrinsic change that he and Margaret should draw nearer to one another. He understood now what had been mysterious and incomprehensible in her.

There was in a degree the same sense of closer union and mutual comprehension between him and the rector. While other faces were turned away, these two shone upon him with a diviner light of love and friendship. But there was no one else. Even Dorothy, with all her sweetness, was judging him, balancing the scales of justice with the severe evenhandedness of youth with a bandage over its eyes. Philip had passed beyond him, and stood higher than he in his youthful probity and honor. They were right; he had been guilty of a great wrong.

Always gnawing at his heart was the remorseful recollection of his eldest son, whom he could not love, but for whom he felt an unutterable pity. A living witness against his selfishness and hypocrisy! The thought of him, haunting him at all times, was charged with misery. It was becoming morbid with him, when Margaret, not too soon, came back to Apley, and was once more his daily companion.

Margaret and Laura met on apparently the old terms. Margaret was very anxious that there should be no break in the intimacy between Sidney and the rector. Partly on this account, and partly from the patience and pity she had learned for the follies of others, she made no difference toward Laura. But Dorothy, again with the severity of youth, could not tolerate the presence of Phyllis's mother. Phyllis herself was away; but when Laura came up to the Hall, Dorothy found some pretext to be absent, or, if that was impossible, sat by in unbroken silence.

Not one of Laura's blandishments could induce her to go to the Rectory. Dick's chances were gone, if he ever had any.

"I see plainly enough what Sidney and Margaret are about," Laura said to her husband. "Now Philip has lost the inheritance, and is a poor match, they are going to bring about a marriage between him and Dorothy Churchill. They are shrewd enough for that, with all their unworldliness."

"Philip and Dorothy!" he repeated thoughtfully; "that seems to me an excellent marriage, now that my poor little Phyllis has found out she never loved Philip. I should have rejoiced in giving Phyllis to him; but doubtless Dorothy is still better suited. And Sidney wished it before he knew of Phyllis's engagement to Philip."

"But I was hoping Dick would have a chance with Dorothy," she said.

"Dick? Oh, no!" he answered. "It would grieve me to the heart if any of my sons became fortune hunters. Dorothy is too rich for any of them. Let them marry girls in their own station, and live honest, industrious lives. I am glad Dick never thought of such a thing."

"But Philip is in the same position now; it is just as much fortune-hunting for him to seek Dorothy."

"Nothing of the kind," he said with the sudden sharpness of a dreamy, mild-tempered man. "Do you suppose Sidney has nothing but those estates bought by Sir John Martin, our uncle? He has had that magnificent business for over

five-and-twenty years. All that he has made for himself will go to Philip."

"Why does Philip become a medical student, then?" she asked snappishly.

"Because the lad does not care to be doing nothing," he replied, "and Margaret does not like him to engage in commerce. She says she does not want him to have nothing to do save merely amassing money. Of course, he would have been a country gentleman, practically a landlord, looking after his father's interests and the welfare of his future tenants. He would have become a magistrate, and he was admirably fitted for filling many useful posts as a country gentleman. Now this prospect has come to an end he chooses to study surgery instead of going into business; a good choice, I think. But he will be a rich man, rich enough to marry a greater heiress than Dorothy, without incurring the reproach of fortune hunting. Sidney must be little short of being a millionaire."

Could this be true? thought Laura with a sinking heart. George might easily be mistaken, but then again it was quite probable that Sidney had made a large fortune by trade. Enormous fortunes were made in the city, and Sidney was always spoken of as a very successful man. Suppose he should be a millionaire! There was not the shadow of a doubt which of his sons his money would go to. Hugh was well provided for, and Martin would not get a shilling more than was entailed upon him. Philip as a millionaire would be a better match than even an

English landlord with a Yorkshire estate, worth only £10,000 a year. She wished she had been less hasty in breaking off Phyllis's engagement. It was that folly of Philip becoming a medical student which had led her astray. But then, would Philip be a millionaire?

CHAPTER LIII.

ANDREW'S HOPE.

A FEW weeks after Margaret and Dorothy left Brackenburn, a telegram reached Sidney in town from Martin's tutor: "Martin lost since dawn yesterday; searching moors."

The sense of loneliness and separation became intolerable to Martin after Dorothy was gone. The homesickness, if it could be called so in one who had never had a home, made him uncontrollably restless. There was not in all this vast expanse of moorland an object that could distract his brooding memory, and in the old house, with its now empty rooms, there was no one who could speak in his own language except the tutor, a kindly man enough, but with no special interest in his uncouth charge. Martin had borne his exile as long as he could. Now he would make his way down to London where Dorothy and Philip lived. His father also was there, and that beautiful, gracious signora, who called herself his mother, and who always looked at him with wonderful kindness in her eyes. When he saw them he would make them understand that he could not live in England any longer, and they would let him go back to Ampezzo, and buy him a farm there among the old

familiar faces. No one would ill treat him any more when they saw how rich he was.

He set off in the clear gray of the dawn, just as the twitter of the birds began in every tree and hedgerow, and the silver drops of dew hung upon every leaf. It was barely a year since he had been taken from his mountain home, and his life of misery and oppression there; but to him it was as long as centuries. He recollected well enough what he had suffered; still he felt vaguely that, though his sufferings were different, they were not less in this strange country. He was like a blind man whose sight is partially restored, and behold! everything is dim, and monstrous, and full of terror; he dare not move lest he should come in contact with these menacing forms. All the new world to which Martin had been brought was out of keeping with him. He had no place in it. If he could only live like the farmers in the Ampezzo Valley, a hardy, sturdy, stalwart life, where his sinewy, clumsy limbs would be of service to him, there would be a chance of his being happy.

These impressions, like all others, were vague, but not on that account less powerful. He could not shape them into language, but he fancied if he could see Philip or Dorothy he could make them understand. But they were gone, these only beloved ones, and he did not know when he should see them again. He must follow them, or he would die. His wanderings took a southerly direction. It was natural to him to avoid

passing through the streets of any town, and when he came near to one he turned aside and took a roundabout road. There was no hardship to him in sleeping out of doors at this time of the year, and he felt no inconvenience from the fact that he could not maintain a decent appearance. In the villages he passed through, buying food with the few shillings he possessed, he was taken for a foreign tramp, and well watched. The children sometimes hooted at him, but that was nothing; it was almost welcome, and he paid no attention to it beyond a flickering smile.

Meanwhile, in all the local papers, and very quickly in the London papers also, there appeared sensational paragraphs describing the disappearance of and search made for the son and heir of Sidney Martin. The whole story, with the old scandal, came to the front again. In the course of a few days the fugitive was found, and brought back to Brackenburn, whither his father and brother had hurried upon receiving the news. It was in vain to reproach him. He was a man, with a man's right to freedom, and not even his father was justified in keeping him under restraint as if he was a madman. A man who suffered from no sense of hardship when he was living out of doors, with little food besides wild berries and field vegetables, might spend the greater part of his time in these fitful wanderings, relapsing more and more into his original barbarism.

“Your mother and Dorothy cannot live here

altogether to be his keeper," said Sidney to Philip, "yet it is evident his grandfather has no control over him. What more can we do?"

"You have done all you could, father," answered Philip, "and now I say, let him go back to Cortina, if he is so bent upon it; and we should not lose sight of him. It would be nothing to buy him a farm there."

"Impossible!" said Sidney. "If he returns a rich man, some woman there will marry him, and his son will be no more fit to be an English gentleman than he is. If we could make him understand about the entail I could pay him to cut it off; but he could never know what it meant. No; he must not go back to Cortina."

"Let us take him down to Apley," suggested Philip.

"Would he be better off there?" asked his father. "He finds life here too civilized with all the moors to roam over. How would he feel where every acre of land is enclosed, and no trespassing allowed, and where life is so much more cramped by custom and conventionality? Do you think he could bear it? I say nothing about your mother and Dorothy, whose lives must be upset and spoiled by his presence; but would he be happier?"

"Look at him," said Philip, "how he is listening and watching us, as if he would tear the words out of our mouths. Martin," he added in Italian, "we are talking about you."

"Yes, yes!" he answered eagerly.

“What are we to do with you?” asked Philip.

“Send me back to Cortina,” he replied.

“But we want you to live here,” continued Philip; “we wish you to marry some good English girl, and bring up your sons to be like Hugh and me. This house and these lands will belong to your eldest son when you die; and he must be brought up like us, not like the farmers in Cortina.”

“If I die, and if I have no son, who would the house belong to?” asked Martin reflectively.

They did not answer him. Martin's face was thoughtful and anxious, and he was evidently puzzling over this new idea. He looked from one to the other with an expression of wistful entreaty in his deep-set eyes, and a look of stronger intelligence than they had seen before dawned upon his face.

“My brother,” he said, “before I came you were in my place. You did not know I lived; you were the eldest son. I take from you this house, these lands. Take them back from me; they make me sad. I will keep none of them. See! I am not even good enough to be thy servant.”

“But you cannot give them back,” rejoined Philip. “Perhaps I might take them if you could and let you be happy in your own way. But you are my father's eldest son, and you must have them, and your eldest son after you.”

“Ah! what a misery!” he cried. “I take all these things from my brother!”

He spoke mournfully and tears glistened in his eyes. He flung himself down on the floor, and hid his face with his hands in an attitude of despondency and wretchedness.

“If I died,” he said at last, “all would come right. Why did you not leave me in Ampezzo? I do you harm; I rob you.”

“No, you do me no harm,” answered Philip; “besides, you are my brother and we care for you. If you are good we shall love you.”

To Philip it seemed as if this brother of his was little more than a child, who might be managed as a child. But Martin shook his head and looked up intently into his father's face.

“You will never love me,” he said. “My father, it would be a happy thing for you all if I was to die.”

The words were so true that neither of them could contradict him. If Martin died how many of the vexatious complications that beset them would cease, and soon be forgotten by the world! Margaret might have said something to console the sorrowful heart just awaking to life and consciousness, but she was not there.

“If I could only die!” he murmured to himself with exceeding sadness.

The problem of how to atone for his sin presented itself with augmented force to Sidney. This son of his had none of the distinctive vices of a savage, unless it was a touch of ferocious cruelty, not surprising in one whose whole life had been subject to oppression and persecution. He had inherited from himself certain moral qualities

which dominated his lower passions ; but from his mother he had derived a self-will and a lack of intelligence which must always make him blind and deaf to reason. As he crouched there on the ground, muttering to himself, a vivid image of Sophy came across Sidney's mind. This poor creature could never make a thorough savage, self-reliant and triumphant in his animal nature ; neither could he now be trained into an intelligent and contented member of civilized society. What could be done for him ?

Andrew Goldsmith had taken himself off immediately upon Sidney's arrival at Brackensburn, but Mary remained in charge of the household. To Mary, as well as to Rachel, it was a great trial to see Philip's place taken by Martin, though he was their own niece's son. Their old-fashioned loyalty to their superiors made them feel as if he was an interloper, one who was utterly unfit for the position which was Philip's due. If Martin could have been brought to England to inherit their own savings, and perhaps succeed his grandfather as the village saddler, they would have welcomed Sophy's son with all their hearts. But it seemed out of the course of nature that he should succeed Sidney, and take Philip's estate. Mary, too, was additionally troubled just now by a scheme of her brother Andrew's.

“Martin's giving you a deal of trouble, sir,” said Mary the evening of the day after Martin had been brought back to the Manor House. “If it wasn't for our Andrew, I should say let

him go back where he came from. But Andrew won't hear a word of that sort. He says Martin shall have his rights, and as long as he lives he'll see there's fair play. But if you'll let me tell you a secret, sir, Andrew's bent upon getting him married, because he thinks you'll want to keep him single, so as Mr. Philip may come into the estate some day."

"It would be the best thing that could be done for him," said Sidney, "if Andrew could find anybody who would marry him. I mean any good, reputable girl."

"Well, I don't credit it!" replied Mary, "but I think Mrs. Martin at the Rectory put it into Andrew's head at Christmas, talking to him a lot of nonsense. He says he's sure she'd be willing for Miss Phyllis to marry him when he's renovated and polished up a little. But Rachel and me laughed at him, and said, anyhow, the rector 'ud never think of giving his consent to her marrying a poor, ignorant, dark Roman Catholic, worshiping a crucifix set up for him by Miss Dorothy, to say nothing of his rough ways, and dreadful bad manners. Miss Phyllis would never look at him, I said, and Mrs. Martin has never set eyes on him yet. All the same, it put it into Andrew's head that somebody would marry Martin, if he could not marry as high as Miss Phyllis."

In spite of the heaviness of his heart, Sidney could not repress a grim laugh at the thought of Laura marrying Phyllis to his eldest son, when that son was Martin, not Philip.

“Does Andrew know of anyone else?” he asked.

“Why, yes,” said Mary, “if he’s not hindered. There’s a sort of far-off cousin of ours, a pretty, nice-mannered girl, something like our Sophy, you know; she’s a clerk in a post office, getting her fifteen pounds a year. Selina Goldsmith her name is, and Andrew wants me to have her here to keep me company, he says, and wait on him and me. But I’m sure he’s got another notion in his head, and Rachel told me to tell you, when I wrote to ask her advice.”

“Mary, you and Rachel are faithful old friends,” he answered, “but believe me when I assure you Margaret and I would be grateful to any good girl who would become Martin’s wife and make him happy. There are many women who would marry him for his future position, if Miss Phyllis would not. You have my full sanction to bringing your young kinswoman here, and, if you succeed in marrying her to Martin, half our difficulties will be overcome.”

“Andrew will never believe it,” said Mary. “And she may sit at table with us when Martin is there, and go out walks with him and Andrew? I shan’t let her go without Andrew.”

“You may do all you can to promote such a marriage,” he replied; “and if Martin is married before next Christmas, we shall be only too glad.”

He returned to Apley the next day with a sense of relief in the hopeful prospect which Mary’s words had opened to him. It was not

improbable that Martin would marry this girl, and if he did, he might lead a secluded and tolerably happy life in the old house at Brackenburn, and gradually fall into occupying himself on the farm that was attached to it. Once suitably married, Martin would be no longer so great an anxiety to them all, and he himself might live down the aspersions so lavishly cast upon his reputation. Martin's children should be brought to Apley at an early age, and, though he would not separate them too much from their parents, they should grow up under his own and Margaret's care. To them he might make that atonement which he could never make to his son.

Andrew Goldsmith rejoiced greatly in the success of his scheme, to which Mary had withdrawn all her opposition. Selina was brought to live at Brackenburn. She was something like Sophy—pretty, lively, and pettish. To exchange her drudgery at the small post office and shop, where she had been glad to earn fifteen pounds a year, for the grandeur of living at a manor house, with very little to do, seemed at first an immense step in life to her girlish ambition. Andrew had rather plainly hinted at what a height she might climb to if she chose, but to his intense disappointment and dismay, Selina seemed much more shocked at Martin's rough ways and bad manners than Miss Dorothy herself was. He had seen Dorothy carry Martin his food from the dining room to the porch, when he refused to sit down to the table, and many a

time had Martin persisted in walking barefoot beside her on the turfy moors. But Selina declared she could not put up with his coarseness and vulgarity, and she seemed more inclined to devote herself to winning the admiration of Martin's tutor.

Andrew insisted upon Selina accompanying them often in their rambles on the moors, rambles irksome and tedious to her beyond measure. There was nothing to be seen there save earth and sky. Martin paid but little heed to her. Like all the rest, she could not talk to him. Those who knew his language were gone away, and how long it would be before they came again he did not know. This girl, whose voice was loud and shrill, and who laughed all the time a little giggling laugh, except when she was sulky, who had strange antics, shaking her head at him, and holding up her finger, and pointing here and there, was altogether unlike his signorina, or the gracious and stately lady who was now his father's wife. He liked his rambles best alone, though he could tolerate the companionship of the old man, his grandfather, who was always silent, but who looked at him often with loving eyes. It did not escape his notice that, since his foiled attempt to find his way to London, he was never left long alone but one or other of his guardians sought him out. The fancy took possession of him that Selina had been added to their number to be another spy upon him.

Andrew Goldsmith's impatience was extreme. He was angry with Selina for failing to win his

grandson's love, and angry at the thought of Martin not marrying. That would be a triumph for his enemy. If he could only argue with Martin, he fancied something could be done, but all he had to say must be translated by the tutor, who was in Sidney's pay. This barrier of language between himself and Sophy's son was another of the wrongs Sidney had inflicted on him.

CHAPTER LIV.

FAILURES.

SIDNEY'S disappointment at the failure of this new scheme almost equaled Andrew's. He had built a good many hopes on the chance of Martin's marriage, for Margaret dwelt much on the humanizing influence a wife and children would have upon him. But Rachel secretly rejoiced in her brother's discomfiture; and Mary, who could not be brought to fall into the scheme, watched its failure gladly. Neither of them could believe it would be a good thing for Philip.

Nothing could be more melancholy than Martin's life became. At Cortina he had been miserably oppressed, every man's hand being against him; but he had been so fully occupied by the heavy tasks exacted from him by Chiara that time had never hung heavily on his hands. The very hatred and tyranny he had suffered from, and the deprivations he had to undergo, supplied that spice of excitement without which existence is a tedious monotony. A deep disgust of life took hold of his half-awakened mind. In former days the struggle for existence had occupied him. That hunger, which hardened him to a long and patient effort, as he stealthily followed and trapped some wild animal, was no longer felt;

his food was brought to him oftener than he needed it, and he ate more than was good for him out of sheer want of employment. The sound, dreamless sleep that came to him on his heap of straw in Chiara's hut did not visit the soft, comfortable bed, which his aunt Mary took care to make herself every morning, that the feathers might be kept downy. Even his outdoor life was no longer a perilous climbing of peaks with deep precipices and abysses, which compelled him to give a strained attention to every step; it was a dull loitering over a safe plain, with an old man always jogging on beside him, and a smooth horizon bounding his view. He was too ignorant to know what was ailing him, body and mind; but nostalgia held him in its dread embrace, and life was becoming an insufferable burden to him.

Now and then the heavy cloud lifted, and a gleam of light reached him. Philip came down as often as he could spare a day or two, and his flying visits were Martin's only sunshine. He was at last beginning to realize that this grand signore was indeed his brother. If he knew when he was to come he watched all day for the moment when he could set out to meet him. If Philip came unawares his transport of gladness more than once brought the tears to Philip's eyes. But his father's visits produced in him a feeling of anxiety, and almost of terror. He was afraid of him, and this fear flung him back into his original moroseness and barbarism in his father's presence.

His longing to see Margaret and Dorothy was intense, but he never gave expression to it. Only when kneeling before the crucifix, near the entrance of his cave, did he utter either of their names. In this place alone did he find any moments of comparative freedom from the mysterious malady which was consuming him. The damp, rocky roof and walls, the hard, rough floor, the utter stillness and wildness of the place were like a bit of his old life when he sought refuge in his cave on the mountains. Sometimes, when he managed to elude the vigilance of his grandfather, he made his way to this spot, and felt, for an hour or two, something of the restful, satisfied feelings we all enjoy when we are at home. When, as he stood at the low mouth of the cave, and lifted up his heavy eyes to the worn, grotesque, pathetic figure of Christ upon the cross, that familiar sight on which his childish gaze had so often rested, then he could almost fancy that a step or two would bring him out upon the sharp, ice-bound peaks, where the biting wind would string up his relaxed frame, and send the blood tingling through his languid veins.

The summer and autumn passed by, but Margaret and Dorothy did not return to Brackenburn. Sidney intended to keep Christmas there again, and their visit was reserved for the winter. Philip and Hugh also, though they spent a week now and then shooting on the moors, did not give up the whole of the long vacation to Martin, as they had done the year before. Some of the

time was spent at Apley, where their intercourse with their cousins at the Rectory had returned to its former channel, excepting with Phyllis, whose absence when Philip was staying at the Hall was as regular as his presence there.

Laura was for once perplexed and uncertain. She could not forget that though Philip was at present only a medical student he might some day be a millionaire. She had means of setting an inquiry afloat as to Sidney's position in the city; but the answers she got were contradictory, and in consequence unsatisfactory. Ought she, in Phyllis's interests, to attach him once more to her? or should she see him carry off a rich heiress like Dorothy before her very eyes? She could not forgive herself for having been too precipitate in breaking off his long engagement with Phyllis, but she did not think it would be impossible to renew it.

She summoned Phyllis home early in October, while Philip was still at Apley, in order to see how the young people would conduct themselves toward one another. But fortune did not favor her. Philip and Dorothy met Phyllis unexpectedly in the avenue between the Hall and the Rectory. The color mounted up to Philip's face, and there was a slight embarrassment in his manner; but Phyllis was quite self-possessed, and spoke to him in a cordial and cousinly tone.

“Why! Philip, it is ages since I saw you,” she said gayly, “and now you have quite a professional air. Pray do not ask me after my

health, dear Dr. Martin. I cannot let you feel my pulse, or look at my tongue."

"I need not," he answered; "you never had anything the matter with you, and you have not now. I wish some of our poor hospital patients had your chances of keeping well."

"He talks of the hospital immediately," she rejoined, tossing her head, "and he smells of his drugs. O Philip! Philip! that you should come to this! You are a lost man."

"I suppose I am," he said, laughing; "I am lost to my old life, but I like the new one as much. Phyllis, it seems like a hundred years since I saw you."

"That is what makes you look so old," she retorted; "a hundred years, added to the twenty-three I know of, must make a tremendous difference. How much more aged you are than me!"

"Do you think he looks older?" asked Dorothy rather anxiously. "Mrs. Martin is afraid he works too hard, and she is troubled a little about it."

"So are you," rejoined Phyllis.

"Yes, I am," she replied steadily, yet a little shyly. She was more disturbed by this unexpected meeting than either of the other two were. It seemed to her that it must be inexpressibly painful to them both, and that it would be better for her to go away.

"Well, good-by," said Phyllis airily; "here is the gate. Open it for me, and shut it behind me, or we shall have your Scotch cattle in our

glebe. We shall see you at the Rectory soon, Philip?"

Philip opened the gate, and he and Dorothy stood in silence watching her, until, as she turned a corner that would hide her from their sight, she looked round and kissed her hand to them.

"How pretty she is!" exclaimed Philip. It astonished him that he felt so little agitation upon seeing her for the first time. She was very pretty; very fair. "But if she be not fair for me, what care I how fair she be?" he said to himself, feeling the very spirit of Wither's old poem. The face beside him, not so faultless as Phyllis's, was more beautiful to him for its expression of almost timid sympathy with his supposed grief. Dorothy's eyes looked wistfully into his.

"I cannot understand how or why I loved her," he went on in a low tone. "I suppose it was because I grew up with the idea that she was to be my wife. Not at home, but at the Rectory she was always called my little wife. So it grew with my growth."

"It must have been a great sorrow to you," murmured Dorothy.

"It was the uprooting of a fancy, not a sorrow," he said; "I am thankful it was torn up like the weed it was. A weed! Yes; and it would have been a noxious weed, poisoning my whole life. It is compensation enough for losing the position for which Phyllis would have married me."

They walked on under the overarching trees,

with the setting sun throwing long shadows before them as they moved side by side. A few fallen leaves lay upon the road, or whirled merrily around them in the evening wind.

“There is only one girl who is like my mother,” he said suddenly, “and if I could hope to win her—if it was in years to come—if she would wait for me——”

“Who is it?” asked Dorothy tremulously, as he paused; and she looked up into his face with a pained expression. So soon to have forgotten his love to Phyllis—and to love again!

“Why, Dorothy!” he exclaimed, “there is nobody in the world like my mother but you! Don’t you feel it? My father is always pointing it out. Will you not some day forget my foolish fancy for Phyllis, and believe that I love you, and only you, with all my heart? I have loved you ever since we were at Cortina and found out poor Martin.”

Dorothy made no answer. Her heart beat so quickly that she knew she could not control her voice or her tears if she attempted to speak. Her love for him dated farther back than his for her.

“You think me fickle, and that I fall in love too easily,” he said in tones of deprecating earnestness, “but set me a time, let me prove myself in earnest. I had not seen you when I was inextricably bound to Phyllis. Oh! I love you quite differently; I think of you as if you were my conscience. I try to see myself as you see me; and when I do I feel how unworthy I am of you.”

“No, no,” she answered, between laughing and sobbing; “unworthy of me!”

“Then you will give me time to prove that I love you,” he said, “and to give me a chance of winning your love.”

“There is no need of that,” she whispered.

“Is that true?” he cried, seizing her hands, and gazing eagerly into her face. “Do you mean that you have loved me, blind idiot that I was? Do you mean that you were not disgusted by me when I was playing the forlorn lover, and must needs be sent abroad to cure me of my folly? O Dorothy! if I could only make you forget what a fool I made of myself!”

“I was so sorry for you,” she said pityingly, “and I would have done all I could to save you from your sorrow. But it is best as it is, perhaps.”

“A thousand times best!” he exclaimed. “Ever since we were at Cortina you have been in my heart of hearts; and I understand a little now the sacred mystery that a true marriage must be.”

CHAPTER LV.

A NEW PLAN.

THERE were more persons than Laura Martin who felt bitter and disappointed when the announcement was made that Sidney Martin's second son was about to marry his rich ward. Dorothy, with her large fortune, had been the subject of much speculation and many schemes among Sidney's circle, and he did not escape further odium.

His career stood in this light in the eyes of most who knew him. In his early manhood he contracted a low marriage, which he kept a profound secret for fear of losing the favor of his rich uncle, whose next heir he was. When tired and disgusted with his unsuitable wife, he deserted her and his infant son in a remote and almost unvisited spot in the Austrian Tyrol, thus dooming his firstborn child to a life of misery and degradation many degrees worse than that of the lowest laborer in England. After his succession to the estates of his uncle he assumed the character of an ardent philanthropist and Christian, by which he gained the affection of the only daughter and heiress of Colonel Cleveland of Apley. His eldest son by this marriage was brought up as his heir, and would have succeeded him but for the accidental discovery of his first-

born son, a man of thirty, densely ignorant, and as uncivilized as a savage. The right of this man having been established by his mother's father, Sidney was compelled to acknowledge him and place him in the house which would belong to him upon his father's death. But to compensate the second son, thus dispossessed and disinherited, he handed over to him the wealthy ward, who had been entrusted to his care by a man who knew him only under his assumed character. This young girl had been kept secluded from all chances of making another choice. Sidney Martin was a clever man, said the world, a clever Christian.

No man knew the depth of his repentance. Even Margaret but dimly guessed it. If he could have made a sacrifice of all his life, and gone back to the hour when he fled from Sophy's shrill peevishness, he would have done it, and taken up his life afresh, burdened with her as his wife and the mother of his children. But the past could not be undone. There was a closer union now between him and Margaret than there ever had been, though it had struck its roots in his sin and sorrow. It might have been a higher union, lifted up into pure regions of holiness and gladness, but he had dragged her down to him in the valley instead of rising with her to fairer heights.

Another scheme presented itself to his brain, always busily planning how to retrieve the past. Why should not Philip and Dorothy marry at once, and go to live at Brackenburn? Philip had

been brought up to fulfill the duties of an English country gentleman, a post Martin could never fill. He might still take that position, and look after the Yorkshire estate as long as Sidney himself lived. Then the progress which Martin had been making under Dorothy's influence, and which had been arrested by her departure, would go on again. Martin was sinking back mentally, and was failing physically. Philip and Dorothy would save him body and soul.

Margaret approved cordially of this idea. Her heart was full of pity for the desolate man, living his lonely life among people who must utterly fail to understand him. There was no reason why Philip and Dorothy should not marry soon and take up their charge. They could make a home for Martin, who loved them both so ardently; and if it came to pass in the future that he should marry, they would give up the place to him. As Dorothy loved her birthplace so much, she and Philip might choose to build themselves a house in the neighborhood of Brackeburn.

There was one person only who might raise an objection to this plan; and Philip went down to Brackeburn to consult Andrew Goldsmith, and convince him of its desirability. It was a November night when he reached the manor house, and scarcely a light shone in any of its windows, and not a sound was to be heard until Philip rang the great hall door bell. It was opened by Selina, with a candle in her hand; and by its dim light she led him along the many passages until they reached the door of the

housekeeper's room near the kitchen. Both Andrew and Mary Goldsmith were dozing in the flickering firelight, and Selina giggled audibly at their bewildered efforts to appear awake and lively.

"A poor home for Martin," thought Philip, as he shook hands with the old people. Martin was stretched upon the hearthrug, and did not stir. He was lying in a languid posture, as if his strength was quite worn out. His hair, no longer left to grow in a tangled mass, lay in thin, straight lines on his forehead and his hollow temples, which had almost the color of old ivory. His cheeks, too, were sunken, and as he slept there was a tremulous movement about his lips, which gave to him an air of childish weakness. He looked like a strong man whose strength was slowly ebbing away.

"Martin, old man," said Philip, laying a cold hand on his burning forehead, "wake up and give me a welcome."

Martin awoke with a violent start, and looked up vacantly, like a dog just roused from his sleep, but when he saw who was bending over him he burst into a passion of tears.

"It is time Dorothy and I came to take care of him," thought Philip.

He would have no other fire kindled, and as supper was just ready, he sat down with them. When this meal was over, and Mary and Selina had gone to see after his room for the night, Philip found an opportunity of at once telling his business. Andrew was fond of him, but in his

obstinate old heart there was a lurking jealousy of this fine young fellow who had so long usurped the place of his grandson. It vexed him to see Martin stretch himself on the ground at Philip's feet, and gaze up into his face in humble admiration.

"Mr. Goldsmith," began Philip. In old times he had called him Andrew, but since he knew him to be his father's father-in-law he had adopted a more formal mode of address, which Andrew always acknowledged by a slow and somewhat dignified motion of his head. "Mr. Goldsmith, I came to tell you and Mary, who are among my earliest friends, that I am going to marry Miss Dorothy. Soon, too, for my father and mother wish it, as well as myself.

Andrew took his pipe out of his mouth as if to speak, but put it back again till he should hear more, for he was sure there was more to come.

"We are to be married almost immediately," continued Philip, "partly on Martin's account. You know how he misses my mother and Dorothy, and you know how quickly he learns from Dorothy. He has fallen back ever since she went away. So we intend to make a home for Martin. We are going to take him under our charge, and see how much we can do for him. My mother says this life is only a moment in our endless life, and Dorothy and I are going to spend our moment in taking care of my brother."

"How are you going to do it?" asked Andrew suspiciously.

“And as soon as we are married, we are coming here to live with Martin——”

“That shall never be,” interrupted Andrew, bringing his clenched fist down on the table with a blow that made Martin start, and cower like a frightened hound. “I’ll see that my grandson is not turned out of his own house. No, no. Marry as soon as you please; but you shan’t come to live in Martin’s place.”

Andrew’s folly and vehemence were so unexpected by Philip, that for a minute or two he sat silently staring at the old man’s infuriated face. Martin, who had been roused by his angry tones, sat up on his heels and gazed from one to the other in bewildered attention.

“Mr. Goldsmith,” said Philip, after his pause of amazement, “we are making this arrangement chiefly on Martin’s account. It is true Miss Dorothy loves this house, where she was born, and would rather live here than anywhere else; but she knows it can never be ours. We think of building another house in this neighborhood.”

“Ay!” interrupted Andrew again, “with the money left by Sir John Martin to build a place suitable for his heir. But Martin is his heir. I am not too old to see that he has his rights. What you say sounds all very well; but there’s nobody but me to see the poor lad gets his own. I’m sorry to gainsay you, Mr. Philip, but you cannot come to live here in my grandson’s house. He must be master, and nobody else.”

“Not for his own good?” asked Philip. “He cannot be master, for he does not know how to

give an order to any servant. He will learn in time, if we take him in hand. We thought you and Mary would be glad to return to Apley, for you are among total strangers here ; and Rachel is going to live with us as housekeeper.”

“Ah !” cried Andrew, with a long-drawn accent of suspicion and contempt, “Rachel would do anything to serve you. I should soon hear that Martin had signed his rights away. I couldn't trust Sophy's son with Rachel when it was you he had to be unsaddled for. No ; it shall never be. I'll stay by Martin as long as I live ; and nobody else shall be master or mistress in his house.”

“Martin,” said Philip, stooping down to his brother again, and speaking in the simple Italian words he understood, “I am going to marry the signorina. Would you like us to come here, and live with you always ?”

Martin repeated the words slowly to himself in a whisper ; and slowly the expression of his heavy face turned into a smile so wistful and pathetic that it made Philip's heart ache. It was the smile of a soul that sees afar off the glory and blissfulness of a life from which it is shut out, but which it gazes at with distant and ignorant sympathy.

“Yes, yes, my brother !” he answered.

“I don't know what you say to him,” said Andrew jealously ; “but he's more simple than a child ; you may do what you like with him. But you won't take me in ; neither you nor your father. Here Martin is, and here he stays.”

“We wish him to stay here,” replied Philip.
“We are coming chiefly for his sake.”

“But I say you shall not come,” persisted Andrew. “I’m his only guardian, and I’ll defend his rights. Come in Philip—turn out Martin. That’s how it will be; and I put down my foot against it. Here Martin stops, and here I stop; and nobody else comes in as master.”

“You compel me to remind you that Martin has no right to this house,” said Philip, “as long as my father lives. This place belongs to my father, and to no one else.”

“I’ll take lawyer’s opinion on that,” he answered doggedly. “I’ve given up putting my trust in any man, especially Mr. Martin. And if it’s true, as sure as you bring Miss Dorothy here as your wife I’ll take my grandson away, down to Apley, and all the country-side shall see Mr. Martin’s son and heir sitting at work in a saddler’s shop. He is fitter for that, perhaps, than to be a squire; but whose fault is it? Who deserted him and his mother? Oh! Sophy, Sophy! my poor lost little girl!”

He dropped his white head upon his hands, and his sobs sounded through the little room. Philip rose silently, and went away; and Martin, with his bare feet, followed him noiselessly. The old man was left alone with his impotent rage and grief.

CHAPTER LVI.

ON THE MOORS.

ANDREW GOLDSMITH went, as he had threatened, to consult lawyers, one after another, and learned, to his vexation, that, so long as the father lived, the son had no legal claim to the estate. There could be no disputing Sidney's right to dispose of Brackenburn as he pleased during his lifetime. The next course to take would be to follow out his other threat of having his grandson at Apley, and setting him to learn his trade in the village shop, in the sight of all the passers-by. But here again he found himself baffled. He had no authority over Martin; no power save that of persuasion. And how could he persuade one with whom he could exchange no conversation, except by signs? Martin was free to choose for himself; and none but his enemies had access by language to his mind. They might tell him exactly what they pleased; and there was no doubt they would prevail upon him to welcome Philip and Dorothy to Brackenburn. Andrew found himself defeated on all points.

One thing he resolved upon in this defeat—he would not leave Brackenburn unless he was forcibly ejected. He would remain beside Martin, jealously guarding him against signing away his

rights. If they ejected him he would find quarters near at hand ; and all the country should hear of his apprehensions. The thing should not be done in a corner. If it was done it should be proclaimed far and wide. He was Martin's sole protector as long as he lived ; and his resolution and resentment made him feel strong enough to live through many long years yet.

Since old Andrew was so determined in his opposition to Sidney's scheme, there was no longer a great haste in pushing forward the marriage of Philip and Dorothy. But the old purpose of keeping Christmas at Brackenburn was taken up again. Margaret hoped that she and Rachel could make Andrew believe that there was no antagonism felt by any one of them against Martin, but that their great desire was to arrange everything for his welfare. They were glad to hear that he did not intend to quit Brackenburn on their arrival, although he had taken lodgings in the bailiff's house, resolved not to sleep under the same roof as Sidney.

The weather during December was unusually severe. For several days a bitter northeast wind, rising almost to a gale, swept across England, and there was a leaden hue in the gloomy sky, as of low clouds charged with snow, which needed a little rise in the temperature before it could fall. Even at Apley, black frosts, changing into dense fogs, prevailed. But in Yorkshire, though the fogs were lighter, the frost was keener. Every pool and tarn on the moors were ice-bound, and the noisy burn running down the

valley at Brackenburn was silenced, only a sluggish thread of water trickling under the sheet of ice which spread from side to side. The coarse grass upon the moors was fringed with ice ; and the low trees, now bare of leaves, showed like masses of white coral against the leaden sky. The farmers brought their flocks of sheep to pastures near home, and only the wild ponies were left to brave the inclemency of the threatened storm. But it was slow in coming. Now and then the clouds broke, and gleams of wintry sunshine, or a brilliant vision of stars, appeared through the opening.

The winter once again made Martin feel more at home. This snow-charged sky was familiar to him, more familiar than the soft, hazy, blue sky, or the drifting clouds of summer. The moorlands, too, were less strange to him in their frost-bound grayness than in the gorgeous purple and gold of autumn. He felt less homesick than usual ; yet he was no happier. There was a lurking dread in his heart, so vague that he was only dimly conscious of it—the dread of having Philip and Dorothy in their great happiness always in sight.

For he loved Dorothy with a passion that was none the less because he could not express it in words, even to himself. He felt himself unfit for her—far beneath her. He could see how Philip stood beside her, her equal, each suited to the other. But this did not make his inferiority less painful to him. He knew enough of his present position to be aware

that what Philip was he might have been. They had brought this foolish girl, Selina, to be his wife, but how could he love her when he had seen Dorothy?

The day was come when all these great and fine people were expected to arrive—to find him in their way—always in their way, like a dog who has no right to a place on the hearth, but is not driven away out of pity. This kindness of theirs was only a little less oppressive than Chiara's tyranny. Never could he become what they wished him to be, yet he would have to be always striving to become it. It was as if they stood on a sunlit peak far above him, beckoning and calling to him to come up to them, while he was chained at the foot, and could climb but a very little way toward them. Forever climbing and forever falling, with soreness of heart and sickness of soul. This was what his future life would be.

Early in the short day he started off for the moors, followed at a little distance by Andrew, who was as miserable as himself. Martin strode on across the trackless uplands, scarcely heeding where he went, though he kept his purpose vaguely in his mind. He was going toward his cave, three miles away; but, at present, trivial objects were sufficient to divert him from his path. The wild creatures, so numerous on the moors, were become almost tame by the severity of the cold, and many of them were lying dead on the frozen ground. Martin stood at times for some

minutes gazing down with a sort of pity on these victims of the cold. In former days he would have rejoiced over them as so much prey ; but he was never hungry now, and he had seen Dorothy look sad over the dead body of a bird. So with this dim sense of compassion in his heart he stood and gazed at them. Then Andrew, who kept him in sight as far as his old limbs permitted, had time to overtake him, and lay his hand upon Martin's arm, and point toward home, only to start him on again in his devious course.

Ever since he understood that his death would reinstate Philip in his old position, he had thought wistfully of death. There was no escape out of the evil about him except by dying. He was too much of a savage yet to think of suicide : that is a crime of a certain degree of civilization. To put himself to death would have been to him almost as impossible as for a beast to do so. But as he came again and again across these creatures who had perished by the cold, the idea of death was kept all day before his mind.

There was a brief spell of sunshine, but it soon came to an end, and the wintry beauty of the moors was over. They lay sullen and gloomy under the sullen and gloomy sky. The frost-bound pools lurked in the hollows like black gulfs. A sudden blast of freezing wind blew across the wide expanse with a shriek, beneath which was a moan. Then there followed a silence ; and the crackling of the frozen twigs and

sedges under his feet sounded with strange loudness.

He went on more languidly, for with the hiding of the sun the glow passed out of his veins. The sky in the north, toward which his face was turned, grew denser and darker; and he wondered why he saw no snowy peaks rising against it. For he was at home again, in Ampezzo, and more than once he fancied he heard Chiara's shrill, threatening voice calling to him. Was he come out to seek anything that was lost? Were all the sheep safe? and the goats? He could hear no bleating. The wolves would be dangerous in such weather as this. And now the snow was falling thickly, driven by the wind in giddy circles, and swirling around him bewilderingly. He laughed aloud as he stood still to watch them. But he had lost his way, and there was nothing to guide him; no light in the sky except from these white, fluttering snowflakes. In which direction did his cave lie? Once there he would be under shelter from the storm.

All at once he heard the frenzied shouting of old Andrew's voice, calling, "Martin! Martin!" and he came back with a start to the present time. He was not on the mountains above Cortina, but in England, on the wild moors, and the voice calling to him was not Chiara's, but the old man's, who was said to be his mother's father. He shouted back again, and the call drew nearer. He went a few steps toward the sound; and the tall, stooping figure of Andrew

loomed through the driving storm. As Martin drew near him, he uttered a cry of joy, and fell senseless and benumbed into his arms, which he stretched out to catch him.

“I will save you, old man,” cried Martin; “I will save you.”

CHAPTER LVII.

EXPIATION.

IMPORTANT business had taken Sidney to Liverpool, and it had been arranged that instead of returning to Apley, he should go across to Brackenburn and meet the rest of the Christmas party there. Traveling was a good deal impeded by a severe snowstorm, and he was disappointed, though not surprised, to find that the London train was very much behind time, when he reached the country station nearest to Brackenburn. Leaving the carriage and brake to bring the large party coming up from the south, Sidney hired a light spring cart, which would make its way more quickly and easily along the encumbered roads. The early night had already fallen; and a few breaks in the drifting clouds, through which the stars shone by twos and threes, seemed to foretell a cessation in the storm.

The full moon was shining through one of these rifts when he reached the forecourt of the old house, and its silvery light fell on all the gables, and touched every tossing spray of ivy glistening with the freshly fallen snow. But instead of the cheerful lights shining in every window, all the front of the house was in darkness. Within the wide porch a deep drift almost barred the ap-

proach to the door. There was something ominous in the deathlike silence and darkness of this place, to which he had been traveling with the expectation of entering it surrounded by all whom he loved most. There stole over him a sense of loneliness, such as all of us feel at times, when the utter solitude of the life within us, the isolation of each one's spirit, presses consciously and with deep awe upon us. No words could say how precious Margaret was to him; but even she could never enter into the secret and mysterious house of his soul.

A glimmer in a distant window at last answered to the driver's noisy and repeated ringing of the great bell; and the door was opened, Mary Goldsmith appearing with a face of terror.

"Oh, Mr. Martin!" she cried in a tremulous voice, "they're lost in the snow. They've never come back. Andrew and Martin are lost in the snow!"

For a moment it seemed as if her words forbade his entrance; and he stood motionless on the threshold looking from her to the whiteness of the scene behind him.

"Come in, come in," she said impatiently, "and tells us what we must do. All the men are gone to the station, and only the old gardener's left. They went out hours ago, Andrew and Martin, and never came back. They'd have been home before nightfall if they hadn't lost themselves."

Sidney entered the hall, leaving the heavy door ajar, and in a minute or two a long drift of

snow stretched across the polished floor, blown in by the rising wind.

“Has nobody gone in search of them?” asked Sidney.

“Nay!” said Mary, crying, “there’s only me, and Selina, and the maids; and it’s such a dizzy storm. We lost our way only going along the garden walks. We couldn’t see a yard before us. But we’ve lighted up all the windows at the back, looking over the moor. Only I’m afraid they can’t be seen far off through the driving snow.”

The wind had risen again almost to a gale, and roared round the solitary house, shaking every door and casement, and beating the long ivy tendrils against the windowpanes. Sidney could see nothing even of the storm for the sheet of ice and snow covering the outside of the windows. Andrew old, and Martin ailing in health, out on the moors, in this tempest! He looked into Mary’s terror-stricken face with an expression of intense anxiety.

“They will be dead before morning!” cried Mary.

She put his own half formed thought into blunt words. Dead! Sophy’s father and Sophy’s son! The old, long gone by days when he was a boy and madly in love with Sophy came back to him vividly, as if the effacing touch of many years had not blotted out the recollection of them. The girl’s pretty, saucy face, her high spirits and merry moods, her unrestrained love for him and his brief frenzied passion for her,

all the long forgotten memories, sprang into bitter and stinging life. His conscience told him he had been glad when he knew she was dead, leaving his way to happiness and prosperity clear before him. But there was a great horror to him in a thought which was lurking somewhere in an obscure corner of his brain, a murderous thought, that he would rejoice in the death of Sophy's son. What would he do if Philip, his beloved son, were lost on the moors? That must he do for Martin.

He forgot Margaret for the time, as if to him she had no existence. He thought only of his sons—Philip, whom he would give his life to save, and Martin, to whom he owed a deeper debt than to any other human being; and flinging open the hall door he precipitated himself into the storm. There was a sudden lull as he did so; the gusts of wind ceased, and the dizzy snowflakes no longer hid the way. Bidding Mary send all the aid she could, as soon as the men arrived from the station, Sidney started across the moors.

He was fairly well acquainted with their general aspect, and felt no misgiving as to keeping within the range of the points most familiar to him. The light was clear enough to enable him to avoid the greater drifts, and the hollows, lying like great basins of snow. Besides, at any moment he might come upon the weary men, exhausted, perhaps, with exposure and fatigue, but stumbling homeward. From time to time he shouted, and waited, listening painfully for some answer. But no answer came, and still he

went on, busy with the multiplicity of thoughts that crowded through his brain, and taking little heed of time or distance.

It seemed almost as if Martin and Philip were walking beside him. The fatherhood that was in him—the most godlike of all human emotions—was stirred to its very depths. He knew what it was; he had felt it in all its fullness toward Philip. But Martin also was his son! What an infinite love and pathos there were in the words “my son”! It seemed incredible, impossible, that he could have so sinned against that divine fatherhood in himself as to forsake the mother of his firstborn child. He had given life to Martin, but alas! what a life! Could he never set that wrong right through even the countless ages of eternity? Had not Martin lost forever the birth-right that ought to have been his in this world?

No love either of father or mother; no symbol by which he could learn the love of God himself. Martin had never known what it was to be a son. All the innocent blisses, the passing gladness, the deep, unutterable joys of a happy childhood had been stolen from him. That which Philip had possessed in the richest measure Martin had had no least taste of. His childhood had been desolate and oppressed as childhood ought never to be; his manhood had been given over to destitution and slavery. The father had sown in a small seed-plot, the son had reaped in a wide harvest-field.

The chief bitterness of it all, the very sting of death, was that no atonement was possible. As

Sidney struggled onward through the clogging snowdrifts, he felt that he could give up even Margaret if he could recall the past. What was wealth, or influence, or the love of wife and child, or the choicest of all earth's many gifts, compared with the joy of having been true to that which was most akin to God in his own nature? That joy could never be his; but he would be a true father to Martin now, though he could not hope to find in him the sonship which is the crown of fatherhood.

The lull in the storm was over. The snowflakes began to whirl around him giddily, driven and tossed hither and thither by the bitter wind, and falling so thickly that they formed a dense veil of fluttering atoms, as impervious to the sight as a stone wall. The familiar landmarks were utterly lost were they ever so near to him. He fought his way through the wind and the snow as best he could, calling from time to time. The thick air was soundless; he could hear only his own heavy sighs and labored breath. The biting cold was making him feel dull and torpid; a lethargy crept over his busy brain.

Suddenly, as if a white curtain had been drawn aside for a moment, he saw on the other side of a slight ravine the cave which had been Martin's chosen retreat, and in the safe shelter of it sat Andrew and Martin, with a fire burning brightly in the entrance of the cave. Yonder there were warmth and safety; and in Sidney's clouded brain there sprang a great gladness at having found his son. He cried "Martin!" and it

seemed to him as if he turned his ear toward him and listened to his call.

But the vision was hidden again from his sight before he could take a step forward ; and still groping his way, though feebly and with exhausted limbs, he struggled on through the bewildering snowflakes to reach the haven of his son's shelter.

CHAPTER LVIII.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

SCARCELY an hour later than Sidney's arrival Margaret came to Brackenburn, with the large party of her companions and servants. It did not strike her or Philip that there could be much danger in a storm such as they had passed through coming from the south. But Dorothy and the servants belonging to Brackenburn looked grave. The men, huddled in the porch, held a consultation. It was impossible to do anything until the downfall abated. The giddy maze of snowflakes was more bewildering than the darkest night, for lanterns could be of no use in such a storm, as they would have been in utter darkness.

“Oh! Miss Dorothy,” cried Mary, “you know this country's ways better than us from the south. Is there nothing we can do?”

“Nothing,” she answered; “we must wait till the snow abates. Nobody could go out in a storm like this.”

“Would not your St. Bernard track them?” asked Philip.

“No,” she said, “none of the men could venture out now. Oh! you don't know what it is. You cannot go, Philip; you could not find your way for five minutes.”

"They'll be frozen to death before morning," wailed Mary.

"No," answered Dorothy in a faltering voice ; "Martin would get to his cave, and they are safe there. But there is your father, Philip."

"He hasn't been gone an hour," said Mary, "and the others have been out six hours or more."

They gathered round the fire, which had smoldered down upon the neglected hearth ; but it was soon in a blaze again, and the cheerful light fell upon Margaret's pale and thoughtful face. Philip and Dorothy looked at her, and then glanced apprehensively at each other. For the moment Margaret, with her steadfast and simple air of tranquillity, seemed to belong to another world than theirs.

"God is also in the storm," she said softly, as if to herself. She drew Dorothy close to her, and laid her other hand on Philip's arm.

"Children," she said, "we are no safer than they are, for we are all alike in the hands of God. You must go and take food and rest, that you may be strong to help as soon as the storm is over. Philip must go to seek them as soon as it is possible to find them."

But Margaret herself could not take either rest or food. Under her habitual tranquillity, which had become almost a second nature to her, there was to-night a strange agitation, such as she had felt but once before. This breaking up of the deep spring of feeling differed from the storm that had shaken her soul to the center when she

discovered Sidney's treachery; but it was not less intense. She had never known before how much she loved him as her husband, with what a passionate force her heart clung to him. It seemed to her as if she was actually out with him, out in the bewildering snow, weary, aching, stumbling from drift to drift, growing numb and torpid. Oh! if she were really by his side, speaking to him, and hearing his dear voice! It was right that he should go to seek Martin; she did not grudge the peril. She was glad that he should risk his life for the son whose life he had ruined. But if he should perish, her husband, just now, when he had attained a higher level, when the love of God had conquered his love of the world!

From time to time Margaret opened her case-ment and looked out on the baffling snow-fall, which filled all the contracted field of vision. Nothing else could she see, not even the sky; only the dancing motes against a background of dense gloom.

Soon after dawn the downfall ceased, and Dorothy led Philip up to an attic window from which there was the widest view of the moorland. Stretching before their dazzled eyes was an undulating plain of the purest white, with not a track or mark upon it. Here and there a line of the faintest primrose shining in the pale daylight showed the crest of a hillock or the margin of a hollow. But all landmarks were blotted out. The sky was still of a leaden hue, and there was a threatening of more snow on the northern horizon,

“We must find them before another night comes on,” exclaimed Philip.

“I could find my way to Martin’s cave with a compass,” said Dorothy hesitatingly. “If the sun comes out I am sure I could find it.”

“But you must not go, my darling,” he answered. “I cannot let you go with us men.”

“My dogs would be very little use without me,” she said; “they will not follow anyone else so well. I don’t think the dogs can track them, but Martin might hear their baying, and would make an effort to come to us, or let us know where they are.”

“Let us start at once then,” exclaimed Philip.

The men were scanning the threatened storm in the north, but Dorothy’s appearance, ready to go with them, silenced all objections. The snow was too soft to walk on easily, and the dogs whined as she bade them follow her, but they obeyed.

“Only pray ’at the storm ’ill keep off till we are home again,” said the old shepherd, who could estimate the danger of their undertaking better than anyone else. Margaret watched them from her window with a wistful tenderness in her eyes, which were heavy and dim with her sleepless night. It was not possible for her to go.

The sun shone faintly, and Dorothy, by its aid and that of her compass, could direct the course of the little troop of men and dogs to the point where the cave was. She fancied she could recognize, under the softly undulating surface, the outlines of one ridge after another, and the hol-

lows where frozen tarns were lying. The men shouted, and the dogs bayed with their deep voices, filling the moorland with their cry, but there was no sign as yet that any of the lost men heard them. How swiftly the precious moments were passing by! and how slow was the progress which they made! The leaden snowclouds were slowly climbing up the sky, and had already covered the dim disk of the low lying sun.

“I feel sure the cave is over there,” said Dorothy.

They had reached a more rugged part of the upland, strewn with masses of rock, which stood half buried in heather in the summer. Deep snowdrifts had gathered on the side of each of them. The cave lay under a rock at the head of a long, narrow dell, scarcely more than a cleft in the earth, down which a burn ran in summer; and above the margin of this cleft stood a shape which, as they drew near to it, took the form of a cross.

They hastened to the ravine, and looked down into it. It was half filled with a deep drift, which almost hid the mouth of the cave, but the wind had blown away most of the snow from the old Calvary, which had weathered so many wintry tempests in the Ampezzo Valley. The arms of the cross were pure white, and the crucified form upon it was swathed in a white shroud. But the foot of it was buried in the snow, and a human form lay there almost hidden by it, with arms outstretched, as if to clasp the cross. Who could it be?

CHAPTER LIX.

FOUND.

FOR a few moments they all stood paralyzed and speechless on the edge of the ravine, gazing down at the death-like form. Dorothy and Philip clasped one another's hands with a grasp as if their own death was near. Then the dogs broke noisily on the dread silence, and as the clamor rang through the air, there came a shout from the cave; and Martin made his way through the drifted snow, and stood in the entrance, looking up to them with rough gestures of delight.

A sharp cry of terror broke from Philip's lips, and springing down into the ravine he cleared away the snow that covered the prostrate form. Martin was beside him in an instant, and with swift, savage instinct, he bent down, and laid his head on his father's breast, to hear if the heart within was beating still. His head had never rested there before, and now it lay there motionless, listening for the feeblest throb that spoke of life. No one moved or spoke. How long the suspense lasted, who could tell? But at length Martin raised himself, and looked up into Philip's face.

“My brother, our father is dead!” he said.

And now Philip flung himself down upon his

father's breast. How often he had lain there! How many thousands of times had these outstretched arms carried him to and fro, and these lips spoken to him the fondest and proudest words a father could utter! He cried, "Father! father!" in a tone of passionate entreaty, which made the hearts ache of all who heard him. But no man there dare tell him that there was any hope.

There was, however, no time to spare. If the coming storm broke out again in its former fury the position of all of them would be perilous. Martin beckoned them to follow him into the cave, where old Andrew lay, well protected by dry fern and ling heaped about him, and with Martin's thick overcoat laid over him. He was too feeble to walk home across the moors, and a double burden had to be borne by them.

It was a slow and sorrowful progress homeward under the gloomy sky, and across the trackless snow. Philip and Martin had to take their part in carrying the rude litter on which their father lay, and Dorothy, speechless with grief and anxiety for Margaret, walked beside it. Margaret watched the mournful procession as it crept slowly toward her across the silent uplands. Never before had she been so vividly conscious of the presence of God. "In him we live, and move, and have our being," she said in her inmost soul, with a gladness as sharp as pain, as these slowly moving forms of those she loved most drew nearer. One was being carried home; and by a subtle, sympathetic instinct

which had stirred within her all night, she knew who it must be. Sidney, her husband, dearer than all save God, was being brought home to her, dead.

She met Philip at the door of her room, his young features drawn and set with anguish, and she laid her hand in his, and looked up into his eyes, with a tender tranquillity on her white face.

“Do not tell me,” she said, “only show me where they have laid him.”

They went hand in hand silently across the old hall to the library door; then Margaret paused, and pushed Philip gently on one side, with such a smile as the angel of death might have upon his benignant face.

“I must go in alone,” she said, “and let no one come near me. But I know that God is good.”

Philip and Dorothy watched within sight of the door through which she had disappeared and Martin stretched himself on the floor at their feet. Deeper than their own grief was their sorrow for the mortal anguish of Margaret. For what would life be to either of them if the other was taken away? They did not speak; but they looked into each other's face, and felt that their love was made greater and more sacred by this calamity. Martin's sad eyes were fastened upon them, as they sat together, leaning toward one another, as if words between them were not needed.

“My brother,” he said, breaking the silence

at last, "I wish I was dead instead of my father. Why did he go out into the storm?"

"He went to find you, Martin," answered Dorothy.

"To find me!" he cried, "to find me!"

A gleam of gladness came across his heavy face, and into his deep-set eyes; and he raised himself from the ground to pace up and down the floor, murmuring, "To find me," again and again to himself. Once he approached the closed door of the library, and knelt before it, crossing himself devoutly, and whispering a prayer, such as he was wont to say at the foot of the Calvary. After a while he returned to the hearth, where Philip and Dorothy had been anxiously watching him.

"My father went out into the storm to find me," he said with glistening eyes. "I shall know him now when I see him again in Paradise."

How long they waited they never knew; but at last from the soundless room Margaret came out, white as death, but with a radiant look upon her face such as they had never seen before. Dorothy and Philip stood up in awed silence but Martin fell down on his knees as she drew near to them. She laid her hands upon his shoulders and, bending over him, laid her lips upon his wrinkled forehead.

It was the seal of such a pardon as few women are called upon to give. This man had cost her all that she most prized on earth. He was the living memorial of her husband's sin. He would

thrust her firstborn son out of his birthright. As long as she lived he would be to her the symbol of all earthly anguish, and love, and bitterness. But her heart was melted with inexpressible pity for him, a pity which his dark mind could never understand. Nothing but this mute and solemn caress could tell him that she pitied and loved him.

Dorothy understood it more fully than the others did, and, throwing her arms around Margaret, she burst into a passion of tears.

CHAPTER LX.

MARTIN'S FATE.

ANDREW GOLDSMITH was ailing for a few days, and kept his bed until after the funeral solemnities were over. Sidney was taken home to Apley, to be buried where Margaret would some day lie beside him. Martin went down there for the first time to appear as one of the chief mourners at his father's grave; but he returned immediately to Brackenburn, which was now his own.

Andrew Goldsmith entered into his heart's desire. Sophy's son, his own grandson, was now the squire of Brackenburn, the possessor of the estates entailed by Sir John Martin. He would take his place as a wealthy landowner, a man of position and influence. The old saddler, who had been so long dominated by a fixed idea, could hardly give a thought to the tragic fate of his son-in-law, Sophy's husband, who had deserted her, and left her to die among strangers. Once or twice Mary overheard him saying to himself, "He died alone, like my Sophy, with nobody near him as loved him." But he seldom spoke of Sidney.

"I must see they don't wrong Martin," he said, full of suspicion even of Margaret and his own sister Rachel; "there's a many ways rich

folks can wrong poor ones. I must see to it myself."

But his disappointment was great when he found that all Sidney's accumulated wealth was left to Philip, Martin and Hugh, his other sons, being amply provided for in other ways. Philip's portion was still the largest. Andrew's chagrin and consternation were boundless, and he could never believe that his grandson had not been defrauded. The idea fastened on his mind, and made him a miserable man.

Martin contributed largely to his misery. He was now unquestionably an English landowner, but he could not, or would not, live otherwise than as an Austrian peasant. It was at first planned that Philip should buy an estate near Brackenburn, and take Martin under his brotherly protection and influence. But the vast complications of his father's business involved too many interests for him to withdraw from it for some years. He could not sacrifice the interests of hundreds of families to his own desire for a private life, or even to the claims of brotherhood. He felt himself called to step into his father's place, and for some time to be the head of the many branches into which his father's business had spread.

So Martin was left reluctantly to his fate. Before long a priest from the Ampezzo Valley, a man whom he knew, came to take charge of him and his affairs. Martin was glad to have anybody who could talk to him in his own dialect; and this man, to whom he looked up in awe and rev-

erence, was so kindly to him, and knew how to direct him so well, that he soon yielded to him the unquestioning obedience of an ignorant peasant to his priest. There was no more intercourse than before between Andrew and his grandson; but the former, with all his narrow and strong prejudices, was compelled to witness the introduction of foreign ways and Popish idolatry, as he called it, into Martin's household. This was not what he had looked forward to when his heart had beaten high with pride when his grandson took possession of his estates.

Now and then Philip went to see his half-brother, when he could spare a day or two, and Margaret every year spent a few weeks at Brackenburn. But Martin only once visited Apley, the restraints of a home so civilized and cultured being intolerably irksome to him. He was not unhappy, but he had none of the higher joys of life. There was one point on which no man could influence him. He would never marry. Ignorant and savage as he must always remain, there was an austere purity of soul in him which made it impossible for him to marry without love.

The conviction that, after all, Philip or Philip's son would succeed to the estates was a secret trouble to Laura for the rest of her life. If she could but have known that Philip would be the most wealthy of Sidney's three sons! But she had formed no idea of the immense accumulation of Sidney's private property, which would have all been Phyllis's if she had not broken off that

match. Phyllis shared her chagrin in some measure, but it was tempered with the anticipations of a youthful beauty. There were other men besides Philip, she said, though he was a great miss. And she had loved him, she added, with more sadness in her tone than her mother had ever heard. They both took more interest in the details of Philip and Dorothy's marriage than Margaret herself did.

Margaret took up her old life in her old home, where most of all Sidney's presence was most real to her. It was her conviction that he was present, a thin though impenetrable veil alone lying between them. In this path of consolation and peace she walked by faith, a more satisfying thing than walking by sight. She knew that if he had not gone forth to seek the son whom he did not love, there would have dwelt in her heart of hearts a lurking condemnation of him, which would have been exceedingly bitter; whereas now there was there a thankful sense of the full atonement he had made for deserting his child in his infancy. She could well wait until she spoke face to face with Sidney again. Day by day she was strengthened with strength in her soul.

THE END.



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