

ARTHUR TIMOTHY SHAY

HEART-HISTORIES AND
LIFE-PICTURES

Timothy Arthur

Heart-Histories and Life-Pictures

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T. S. Arthur

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INTRODUCTION

So interested are we all in our every-day pursuits; so given up, body and mind, to the attainment of our own ends; so absorbed by our own hopes, joys, fears and disappointments, that we think rarely, if at all, of the heart-histories of others—of the bright and sombre life-pictures their eyes may look upon. And yet, every heart has its history: how sad and painful many of these histories are, let the dreamy eyes, the sober faces, the subdued, often mournful tones, of many that daily cross our paths, testify. An occasional remembrance of these things will cause a more kindly feeling towards others; and this will do us good, in withdrawing our minds from too exclusive thoughts of self.

Whatever tends to awaken our sympathies towards others, to interest us in humanity, is, therefore, an individual benefit as well as a common good. In all that we have written, we have endeavored to create this sympathy and awaken this interest; and so direct has ever been our purpose, that we have given less thought to those elegancies of style on which a literary reputation is often founded, than to the truthfulness of our many life-pictures. In the preparation of this volume, the same end has been kept in view, and its chief merit will be found, we trust, in its power to do good.

T. S. A.

PHILADELPHIA, December, 1852.

THE BOOK OF MEMORY

CHAPTER I

"THERE is a book of record in your mind, Edwin," said an old man to his young friend, "a book of record, in which every act of your life is noted down. Each morning a blank page is turned, on which the day's history is written in lines that cannot be effaced. This book of record is your memory; and, according to what it bears, will your future life be happy or miserable. An act done, is done forever; for, the time in which it is done, in passing, passes to return no more. The history is written and sealed up. Nothing can ever blot it out. You may repent of evil, and put away the purpose of evil from your heart; but you cannot, by any repentance, bring back the time that is gone, nor alter the writing on the page of memory. Ah! my young friend, if I could only erase some pages in the book of my memory, that almost daily open themselves before the eyes of my mind, how thankful I would be! But this I cannot do. There are acts of my life for which repentance only avails as a process of purification and preparation for a better state in the future; it in no way repairs wrong done to others. Keep the pages of your memory free from blots, Edwin. Guard the hand writing there as you value your best and highest interests!"

Edwin Florence listened, but only half comprehended what was said by his aged friend. An hour afterwards he was sitting by the side of a maiden, her hand in his, and her eyes looking tenderly upon his face. She was not beautiful in the sense that the world regards beauty. Yet, no one could be with her an hour without perceiving the higher and truer beauty of a pure and lovely spirit. It was this real beauty of character which had attracted Edwin Florence; and the young girl's heart had gone forth to meet the tender of affection with an impulse of gladness.

"You love me, Edith?" said Edwin, in a low voice, as he bent nearer, and touched her pure forehead with his lips.

"As my life," replied the maiden, and her eyes were full of love as she spoke.

Again the young man kissed her.

In low voices, leaning towards each other until the breath of each was warm on the other's cheek, they sat conversing for a long time. Then they separated; and both were happy. How sweet were the maiden's dreams that night, for, in every picture that wandering fancy drew, was the image of her lover!

Daily thus they met for a long time. Then there was a change in Edwin Florence. His visits were less frequent, and when he met the young girl, whose very life was bound up in his, his manner had in it a reserve that chilled her heart as if an icy hand had been laid upon it. She asked for no explanation of the change; but, as he grew colder, she shrunk more and more into herself, like a flower folding its withering leaves when touched by autumn's frosty fingers.

One day he called on Edith. He was not as cold as he had been, but he was, from some cause, evidently embarrassed.

"Edith," said he, taking her hand—it was weeks since he had touched her hand except in meeting and parting—"I need not say how highly I regard you. How tenderly I love you, even as I could love a pure and gentle sister. But—"

He paused, for he saw that Edith's face had become very pale; and that she rather gasped for air than breathed.

"Are you sick?" he asked, in a voice of anxiety.

Edith was recovering herself.

"No," she replied, faintly.

A deep silence, lasting for the space of nearly half a minute, followed. By this time the maiden, through a forced effort, had regained the command of her feelings. Perceiving this, Edwin resumed—

"As I said, Edith, I love you as I could love a pure and gentle sister. Will you accept this love? Will you be to me a friend—a sister?"

Again there passed upon the countenance of Edith a deadly pallor; while her lips quivered, and her eyes had a strange expression. This soon passed away, and again something of its former repose was in her face. At the first few words of Florence, Edith withdrew the hand he had taken. He now sought it again, but she avoided the contact.

"You do not answer me, Edith," said the young man.

"Do you wish an answer?" This was uttered in a scarcely audible voice.

"I do, Edith," was the earnest reply. "Let there be no separation between us. You are to me what you have ever been, a dearly prized friend. I never meet you that my heart does not know an impulse for good—I never think of you but—"

"Let us be as strangers!" said Edith, rising abruptly. And turning away, she fled from the room.

Slowly did the young man leave the apartment in which they were sitting, and without seeing any member of the family, departed from the house. There was a record on his memory that time would have no power to efface. It was engraved too deeply for the dust of years to obliterate. As he went, musing away, the pale face of Edith was before him; and the anguish of her voice, as she said, "Let us be as strangers," was in his ears. He tried not to see the one, nor hear the other. But that was impossible. They had impressed themselves into the very substance of his mind.

Edwin Florence had an engagement for that very evening. It was with one of the most brilliant, beautiful, and fascinating women he had ever met. A few months before, she had crossed his path, and from that time he was changed towards Edith. Her name was Catharine Linmore. The earnest attentions of Florence pleased her, and as she let the pleasure she felt be seen, she was not long in winning his heart entirely from his first love. In this, she was innocent; for she knew nothing of the former state of his affections towards Edith.

After parting with Edith, Edwin had no heart to fulfill his engagement with Miss Linmore. He could think of nothing but the maiden he had so cruelly deserted; and more than half repented of what he had done. When the hour for the appointment came, his mind struggled awhile in the effort to obtain a consent to go, and then decided against meeting, at least on that occasion, the woman whose charms had led him to do so great a wrong to a loving and confiding heart. No excuse but that of indisposition could be made, under the circumstances; and, attempting to screen himself, in his own estimation, from falsehood, he assumed, in his own thoughts, a mental indisposition, while, in the billet he dispatched, he gave the idea of bodily indisposition. The night that followed was, perhaps, the most unhappy one the young man had ever spent. Days passed, and he heard nothing from Edith. He could not call to see her, for she had interdicted that. Henceforth they must be as strangers. The effect produced by his words had been far more painful than was anticipated; and he felt troubled when he thought about what might be their ultimate effects.

On the fifth day, as the young man was walking with Catharine Linmore, he came suddenly face to face with Edith. There was a change in her that startled him. She looked at him, in passing, but gave no signs of recognition.

"Wasn't that Miss Walter?" inquired the companion of Edwin, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes," replied Florence.

"What's the matter with her? Has she been sick? How dreadful she looks!"

"I never saw her look so bad," remarked the young man. As they walked along, Miss Linmore kept alluding to Edith, whose changed appearance had excited her sympathies.

"I've met her only a few times," said she, "but I have seen enough of her to give me a most exalted opinion of her character. Some one called her very plain; but I have not thought so. There

is something so good about her, that you cannot be with her long without perceiving a real beauty in the play of her countenance."

"No one can know her well, without loving her for the goodness of which you have just spoken," said Edwin.

"You are intimate with her?"

"Yes. She has been long to me as a sister." There was a roughness in the voice of Florence as he said this.

"She passed without recognizing you," said Miss Linmore.

"So I observed."

"And yet I noticed that she looked you in the face, though with a cold, stony, absent look. It is strange! What can have happened to her?"

"I have observed a change in her for some time past," Florence ventured to say; "but nothing like this. There is something wrong."

When the time to part, with his companion came, Edwin Florence felt a sense of relief. Weeks now passed without his seeing or hearing any thing from Edith. During the time he met Miss Linmore frequently; and encouraged to approach, he at length ventured to speak to her of what was in his heart. The young lady heard with pleasure, and, though she did not accept the offered hand, by no means repulsed the ardent suitor. She had not thought of marriage, she said, and asked a short time for reflection.

Edwin saw enough in her manner to satisfy him that the result would be in his favor. This would have made him supremely happy, could he have blotted out all recollection of Edith and his conduct towards her. But, that was impossible. Her form and face, as he had last seen them, were almost constantly before his eyes. As he walked the streets, he feared lest he should meet her; and never felt pleasant in any company until certain that she was not there.

A few days after Mr. Florence had made an offer of his hand to Miss Linmore, and at a time when she was about making a favorable decision, that young lady happened to hear some allusion made to Edith Walter, in a tone that attracted her attention. She immediately asked some questions in regard to her, when one of the persons conversing said—

"Why, don't you know about Edith?"

"I know that there is a great change in her. But the reason of it I have not heard."

"Indeed! I thought it was pretty well known that her affections had been trifled with."

"Who could trifle with the affections of so sweet, so good a girl," said Miss Linmore, indignantly. "The man who could turn from her, has no true appreciation of what is really excellent and exalted in woman's character. I have seen her only a few times; but, often enough to make me estimate her as one among the loveliest of our sex."

"Edwin Florence is the man," was replied. "He won her heart, and then turned from her; leaving the waters of affection that had flowed at his touch to lose themselves in the sands at his feet. There must be something base in the heart of a man who could trifle thus with such a woman."

It required a strong effort on the part of Miss Linmore to conceal the instant turbulence of feeling that succeeded so unexpected a declaration. But she had, naturally, great self-control, and this came to her aid.

"Edwin Florence!" said she, after a brief silence, speaking in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, he is the man. Ah, me! What a ruin has been wrought! I never saw such a change in any one as Edith exhibits. The very inspiration of her life is gone. The love she bore towards Florence seems to have been almost the mainspring of her existence; for in touching that the whole circle of motion has grown feeble, and will, I fear, soon cease for ever."

"Dreadful! The falsehood of her lover has broken her heart."

"I fear that it is even so."

"Is she ill? I have not seen her for a long time," said Miss Linmore.

"Not ill, as one sick of a bodily disease; but drooping about as one whose spirits are broken, and who finds no sustaining arm to lean upon. When you meet her, she strives to be cheerful, and appear into rested. But the effort deceives no one."

"Why did Mr. Florence act towards her as he has done?" asked Miss Linmore.

"A handsomer face and more brilliant exterior were the attractions, I am told."

The young lady asked no more questions. Those who observed her closely, saw the warm tints that made beautiful her cheeks grow fainter and fainter, until they had almost entirely faded. Soon after, she retired from the company.

In the ardor of his pursuit of a new object of affection, Edwin Florence scarcely thought of the old one. The image of Edith was hidden by the interposing form of Miss Linmore. The suspense occasioned by a wish for time to consider the offer he had made, grew more and more painful the longer it was continued. On the possession of the lovely girl as his wife, depended, so he felt, his future happiness. Were she to decline his offer he would be wretched. In this state of mind, he called one day upon Miss Linmore, hoping and fearing, yet resolved to know his fate. The moment he entered her presence he observed a change. She did not smile; and there was something chilling in the steady glance of her large dark eyes.

"Have I offended you?" he asked, as she declined taking his offered hand.

"Yes," was the firm reply, while the young lady assumed a dignified air.

"In what?" asked Florence.

"In proving false to her in whose ears you first breathed words of affection."

The young man started as if stung by a serpent.

"The man," resumed Miss Linmore, "who has been false to Edith Walter, never can be true to me. I wouldn't have the affection that could turn from one like her. I hold it to be light as the thistle-down. Go! heal the heart you have almost broken, if, perchance, it be not yet too late. As for me, think of me as if we had all our lives been strangers—such, henceforth, we must ever remain."

And saying this, Catharine Linmore turned from the rebuked and astonished young man, and left the room. He immediately retired.

CHAPTER II

EVENING, with its passionless influences, was stealing softly down, and leaving on all things its hues of quiet and repose. The heart of nature was beating with calm and even pulses. Not so the heart of Edwin Florence. It had a wilder throb; and the face of nature was not reflected in the mirror of his feelings. He was alone in his room, where he had been during the few hours that had elapsed since his interview with Miss Linmore. In those few hours, Memory had turned over many leaves of the Book of his Life. He would fain have averted his eyes from the pages, but he could not. The record was before him, and he had read it. And, as he read, the eyes of Edith looked into his own; at first they were loving and tender, as of old; and then, they were full of tears. Her hand lay, now, confidingly in his; and now it was slowly withdrawn. She sat by his side, and leaned upon him—his lips were upon her lips; his cheek touching her cheek; their breaths were mingling. Another moment and he had turned from her coldly, and she was drooping towards the earth like a tender vine bereft of the support to which it had held by its clinging tendrils. Ah! If he could only have shut out these images! If he could have erased the record so that Memory could not read it! How eagerly would he have drunk of Lethe's waters, could he have found the fabled stream!

More than all this. The rebuke of Miss Linmore almost maddened him. In turning from Edith, he had let his heart go out towards the other with a passionate devotion. Pride in her beauty and brilliant accomplishments had filled his regard with a selfishness that could ill bear the shock of a sudden repulse. Sleepless was the night that followed; and when the morning, long looked for, broke at last, it brought no light for his darkened spirit. Yet he had grown calmer, and a gentle feeling pervaded his bosom. Thrown off by Miss Linmore, his thoughts now turned by a natural impulse, as the needle, long held by opposing attraction, turns to its polar point, again towards Edith Walter. As he thought of her longer and longer, tenderer emotions began to tremble in his heart. The beauty of her character was again seen; and his better nature bowed before it once more in a genuine worship.

"How have I been infatuated! What syren spell has been on me!" Such were the words that fell from his lips, marking the change in his feelings.

Days went by, and still the change went on, until the old affection had come back; the old tender, true affection. But, he had turned from its object—basely turned away. A more glaring light had dazzled his eyes so that he could see, for a time, no beauty, no attraction, in his first love. Could he turn to her again? Would she receive him? Would she let him dip healing leaves in the waters he had dashed with bitterness? His heart trembled as he asked these questions, for there was no confident answer.

At last Edwin Florence resolved that he would see Edith once more, and seek to repair the wrong done both to her and to himself. It was three months after his rejection by Miss Linmore when he came to this resolution. And then, some weeks elapsed before he could force himself to act upon it. In all that time he had not met the young girl, nor had he once heard of her. To the house of her aunt, where she resided, Florence took his way one evening in early autumn, his heart disturbed by many conflicting emotions. His love for Edith had come back in full force; and his spirit was longing for the old communion.

"Can I see Miss Walter!" he asked, on arriving at her place of residence.

"Walk in," returned the servant who had answered his summons.

Florence entered the little parlor where he had spent so many never-to-be-forgotten hours with Edith—hours unspeakably happy in passing, but, in remembrance, burdened with pain—and looking around on each familiar object with strange emotions. Soon a light step was heard descending the stairs, and moving along the passage. The door opened, and Edith—no, her aunt—entered. The young man had risen in the breathlessness of expectation.

"Mr. Florence," said the aunt, coldly. He extended his hand; but she did not take it.

"How is Edith?" was half stammered.

"She is sinking rapidly," replied the aunt.

Edwin staggered back into a chair.

"Is she ill?" he inquired, with a quivering lip.

"Ill! She is dying!" There was something of indignation in the way this was said.

"Dying!" The young man clasped his hands together with a gesture of despair.

"How long has she been sick?" he next ventured to ask.

"For months she has been dying daily," said the aunt. There was a meaning in her tones that the young man fully comprehended. He had not dreamed of this.

"Can I see her?"

The aunt shook her head, as she answered,

"Let her spirit depart in peace."

"I will not disturb, but calm her spirit," said the young man, earnestly. "Oh, let me see her, that I may call her back to life!"

"It is too late," replied the aunt. "The oil is exhausted, and light is just departing."

Edwin started to his feet, exclaiming passionately—"Let me see her! Let me see her!"

"To see her thus, would be to blow the breath that would extinguish the flickering light," said the aunt. "Go home, young man! It is too late! Do not seek to agitate the waters long troubled by your hand, but now subsiding into calmness. Let her spirit depart in peace."

Florence sunk again into his chair, and, hiding his face with his hands, sat for some moments in a state of a mental paralysis.

In the chamber above lay the pale, almost pulseless form of Edith. A young girl, who had been as her sister for many years, sat holding her thin white hand. The face of the invalid was turned to the wall. Her eyes were closed; and she breathed so quietly that the motions of respiration could hardly be seen. Nearly ten minutes had elapsed from the time a servant whispered to the aunt that there was some one in the parlor, when Edith turned, and said to her companion, in a low, calm voice—

"Mr. Florence has come."

The girl started, and a flush of surprise went over her face.

"He is in the parlor now. Won't you ask him to come up?" added the dying maiden, still speaking with the utmost composure.

Her friend stood surprised and hesitating for some moments, and then turning away, glided from the chamber. She found the aunt and Mr. Florence in the passage below, the latter pleading with the former for the privilege of seeing Edith, which was resolutely denied.

"Edith wants to see Mr. Florence," said the girl, as she joined them.

"Who told her that he was here?" quickly asked the aunt.

"No one. I did not know it myself."

"Her heart told her that I was here," exclaimed Mr. Florence—and, as he spoke, he glided past the aunt, and, with hurried steps, ascended to the chamber where the dying one lay. The eyes of Edith were turned towards the door as he entered; but no sign of emotion passed over her countenance. Overcome by his feelings, at the sight of the shadowy remnant of one so loved and so wronged, the young man sunk into a chair by her side, as nerveless as a child; and, as his lips were pressed upon her lips and cheeks, her face was wet with his tears.

Coming in quickly after, the aunt took firmly hold of his arm and sought to draw him away, but, in a steady voice, the invalid said—

"No—no. I was waiting for him. I have expected him for days. I knew he would come; and he is here now."

All was silence for many minutes; and during this time Edwin Florence sat with his face covered, struggling to command his feelings. At a motion from the dying girl, the aunt and friend retired, and

she was alone with the lover who had been false to his vows. As the door closed behind them, Edwin looked up. He had grown calm. With a voice of inexpressible tenderness, he said—

"Live for me, Edith."

"Not here," was answered. "The silver chord will soon be loosened and the golden bowl broken."

"Oh, say not that! Let me call you back to life. Turn to me again as I have turned to you with my whole heart. The world is still beautiful; and in it we will be happy together."

"No, Edwin," replied the dying maiden. "The history of my days here is written, and the angel is about sealing the record. I am going where the heart will never feel the touch of sorrow. I wished to see you once more before I died; and you are here. I have, once more, felt your breath upon my cheek; once more held your hand in mine. For this my heart is grateful. You had become the sun of my life, and when your face was turned away, the flower that spread itself joyfully in the light, drooped and faded. And now, the light has come back again; but it cannot warm into freshness and beauty the withered blossom."

"Oh, my Edith! Say not so! Live for me! I have no thoughts, no affection that is not for you. The drooping flower will lift itself again in the sunshine when the clouds have passed away."

As the young man said this, Edith raised herself up suddenly, and, with a fond gesture, flung herself forward upon his bosom. For a few moments her form quivered in his arms. Then all became still, and he felt her lying heavier and heavier against him. In a little while he was conscious that he clasped to his heart only the earthly semblance of one who had passed away forever.

Replacing the light and faded form of her who, a little while before, had been in the vigor of health, upon the bed, Edwin gazed upon the sunken features for a few moments, and then, leaving a last kiss upon her cold lips, hurried away.

Another page in his Book of Life was written, There was another record there from which memory, in after life, could read. And such a record! What would he not have given to erase that page!

When the body of Edith Walter was borne to its last resting-place, Florence was among the mourners. After looking his last look upon the coffin that contained the body, he went away, sadder in heart than he had ever been in his life. He was not only a prey to sadness, but to painful self-accusation. In his perfidy lay the cause of her death. He had broken the heart that confided in him, and only repented of his error when it was too late to repair the ruin.

As to what was thought or said of him by others, Edwin Florence cared but little. There was enough of pain in his own self-consciousness. He withdrew himself from the social circle, and, for several years, lived a kind of hermit-life in the midst of society. But, he was far from being happy in his solitude; for Memory was with him, and almost daily, from the Book of his Life, read to him some darkly written page.

One day, it was three years from the time he parted with Edith in the chamber of death, and when he was beginning to rise in a measure above the depressing influences attendant upon that event,—he received an invitation to make one of a social party on the next evening. The desire to go back again in society had been gaining strength with him for some time; and, as it had gained strength, reason had pointed out the error of his voluntary seclusion as unavailing to alter the past.

"The past is past," he said to himself, as he mused with the invitation in his hand. "I cannot recall it—I cannot change it. If repentance can in any way atone for error, surely I have made atonement; for my repentance has been long and sincere. If Edith can see my heart, her spirit must be satisfied. Even she could not wish for this living burial. It is better for me to mingle in society as of old."

Acting on this view, Florence made one on the next evening, in a social party. He felt strangely, for his mind was invaded by old influences, and touched by old impressions. He saw, in many a light and airy form, as it glanced before him, the image of one long since passed away; and heard, in the voices that filled the rooms, many a tone that it seemed must have come from the lips of Edith. How busy was Memory again with the past. In vain he sought to shut out the images that arose in his mind. The page was open before him, and what was impressed thereon he could not but see and read.

This passed, in some degree, away as the evening progressed, and he came nearer, so to speak, to some of those who made up the happy company. Among those present was a young lady from a neighboring city, who attracted much attention both from her manners and person. She fixed the eyes of Mr. Florence soon after he entered the room, and, half unconsciously to himself, his observation was frequently directed towards her.

"Who is that lady?" he asked of a friend, an hour after his arrival.

"Her name is Miss Welden. She is from Albany."

"She has a very interesting face," said Florence.

"And quite as interesting a mind. Miss Weldon is a charming girl."

Not long after, the two were thrown near together, when an introduction took place. The conversation of the young lady interested Florence, and in her society he passed half an hour most pleasantly. While talking with more than usual animation, in lifting his eyes he saw that some one on the opposite side of the room was observing him attentively. For the moment this did not produce any effect. But, in looking up again, he saw the same eyes upon him, and felt their expression as unpleasant. He now, for the first time, became aware that the aunt of Edith Walter was present. She it was who had been regarding him so attentively. From that instant his heart sunk in his bosom. Memory's magic mirror was before him, and in it he saw pictured the whole scene of that last meeting with Edith.

A little while afterward, and Edwin Florence was missed from the pleasant company. Where was he? Alone in the solitude of his own chamber, with his thoughts upon the past. Again he had been reading over those pages of his Book of Life in which was written the history of his intimacy with and desertion of Edith; and the record seemed as fresh as if made but the day before. It was in vain that he sought to close or avert his eyes. There seemed a spell upon him; and he could only look and read.

"Fatal error!" he murmured to himself, as he struggled to free himself from his thralldom to the past. "Fatal error! How a single act will curse a man through life. Oh! if I could but extinguish the whole of this memory! If I could wipe out the hand-writing. Sorrow, repentance, is of no avail. The past is gone for ever. Why then should I thus continue to be unhappy over what I cannot alter? It avails nothing to Edith. She is happy—far happier than if she had remained on this troublesome earth."

But, even while he uttered these words, there came into his mind such a realizing sense of what the poor girl must have suffered, when she found her love thrown back upon her, crushing her heart by its weight, that he bowed his head upon his bosom and in bitter self-upbraidings passed the hours until midnight, when sleep locked up his senses, and calmed the turbulence of his feelings.

CHAPTER III

MONTHS elapsed before Edwin Florence ventured again into company.

"Why will you shut yourself up after this fashion?" said an acquaintance to him one day. "It isn't just to your friends. I've heard half a dozen persons asking for you lately. This hermit life you are leading is, let me tell you, a very foolish life."

The friend who thus spoke knew nothing of the young man's heart history.

"No one really misses me," said Florence, in reply.

"In that you are mistaken," returned the friend. "You are missed. I have heard one young lady, at least, ask for you of late, more than a dozen times."

"Indeed! A *young* lady?"

"Yes; and a very beautiful young lady at that."

"In whose eyes can I have found such favor?"

"You have met Miss Clara Weldon?"

"Only once."

"But once!"

"That is all."

"Then it must be a case of love at first sight—at least on the lady's part—for Miss Weldon has asked for you, to my knowledge, not less than a dozen times."

"I am certainly flattered at the interest she takes in me."

"Well you may be. I know more than one young man who would sacrifice a good deal to find equal favor in her eyes. Now see what you have lost by this hiding of your countenance. And you are not the only loser."

Florence, who was more pleased at what he heard than he would like to have acknowledged, promised to come forth from his hiding place and meet the world in a better spirit. And he did so; being really drawn back into the social circle by the attraction of Miss Weldon. At his second meeting with this young lady he was still more charmed with her than at first; and she was equally well pleased with him. A few more interviews, and both their hearts were deeply interested.

Now there came a new cause of disquietude to Edwin; or, it might be said, the old cause renewed. The going out of his affections towards Miss Weldon revived the whole memory of the past; and, for a time he found it almost impossible to thrust it from his mind. While sitting by her side and listening to her voice, the tones of Edith would be in his ears; and, often, when he looked into her face he would see only the fading countenance of her who had passed away. This was the first state, and it was exceedingly painful while it lasted. But, it gradually changed into one more pleasant, yet not entirely free from the unwelcome intrusion of the past.

The oftener Florence and Miss Weldon met, the more strongly were their hearts drawn toward each other; and, at length, the former was encouraged to make an offer of his hand. In coming to this resolutions, it was not without passing through a painful conflict. As his mind dwelt upon the subject, there was a reproduction of old states. Most vividly did he recall the time when he breathed into the ears of Edith vows to which he had proved faithless. He had, it is true, returned to his first allegiance. He had laid his heart again at her feet; but, to how little purpose! While in this state of agitation, the young man resolved, more than once, to abandon his suit for the hand of Miss Weldon, and shrink back again into the seclusion from which he had come forth. But, his affection for the lovely girl was too genuine to admit of this. When he thought of giving her up, his mind was still more deeply disturbed.

"Oh, that I could forget!" he exclaimed, while this struggle was in progress. "Of what avail is this turning over of the leaves of a long passed history? I erred—sadly erred! But repentance is now too late. Why, then should my whole existence be cursed for a single error? Ah, me! thou not

satisfied, departed one? Is it, indeed, from the presence of thy spirit that I am troubled? My heart sinks at the thought. But no, no! Thou wert too good to visit pain upon any; much less upon one who, thou false to thee, thou didst so tenderly love."

But, upon this state there came a natural re-action. A peaceful calm succeeded the storm. Memory deposited her records in the mind's dimly lighted chambers. To the present was restored its better influences.

"I am free again," was the almost audible utterance, of the young man, so strong was his sense of relief.

An offer of marriage was then made to Miss Weldon. Her heart trembled with joy when she received it. But confiding implicitly in her uncle, who had been for the space of ten years her friend and guardian, she could not give an affirmative reply until his approval was gained. She, therefore, asked time for reflection and consultation with her friend.

Far different from what Florence had expected, was the reception of his offer. To him, Miss Weldon seemed instantly to grow cold and reserved. Vividly was now recalled his rejection by Miss Linmore, as well as the ground of her rejection.

"Is this to be gone over again?" he sighed to himself, when alone once more, "Is that one false step never to be forgotten nor forgiven? Am I to be followed, through life, by this shadow of evil?"

To no other cause than this could the mind of Florence attribute the apparent change and hesitation in Clara Weldon.

Immediately on receiving an offer of marriage, Miss Weldon returned to Albany. Before leaving, she dropped Florence a note, to the effect, that he should hear from her in a few days. A week passed, but the promised word came not. It was, now plain that the friends of the young lady had been making inquiries about him, and were in possession of certain facts in his life, which, if known, would almost certainly blast his hopes of favor in her eyes. While in this state of uncertainty, he met the aunt of Edith, and the way she looked at him, satisfied his mind that his conjectures were true. A little while after a friend remarked to him casually—

"I saw Colonel Richards in town to-day."

"Colonel Richards! Miss Weldon's uncle?"

"Yes. Have you seen him?"

"No. I have not the pleasure of an acquaintance."

"Indeed! I thought you knew him. I heard him mention your name this morning."

"My name!"

"Yes."

"What had he to say of me?"

"Let me think. Oh! He asked me if I knew you."

"Well?"

"I said that I did, of course and that you were a pretty clever fellow; though you had been a sad boy in your time."

The face of Florence instantly reddened.

"Why, what's the matter? Oh I understand now! That little niece of his is one of your flames. But come! Don't take it so to heart. Your chances are one in ten, I have no doubt. By the way, I haven't seen Clara for a week. What has become of her? Gone back to Albany, I suppose. I hope you haven't frightened her with an offer. By the way, let me whisper a word of comfort in your ear. I heard her say that she didn't believe in any thing but first love; and, as you are known to have had half a dozen sweethearts, more or less, and to have broken the hearts of two or three young ladies, the probability is, that you won't be able to add her to tie number of your lady loves."

All this was mere jesting; but the words, though uttered in jest, fell upon the ears of Edwin Florence with all the force of truth.

"Guilty, on your own acknowledgment," said the friend, seeing the effect of his words. "Better always to act fairly in these matters of the heart, Florence. If we sow the wind, we will be pretty sure to reap the whirlwind. But come; let me take you down to the Tremont, and introduce you to Colonel Richards. I know he will be glad to make your acquaintance, and will, most probably, give you an invitation to go home with him and spend a week. You can then make all fair with his pretty niece."

"I have no wish to make his acquaintance just at this time," returned Florence; "nor do I suppose he cares about making mine, particularly after the high opinion you gave him of my character."

"Nonsense, Edwin! You don't suppose I said that to him. Can't you take a joke?"

"Oh, yes; I can take a joke."

"Take that as one, then. Colonel Richards did ask for you, however; and said that he would like to meet you. He was serious. So come along, and let me introduce you."

"No; I would prefer not meeting with him at this time."

"You are a strange individual."

The young men parted; Florence to feel more disquieted than ever. Colonel Richards had been inquiring about him, and, in prosecuting his inquiries, would, most likely, find some one inclined to relate the story of Edith Walter. What was more natural? That story once in the ears of Clara, and he felt that she must turn from him with a feeling of repulsion.

Three or four days longer he was in suspense. He heard of Col. Richards from several quarters, and, in each case when he was mentioned, he was alluded to as making inquiries about him.

"I hear that the beautiful Miss Weldon is to be married," was said to Florence at a time when he was almost mad with the excitement of suspense.

"Ah!" he replied, with forced calmness, "I hope she will be successful in securing a good husband."

"So do I; for she is indeed a sweet girl. I was more than half inclined to fall in love with her myself; and would leave done so, if I had believed there was any chance for me."

"Who is the favored one?" asked Florence.

"I have not been able to find out. She received three or four offers, and went back to Albany to consider them and make her election. This she has done, I hear; and already, the happy recipient of her favor is rejoicing over his good fortune. May they live a thousand years to be happy with each other!"

Here was another drop of bitterness in the cup that was at the lips of Edwin Florence. He went to his office immediately, and, setting down, wrote thus to Clara:

"I do not wrongly interpret, I presume, a silence continued far beyond the time agreed upon when we parted. You have rejected my suit. Well, be it so; and may you be happy with him who has found favor in your eyes. I do not think he can love you more sincerely than I do, or be more devoted to your happiness than I should have been. It would have relieved the pain I cannot but feel, if you had deemed my offer worthy a frank refusal. But, to feel that one I have so truly loved does not think me even deserving of this attention, is humiliating in the extreme. But, I will not upbraid you. Farewell! May you be happy."

Sealing Up his epistle, the young man, scarcely pausing even for hurried reflection, threw it into the post office. This done, he sunk into a gloomy state of mind, in which mortification and disappointment struggled alternately for the predominance.

Only a few hours elapsed after the adoption of this hasty course, before doubts of its propriety began to steal across his mind. It was possible, it occurred to him, that he might have acted too precipitately. There might be reasons for the silence of Miss Weldon entirely separate from those he had been too ready to assume; and, if so, how strange would his letter appear. It was too late now to recall the act, for already the mail that bore his letter was half way from New York to Albany. A restless night succeeded to this day. Early on the next morning he received a letter. It was in these words—

"MY DEAR MR. FLORENCE:—I have been very ill, and to-day am able to sit up just long enough to write a line or two. My uncle was in New York some days ago, but did not meet with you. Will you not come up and see me?

"Ever Yours, CLARA WELDON."

Florence was on board the next boat that left New York for Albany. The letter of Clara was, of course, written before the receipt of his hasty epistle. What troubled him now was the effect of this epistle on her mind. He had not only wrongly interpreted her silence, but had assumed the acceptance of another lover as confidently as if he knew to an certainty that such was the case. This was a serious matter and might result in the very thing he had been so ready to assume—the rejection of his suit.

Arriving at length, in Albany, Mr. Florence sought out the residence of Miss Weldon.

"Is Colonel Richards at home?" he inquired.

On being answered in the affirmative he sent up his name, with a request to see him. The colonel made his appearance in short time. He was a tall, thoughtful looking man, and bowed with a dignified air as he came into the room.

"How is Miss Weldon?" asked Florence, with an eagerness he could not restrain.

"Not so well this morning," replied the guardian. "She had a bad night."

"No wonder," thought the young man, "after receiving that letter."

"She has been sleeping, however since daylight," added Colonel Richards, "and that is much in her favor."

"She received my letter, I presume," said Florence, in a hesitating voice.

"A letter came for her yesterday," was replied; "but as she was more indisposed than usual, we did not give it to her."

"It is as well," said the young man, experiencing a sense of relief.

An hour afterwards he was permitted to enter the chamber, where she lay supported by pillows. One glance at her face dispelled from his mind every lingering doubt. He had suffered from imaginary fears, awakened by the whispers of a troubled conscience.

CHAPTER IV

IN a few days Clara was well enough to leave her room, and was soon entirely recovered from her sudden illness. That little matter of the heart had been settled within three minutes of their meeting, and they were now as happy as lovers usually are under such favorable circumstances.

When Edwin Florence went back to New York, it was with a sense of interior pleasure more perfect than he had experienced for years; and this would have remained, could he have shut out the past; or, so much of it as came like an unwelcome intruder. But, alas! this was not to be. Even while he was bending, in spirit, over the beautiful image of his last beloved, there would come between his eyes and that image a pale sad face, in which reproof was stronger than affection, It was all in vain that he sought to turn from that face. For a time it would remain present, and then fade slowly away, leaving his heart oppressed.

"Is it to be ever thus!" he would exclaim, in these seasons of darkness. "Will nothing satisfy this accusing spirit? Edith! Dear Edith! Art thou not among the blessed ones? Is not thy heart happy beyond mortal conception? Then why come to me thus with those tearful eyes, that shadowy face, those looks of reproof? Have I not suffered enough for purification! Am I never to be forgiven?"

And then, with an effort, he would turn his eyes from the page laid open by Memory, and seek to forget what was written there. But it seemed as if every thing conspired to freshen his remembrance of the past, the nearer the time approached, when by a marriage union with one truly beloved, he was to weaken the bonds it had thrown around him. The marriage of Miss Linmore took place a few weeks after his engagement with Clara, and as an intimate friend led her to the altar, he could not decline making one of the number that graced the nuptial festivities. In meeting the young bride, he endeavored to push from his mind all thoughts of their former relations. But she had not done this, and her thought determined his. Her mind recurred to the former time, the moment he came into her presence, and, of necessity his went back also. They met, therefore, with a certain reserve, that was to him most unpleasant, particularly as it stirred a hundred sleeping memories.

By a strong effort, Florence was able to conceal from other eyes much of what he felt. In doing this, a certain over action was the consequence; and he was gayer than usual. Several times he endeavored to be lightly familiar with the bride; but, in every instance that he approached her, he perceived a kind of instinctive shrinking; and, if she was in a laughing mood, when he drew near she became serious and reserved. All this was too plain to be mistaken; and like the repeated strokes of a hammer upon glowing iron, gradually bent his feelings from the buoyant form they had been endeavoring to assume. The effect was not wholly to be resisted. More than an hour before the happy assemblage broke up, Florence was not to be found in the brilliantly lighted rooms. Unable longer to conceal what he felt, he had retired.

For many days after this, the young man felt sober. "Why haven't you called to see me?" asked the friend who had married Miss Linmore, a week or two after the celebration of the nuptials.

Florence excused himself as best he could, and promised to call in a few days. Two weeks went by without the fulfillment of his promise.

"No doubt, we shall see you next week," said the friend, meeting him one day about this time; "though I am not so sure we will receive your visits then."

"Why not?"

"A certain young lady with whom, I believe, you have some acquaintance, is to spend a short time with us."

"Who?" asked Florence, quickly.

"A young lady from Albany."

"Miss Weldon?"

"The same."

"I was not aware that she was on terms of intimacy with your wife."

"She's an old friend of mine; and, in that sense a friend of Kate's."

"Then they have not met."

"Oh, yes; frequently. And are warmly attached. We look for a pleasant visit. But, of course, we shall not expect to see you. That is understood."

"I rather think you will; that is, if your wife will admit me on friendly terms."

"Why do you say that?" inquired the friend, appearing a little surprised.

"I thought, on the night of your wedding, that she felt my presence as unwelcome to her."

"And is this the reason why you have not called to see us?"

"I frankly own that it is."

"Edwin! I am surprised at you. It is all a piece of imagination. What could have put such a thing into your head?"

"It may have been all imagination. But I couldn't help feelings as I did. However, you may expect to see me, and that, too, before Miss Weldon's arrival."

"If you don't present yourself before, I am not so sure that we will let you come afterwards," said the friend, smiling.

On the next evening the young man called. Mrs. Hartley, the bride of his friend, endeavored to forget the past, and to receive him with all the external signs of forgetfulness. But, in this she did not fully succeed, and, of course, the visit of Florence was painfully embarrassing, at least, to himself. From that time until the arrival of Miss Weldon, he felt concerned and unhappy. That Mrs. Hartley would fully communicate or covertly hint to Clara certain events of his former life, he had too much reason to fear; and, were this done, he felt that all his fond hopes would be scattered to the winds. In due time, Miss Weldon arrived. In meeting her, Florence was conscious of a feeling of embarrassment, never before experienced in her presence. He understood clearly why this was so. At each successive visit his embarrassment increased; and, the more so, from the fact that he perceived a change in Clara ere she had been in the city a week. As to the cause of this change, he had no doubts. It was evident that Mrs. Hartley had communicated certain matters touching his previous history.

Thus it went on day after day, for two or three weeks, by which time the lovers met under the influence of a most chilling constraint. Both were exceedingly unhappy.

One day, in calling as usual, Mr. Florence was surprised to learn that Clara had gone back to Albany.

"She said, nothing of this last night," remarked the young man to Mrs. Hartley.

"Her resolution was taken after you went away," was replied.

"And you, no doubt, advised the step," said Mr. Florence, with ill-concealed bitterness.

"Why do you say that?" was quickly asked.

"How can I draw any other inference?" said the young man, looking at her with knit brows.

"Explain yourself, Mr. Florence!"

"Do my words need explanation?"

"Undoubtedly! For, I cannot understand them."

"There are events in my past life—I will not say how bitterly repented—of which only you could have informed her."

"What events?" calmly asked the lady.

"Why lacerate my feelings by such a question?" said Florence, while a shadow of pain flitted over his face, as Memory presented a record of the past.

"I ask it with no such intention. I only wish to understand you," replied Mrs. Hartley. "You have brought against me a vague accusation. I wish it distinct, that I may affirm or deny it."

"Edith Walter," said Edwin Florence, in a low, unsteady voice, after he had been silent for nearly a minute.

Mrs. Hartley looked earnestly into his face. Every muscle was quivering.

"What of her?" she inquired, in tones quite as low as those in which the young man had spoken.

"You know the history."

"Well?"

"And, regardless of my suffering and repentance, made known to Clara the blasting secret."

"No! By my hopes of heaven, no!" quickly exclaimed Mrs. Hartley.

"No?" A quiver ran through the young man's frame.

"No, Mr. Florence! That rested as silently in my own bosom as in yours."

"Who, then, informed her?"

"No one."

"Has she not heard of it?"

"No."

"Why, then, did she change towards me?"

"You changed, first, towards her."

"Me!"

"Yes. From the day of her arrival in New York, she perceived in you a certain coldness and reserve, that increased with each repeated interview."

"Oh, no!"

"It is true. I saw it myself."

Florence clasped his hands together, and bent his eyes in doubt and wonder upon the floor.

"Did she complain of coldness and change in me?" he inquired.

"Yes, often. And returned, last night, to leave you free, doubting not that you had ceased to love her."

"Ceased to love her! While this sad work has been going on, I have loved her with the agony of one who is about losing earth's most precious thing. Oh! write to her for me, and explain all. How strange has been my infatuation. Will you write for me?"

"Yes."

"Say that my heart has not turned from her an instant. That her imagined coldness has made me of all men most wretched."

"I will do so. But why not write yourself?"

"It will be better to come from you. Ask her to return. I would rather meet her here than in her uncle's house. Urge her to come back."

Mrs. Hartley promised to do so, according to the wish of Mr. Florence. Two days passed, and there was no answer. On the morning of the third day, the young man, in a state of agitation from suspense called at the house of his friend. After sending up his name, he sat anxiously awaiting the appearance of Mrs. Hartley. The door at length opened, and, to his surprise and joy, Clara entered. She came forward with a smile upon her face, extending her hand as she did so. Edwin sprang to meet her, and catching her hand, pressed it eagerly to his lips.

"Strange that we should have so erred in regard to each other," said Clara, as they sat communing tenderly. "I trust no such error will come in the future to which I look forward with so many pleasing hopes."

"Heaven forbid!" replied the young man, seriously.

"But we are in a world of error. Ah! if we could only pass through life without a mistake. If the heavy weight of repentance did not lie so often and so long upon our hearts—this would be a far pleasanter world than it is."

"Do not look so serious," remarked Clara, as she bent forward and gazed affectionately into the young man's face. "To err is human. No one here is perfect. How often, for hours, have I mourned over errors; yet grief was of no avail, except to make my future more guarded."

"And that was much gained," said Florence, breathing deeply with a sense of relief. "If we cannot recall and correct the past, we can at least be more guarded in the future. This is the effect

of my own experience. Ah! if we properly considered the action of our present upon the future, how guarded would we be. All actions are in the present, and the moment they are done the present becomes the past, over which Memory presides. What is past is fixed. Nothing can change it. The record is in marble, to be seen in all future time."

The serious character of the interview soon changed, and the young lovers forgot every thing in the joy of their reconciliation. Nothing arose to mar their intercourse until the appointed time for the nuptial ceremonies arrived, when they were united in holy wedlock. But, Edwin Florence did not pass on to this time without another visit from the rebuking Angel of the past. He was not permitted to take the hand of Clara in his, and utter the words that bound him to her forever, without a visit from the one whose heart he had broken years before. She came to him in the dark and silent midnight, as he tossed sleeplessly upon his bed, and stood and looked at him with her pale face and despairing eyes, until he was driven almost to madness. She was with him when the light of morning dawned; she moved by his side as he went forth to meet and claim his betrothed; and was near him, invisible to all eyes but his own, when he stood at the altar ready to give utterance to the solemn words that bound him to his bride. And not until these words were said, did the vision fade away.

No wonder the face of the bridegroom wore a solemn aspect as he presented himself to the minister, and breathed the vows of eternal fidelity to the living, while before him, as distinct as if in bodily form, was the presence of one long since sleeping in her grave, who had gone down to her shadowy resting place through his infidelity.

From this time there was a thicker veil drawn over the past. The memory of that one event grew less and less distinct; though it was not obliterated, for nothing that is written in the Book of Life is ever blotted out. There were reasons, even in long years after his marriage, when the record stood suddenly before him, as if written in words of light; and he would turn from it with a feeling of pain.

Thus it is that our present blesses or curses our future. Every act of our lives affects the coming time for good or evil. We make our own destiny, and make it always in the present. The past is gone, the future is yet to come. The present only is ours, and, according to what we do in the present, will be the records of the past and its influence on the future. They are only wise who wisely regard their actions in the present.

THE BRILLIANT AND THE COMMONPLACE

DAY after day I worked at my life-task, and worked in an earnest spirit. Not much did I seem to accomplish; yet the little that was done had on it the impress of good. Still, I was dissatisfied, because my gifts were less dazzling than those of which many around me could boast. When I thought of the brilliant ones sparkling in the firmament of literature, and filling the eyes of admiring thousands, something like the evil spirit of envy came into my heart and threw a shadow upon my feelings. I was troubled because I had not their gifts. I wished to shine with a stronger light. To dazzle, as well as to warm and vivify.

Not long ago, there came among us one whom nature had richly endowed. His mind possessed exceeding brilliancy. Flashes of thought, like lightning from summer cloud, were ever filling the air around him. There was a stateliness in the movement of his intellect, and an evidence of power, that oppressed you at times with wonder.

Around him gathered the lesser lights in the hemisphere of thought, and veiled their feeble rays beneath his excessive brightness. He seemed conscious of his superior gifts and displayed them more like a giant beating the air to excite wonder, than putting forth his strength to accomplish a good and noble work. Still, I was oppressed and paralyzed by the sphere of his presence. I felt puny and weak beside him, and unhappy because I was not gifted with equal power.

It so happened that a work of mine, upon which the maker's name was not stamped—work done with a purpose of good—was spoken of and praised by one who did not know me as the handicraftsman.

"It is tame, dull, and commonplace," said the brilliant one, in a tone of contempt; and there were many present to agree with him.

Like the strokes of a hammer upon my heart, came these words of condemnation. "Tame, dull, and commonplace!" And was it, indeed, so? Yes; I felt that what he uttered was true. That my powers were exceedingly limited, and my gifts few. Oh, what would I not have then given for brilliant endowments like those possessed by him from whom had fallen the words of condemnation?

"You will admit," said one—I thought it strange at the time that there should be even one to speak a word in favor of my poor performance—"that it will do good?"

"Good!" was answered, in a tone slightly touched by contempt. "Oh, yes; it will do good!" and the brilliant one tossed his head. "Anybody can do good!"

I went home with a perturbed spirit. I had work to do; but I could not do it. I sat down and tried to forget what I had heard. I tried to think about the tasks that were before me. "Tame, dull, and commonplace!" Into no other form would my thoughts come.

Exhausted, at last, by this inward struggle, I threw myself upon my bed, and soon passed into the land of dreams.

Dream-land! Thou art thought by many to be *only* a land of fantasy and of shadows. But it is not so. Dreams, for the most part, *are* fantastic; but all are not so. Nearer are we to the world of spirits, in sleep; and, at times, angels come to us with lessons of wisdom, darkly veiled under similitude, or written in characters of light.

I passed into dream-land; but my thoughts went on in the same current. "Tame, dull, and commonplace!" I felt the condemnation more strongly than before.

I was out in the open air, and around me were mountains, trees, green fields, and running waters; and above all bent the sky in its azure beauty. The sun was just unveiling his face in the east, and his rays were lighting up the dew-gems on a thousand blades of grass, and making the leaves glitter as if studded with diamonds.

"How calm and beautiful!" said a voice near me. I turned, and one whose days were in the "sear and yellow leaf," stood by my side.

"But all is tame and commonplace," I answered. "We have this over and over again, day after day, month after month, and year after year. Give me something brilliant and startling, if it be in the fiery comet or the rushing storm. I am sick of the commonplace!"

"And yet to the commonplace the world is indebted for every great work and great blessing. For everything good, and true, and beautiful!"

I looked earnestly into the face of the old man. He went on.

"The truly good and great is the useful; for in that is the Divine image. Softly and unobtrusively has the dew fallen, as it falls night after night. Silently it distilled, while the vagrant meteors threw their lines of dazzling light across the sky, and men looked up at them in wonder and admiration. And now the soft grass, the green leaves, and the sweet flowers, that drooped beneath the fervent heat of yesterday, are fresh again and full of beauty, ready to receive the light and warmth of the risen sun, and expand with, a new vigor. All this may be tame, and commonplace; but is it not a great and a good work that has been going on?"

"The tiller of the soil is going forth again to his work. Do not turn your eyes from him, and let a feeling of impatience stir in your heart because he is not a soldier rushing to battle, or a brilliant orator holding thousands enchained by the power of a fervid eloquence that is born not so much of good desires for his fellow-men as from the heat of his own self-love. Day after day, as now, patient, and hopeful, the husbandman enters upon the work that lies before him, and, hand in hand with God's blessed sunshine, dews, and rain, a loving and earnest co-laborer, brings forth from earth's treasure-house of blessings good gifts for his fellow-men. Is all this commonplace? How great and good is the commonplace!"

I turned to answer the old man, but he was gone. I was standing on a high mountain, and beneath me, as far as the eye could reach, were stretched broad and richly cultivated fields; and from a hundred farm-houses went up the curling smoke from the fires of industry. Fields were waving with golden grain, and trees bending with their treasures of fruit. Suddenly, the bright sun was veiled in clouds, that came whirling up from the horizon in dark and broken masses, and throwing a deep shadow over the landscape just before bathed in light. Calmly had I surveyed the peaceful scene spread out before me. I was charmed with its quiet beauty. But now, stronger emotions stirred within me.

"Oh, this is sublime!" I murmured, as I gazed upon the cloudy hosts moving across the heavens in battle array.

A gleam of lightning sprang forth from a dark cavern in the sky, and then, far off, rattled and jarred the echoing thunder. Next came the rushing and roaring wind, bending the giant-limbed oaks as if they were but wands of willow, and tearing up lesser trees as a child tears up from its roots a weed or flower.

In this war of elements I stood, with my head bared, and clinging to a rock, mad with a strange and wild delight.

"Brilliant! Sublime! Grand beyond the power of descriptions," I said, as the storm deepened in intensity.

"An hour like this is worth all the commonplace, dull events of a lifetime."

There came a stunning crash in the midst of a dazzling glare. For some moments I was blinded. When sight was restored, I saw, below me, the flames curling upward from a dwelling upon which the fierce lightning had fallen.

"What majesty! what awful sublimity!" said I, aloud. I thought not of the pain, and terror, and death that reigned in the human habitation upon which the bolt of destruction had fallen, but of the sublime power displayed in the strife of the elements.

There was another change. I no longer stood on the mountain, with the lightning and tempest around me; but was in the valley below, down upon which the storm had swept with devastating fury. Fields of grain were level with the earth; houses destroyed; and the trophies of industry marred in a hundred ways.

"How sublime are the works of the tempest!" said a voice near me. I turned, and the old man was again at my side.

But I did not respond to his words.

"What majesty! What awful sublimity and power!" continued the old man. "But," he added, in a changed voice, "there is a higher power in the gentle rain than lies in the rushing tempest. The power to destroy is an evil power, and has bounds beyond which it cannot go. But the gentle rain that falls noiselessly to the earth, is the power of restoration and recreation. See!"

I looked, and a man lay upon the ground apparently lifeless. He had been struck down by the lightning. His pale face was upturned to the sky, and the rain shaken free from the cloudy skirts of the retiring storm, was falling upon it. I continued to gaze upon the form of the prostrate man, until there came into it a flush of life. Then his limbs quivered; he threw his arms about. A groan issued from his constricted chest. In a little while, he arose.

"Which is best? Which is most to be loved and admired?" said the old man. "The wild, fierce, brilliant tempest, or the quiet rain that restores the image of life and beauty which the tempest has destroyed? See! The gentle breezes are beginning to move over the fields, and, hand in hand with the uplifting sunlight, to raise the rain that has been trodden beneath the crushing heel of the tempest, whose false sublimity you so much admired. There is nothing startling and brilliant in this work; but it is a good and a great work, and it will go on silently and efficiently until not a trace of the desolating storm can be found. In the still atmosphere, unseen, but all-potent, lies a power ever busy in the work of creating and restoring; or, in other words, in the commonplace work of doing good. Which office would you like best to assume—which is the most noble—the office of the destroyer or the restorer?"

I lifted my eyes again, and saw men busily engaged in blotting out the traces of the storm, and in restoring all to its former use and beauty.

Builders were at work upon the house which had been struck by lightning, and men engaged in repairing fences, barns, and other objects upon which had been spent the fury of the excited elements. Soon every vestige of the destroyer was gone.

"Commonplace work, that of nailing on boards and shingles," said the old man; "of repairing broken fences; of filling up the deep foot-prints of the passing storm; but is it not a noble work? Yes; for it is ennobled by its end. Far nobler than the work of the brilliant tempest, which moved but to destroy."

The scene changed once more. I was back again from the land of dreams and similitudes. It was midnight, and the moon was shining in a cloudless sky. I arose, and going to the window, sat and looked forth, musing upon my dream. All was hushed as if I were out in the fields, instead of in the heart of a populous city. Soon came the sound of footsteps, heavy and measured, and the watchman passed on his round of duty. An humble man was he, forced by necessity into his position, and rarely thought of and little regarded by the many. There was nothing brilliant about him to attract the eye and extort admiration. The man and his calling were commonplace. He passed on; and, as his form left my eye, the thought of him passed from my mind. Not long after, unheralded by the sound of footsteps, came one with a stealthy, crouching air; pausing now, and listening; and now looking warily from side to side. It was plain that he was on no errand of good to his fellowmen. He, too, passed on, and was lost to my vision.

Many minutes went by, and I still remained at the window, musing upon the subject of my dream, when I was startled by a cry of terror issuing from a house not far away. It was the cry of a woman. Obeying the instinct of my feelings, I ran into the street and made my way hurriedly towards the spot from which the cry came.

"Help! help! murder!" shrieked a woman from the open window.

I tried the street door of the house, but it was fastened. I threw myself against it with all my strength, and it yielded to the concussion. As I entered the dark passage, I found myself suddenly grappled by a strong man, who threw me down and held me by the throat. I struggled to free myself,

but in vain. His grip tightened. In a few moments I would have been lifeless. But, just at the instant when consciousness was about leaving me, the guardian of the night appeared. With a single stroke of his heavy mace, he laid the midnight robber and assassin senseless upon the floor.

How instantly was that humble watchman ennobled in my eyes! How high and important was his use in society! I looked at him from a new standpoint, and saw him in a new relation.

"Commonplace!" said I, on regaining my own room in my own house, panting from the excitement and danger to which I had been subjected. "Commonplace! Thank God for the commonplace and the useful!"

Again I passed into the land of dreams, where I found myself walking in a pleasant way, pondering the theme which had taken such entire possession of my thoughts. As I moved along, I met the gifted one who had called my work dull and commonplace; that work was a simple picture of human life; drawn for the purpose of inspiring the reader with trust in God and love towards his fellow-man. He addressed me with the air of one who felt that he was superior, and led off the conversation by a brilliant display of words that half concealed, instead of making clear, his ideas. Though I perceived this, I was yet affected with admiration. My eyes were dazzled as by a glare of light.

"Yes, yes," I sighed to myself; "I am dull, tame, and commonplace beside these children of genius. How poor and mean is the work that comes from my hands!"

"Not so!" said my companion. I turned to look at him; but the gifted being stood not by my side. In his place was the ancient one who had before spoken to me in the voice of wisdom.

"Not so!" he continued. "Nothing that is useful is poor and mean. Look up! In the fruit of our labor is the proof of its quality."

I was in the midst of a small company, and the gifted being whose powers I had envied was there, the centre of attraction and the observed of all observers. He read to those assembled from a book; and what he read flashed with a brightness that was dazzling. All listened in the most rapt attention, and, by the power of what the gifted one read, soared now, in thought, among the stars, spread their wings among the swift-moving tempest, or descended into the unknown depths of the earth. As for myself, my mind seemed endowed with new faculties, and to rise almost into the power of the infinite.

"Glorious! Divine! Godlike!" Such were the admiring words that fell from the lips of all.

And then the company dispersed. As we went forth from the room in which we had assembled, we met numbers who were needy, and sick, and suffering; mourners, who sighed for kind words from the comforter: little children, who had none to love and care for them; the faint and weary, who needed kind hands to help them on their toilsome journey. But no human sympathies were stirring in our hearts. We had been raised, by the power of the genius we so much admired, far above the world and its commonplace sympathies. The wings of our spirits were still beating the air, far away in the upper regions of transcendent thought.

Another change came. I saw a woman reading from the same book from which the gifted one had read. Ever and anon she paused, and gave utterance to words of admiration.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" fell, ever and anon, from her lips; and she would lift her eyes, and muse upon what she was reading. As she sat thus, a little child entered the room. He was crying.

"Mother! mother!" said the child, "I want—"

But the mother's thoughts were far above the regions of the commonplace. Her mind was in a world of ideal beauty. Disturbed by the interruption, a slight frown contracted on her beautiful brows as she arose and took her child by the arm to thrust it from the room.

A slight shudder went through my frame as I marked the touching distress that overspread the countenance of the child as it looked up into its mother's face and saw nothing there but an angry frown.

"Every thought is born of affection," said the old man, as this scene faded away, "and has in it the quality of the life that gave it birth; and when that thought is reproduced in the mind of another, it awakens its appropriate affection. If there had been a true love of his neighbor in the mind of the gifted one when he wrote the book from which the mother read, and if his purpose had been to inspire with human emotions—and none but these are God-like—the souls of men, his work would have filled the heart of that mother with a deeper love of her child, instead of freezing in her bosom the surface of love's celestial fountain. To have hearkened to the grief of that dear child, and to have ministered to its comfort, would have been a commonplace act, but, how truly noble and divine! And now, look again, and let what passes before you give strength to your wavering spirits."

I lifted my eyes, and saw a man reading, and I knew that he read that work of mine which the gifted one had condemned as dull, and tame, and commonplace. And, moreover, I knew that he was in trouble so deep as to be almost hopeless of the future, and just ready to give up his life-struggle, and let his hands fall listless and despairing by his side. Around him were gathered his wife and his little ones, and they were looking to him, but in vain, for the help they needed.

As the man read, I saw a light come suddenly into his face. He paused, and seemed musing for a time; and his eyes gleamed quickly upwards, and as his lips parted, these words came forth: "Yes, yes; it must be so. God is merciful as he is wise, and will not forsake his creatures. He tries us in the fires of adversity but to consume the evil of our hearts. I will trust him, and again go forth, with my eyes turned confidently upwards." And the man went forth in the spirit of confidence in Heaven, inspired by what I had written.

"Look again," said the one by my side.

I looked, and saw the same man in the midst of a smiling family. His countenance was full of life and happiness, for his trust had not been in vain. As I had written, so he had found it. God is good, and lets no one feel the fires of adversity longer than is necessary for his purification from evil.

"Look again!" came like tones of music to my ear.

I looked, and saw one lying upon a bed. By the lines upon his brow, and the compression of his lips, it was evident that he was in bodily suffering. A book lay near him; it was written by the gifted one, and was full of bright thoughts and beautiful images. He took it, and tried to forget his pain in these thoughts and images. But in this he did not succeed, and soon laid it aside with a groan of anguish. Then there was handed to him my poor and commonplace work; and he opened the pages and began to read. I soon perceived that an interest was awakened in his mind. Gradually the contraction of his brow grew less severe, and, in a little while, he had forgotten his pain.

"I will be more patient," said he, in a calm voice, after he had read for a long time with a deep interest. "There are many with pain worse than mine to bear, who have none of the comforts and blessings so freely scattered along my way through life."

And then he gave directions to have relief sent to one and another whom he now remembered to be in need.

"It is a good work that prompts to good in others," said the old man. "What if it be dull and tame—commonplace to the few—it is a good gift to the world, and thousands will bless the giver. Look again!"

An angry mother, impatient and fretted by the conduct of a froward child, had driven her boy from her presence, when, if she had controlled her own feelings, she might have drawn him to her side and subdued him by the power of affection. She was unhappy, and her boy had received an injury.

The mother was alone. Before her was a table covered with books, and she took up one to read. I knew the volume; it was written by one whose genius had a deep power of fascination. Soon the mother became lost in its exciting pages, and remained buried in them for hours. At length, after turning the last page, she closed the book; and then came the thought of her wayward boy. But, her feelings toward him had undergone no change; she was still angry, because of his disobedience.

Another book lay upon the table; a book of no pretensions, and written with the simple purpose of doing good. It was commonplace, because it dealt with things in the common life around us. The mother took this up, opened to the title-page, turned a few leaves, and then laid it down again; sat thoughtful for some moments, and then sighed. Again she lifted the book, opened it, and commenced reading. In a little while she was all attention, and ere long I saw a tear stealing forth upon her cheeks. Suddenly she closed the book, evincing strong emotion as she did so, and, rising up, went from the room. Ascending to a chamber above, she entered, and there found the boy at play. He looked towards her, and, remembering her anger, a shadow flitted across his face. But his mother smiled and looked kindly towards him. Instantly the boy dropped his playthings, and sprung to her side. She stooped and kissed him.

"Oh, mother! I do love you, and I will try to be good!"

Blinding tears came to my eyes, and I saw this scene no longer. I was out among the works of nature, and my instructor was by my side.

"Despise not again the humble and the commonplace," said he, "for upon these rest the happiness and well-being of the world. Few can enter into and appreciate the startling and the brilliant, but thousands and tens of thousands can feel and love the commonplace that comes to their daily wants, and inspires them with a mutual sympathy. Go on in your work. Think it not low and mean to speak humble, yet true and fitting words for the humble; to lift up the bowed and grieving spirit; to pour the oil and wine of consolation for the poor and afflicted. It is a great and a good work—the very work in which God's angels delight. Yea, in doing this work, you are brought nearer in spirit to Him who is goodness and greatness itself, for all his acts are done with the end of blessing his creatures."

There was another change. I was awake. It was broad daylight, and the sun had come in and awakened me with a kiss. Again I resumed my work, content to meet the common want in my labors, and let the more gifted and brilliant ones around me enjoy the honors and fame that gathered in cloudy incense around them.

It is better to be loved by the many, than admired by the few.

JENNY LAWSON

CHAPTER I

MARK CLIFFORD had come up from New York to spend a few weeks with his maternal grandfather, Mr. Lofton, who lived almost alone on his beautiful estate a few miles from the Hudson, amid the rich valleys of Orange county. Mr. Lofton belonged to one of the oldest families in the country, and retained a large portion of that aristocratic pride for which they were distinguished. The marriage of his daughter to Mr. Clifford, a merchant of New York, had been strongly opposed on the ground that the alliance was degrading—Mr. Clifford not being able to boast of an ancestor who was anything more than an honest man and a useful citizen. A closer acquaintance with his son-in-law, after the marriage took place, reconciled Mr. Lofton in a good measure to the union; for he found Mr. Clifford to be a man of fine intelligence, gentlemanly feeling, and withal, tenderly attached to his daughter. The marriage was a happy one—and this is rarely the case when the external and selfish desire to make a good family connection is regarded above the mental and moral qualities on which a true union only can be based.

A few years previous to the time at which our story opens, Mrs. Clifford died, leaving one son and two daughters. Mark, the oldest of the children, was in his seventeenth year at the time the sad bereavement occurred—the girls were quite young. He had always been an active boy—ever disposed to get beyond the judicious restraints which his parents wisely sought to throw around him. After his mother's death, he attained a wider liberty. He was still at college when this melancholy event occurred, and continued there for two years; but no longer in correspondence with, and therefore not under the influence of one whose love for him sought ever to hold him back from evil, his natural temperament led him into the indulgence of a liberty that too often went beyond the bounds of propriety.

On leaving college Mr. Clifford conferred with his son touching the profession he wished to adopt, and to his surprise found him bent on entering the navy. All efforts to discourage the idea were of no avail. The young man was for the navy and nothing else. Yielding at last to the desire of his son, Mr. Clifford entered the usual form of application at the Navy Yard in Washington, but, at the same time, in a private letter to the Secretary, intimated his wish that the application might not be favorably considered.

Time passed on, but Mark did not receive the anxiously looked for appointment. Many reasons were conjectured by the young man, who, at last, resolved on pushing through his application, if personal efforts could be of any avail. To this end, he repaired to the seat of government, and waited on the Secretary. In his interviews with this functionary, some expressions were dropped that caused a suspicion of the truth to pass through his mind. A series of rapidly recurring questions addressed to the Secretary were answered in a way that fully confirmed this suspicion. The effect of this upon the excitable and impulsive young man will appear as our story progresses.

It was while Mark's application was pending, and a short time before his visit to Washington, that he came up to Fairview, the residence of his grandfather. Mark had always been a favorite with the old gentleman, who rather encouraged his desire to enter the navy.

"The boy will distinguish himself," Mr. Lofton would say, as he thought over the matter. And the idea of distinction in the army or navy, was grateful to his aristocratic feelings. "There is some of the right blood in his veins for all."

One afternoon, some two or three days after the young man came up to Fairview, he was returning from a ramble in the woods with his gun, when he met a beautiful young girl, simply attired, and bearing on her head a light bundle of grain which she had gleaned in a neighboring field. She

was tripping lightly along, singing as gaily as a bird, when she came suddenly upon the young man, over whose face there passed an instant glow of admiration. Mark bowed and smiled, the maiden dropped a bashful courtesy, and then each passed on; but neither to forget the other. When Mark turned, after a few steps, to gaze after the sweet wild flower he had met so unexpectedly, he saw the face again, for she had turned also. He did not go home on that evening, until he had seen the lovely being who glanced before him in her native beauty, enter a neat little cottage that stood half a mile from Fairview, nearly hidden by vines, and overshadowed by two tall sycamores.

On the next morning Mark took his way toward the cottage with his gun. As he drew near, the sweet voice he had heard on the day before was warbling tenderly an old song his mother had sung when he was but a child; and with the air and words so well remembered, came a gentleness of feeling, and a love of what was pure and innocent, such as he had not experienced for many years. In this state of mind he entered the little porch, and stood listening for several minutes to the voice that still flung itself plaintively or joyfully upon the air, according to the sentiment breathed in the words that were clothed in music; then as the voice became silent, he rapped gently at the door, which, in a few moments, was opened by the one whose attractions had drawn him thither.

A warm color mantled the young girl's face as her eyes fell upon so unexpected a visitor. She remembered him as the young man she had met on the evening before; about whom she had dreamed all night, and thought much since the early morning. Mark bowed, and, as an excuse for calling, asked if her mother were at home.

"My mother died when I was but a child," replied the girl, shrinking back a step or two; for Mark was gazing earnestly into her face.

"Ah! Then you are living with your—your—"

"Mrs. Lee has been a mother to me since then," said she, dropping her eyes to the floor.

"Then I will see the good woman who has taken your mother's place." Mark stepped in as he spoke, and took a chair in the neat little sitting room into which the door opened.

"She has gone over to Mr. Lofton's," said the girl, in reply, "and won't be back for an hour."

"Has she, indeed? Then you know Mr. Lofton?"

"Oh, yes. We know him very well. He owns our little cottage."

"Does he! No doubt you find him a good landlord."

"He's a kind man," said the girl, earnestly.

"He is, as I have good reason to know," remarked the young man. "Mr. Lofton is my grandfather."

The girl seemed much surprised at this avowal, and appeared less at ease than before.

"And now, having told you who I am," said Mark, "I think I may be bold enough to ask your name."

"My name is Jenny Lawson," replied the girl.

"A pretty name, that—Jenny—I always liked the sound of it. My mother's name was Jenny. Did you ever see my mother? But don't tremble so! Sit down, and tell your fluttering heart to be still."

Jenny sunk into a chair, her bosom heaving, and the crimson flush still glowing on her cheeks, while Mark gazed into her face with undisguised admiration.

"Who would have thought," said he to himself, "that so sweet a wild flower grew in this out of the way place."

"Did you ever see my mother, Jenny?" asked the young man, after she was a little composed.

"Mrs. Clifford?"

"Yes."

"Often."

"Then we will be friends from this moment, Jenny. If you knew my mother then, you must have loved her. She has been dead now over three years."

There was a shade of sadness in the young man's voice as he said this.

"When did you see her last?" he resumed.

"The summer before she died she came up from New York and spent two or three weeks here. I saw her then, almost every day."

"And you loved my mother? Say you did!"

The young man spoke with a rising emotion that he could not restrain.

"Every body loved her," replied Jenny, simply and earnestly.

For a few moments Mark concealed his face with his hands, to hide the signs of feeling that were playing over it; then looking up again, he said—

"Jenny, because you knew my mother and loved her, we must be friends. It was a great loss to me when she died. The greatest loss I ever had, or, it may be, ever will have. I have been worse since then. Ah me! If she had only lived!"

Again Mark covered his face with his hands, and, this time, he could not keep the dimness from his eyes.

It was a strange sight to Jenny to see the young man thus moved. Her innocent heart was drawn toward him with a pitying interest, and she yearned to speak words of comfort, but knew not what to say.

After Mark grew composed again, he asked Jenny a great many questions touching her knowledge of his mother; and listened with deep interest and emotion to many little incidents of Jenny's intercourse with her, which were related with all the artlessness and force of truth. In the midst of this singular interview, Mrs. Lee came in and surprised the young couple, who, forgetting all reserve, were conversing with an interest in their manner, the ground of which she might well misunderstand. Jenny started and looked confused, but, quickly recovering herself, introduced Mark as the grandson of Mr. Lofton.

The old lady did not respond to this with the cordiality that either of the young folks had expected. No, not by any means. A flush of angry suspicion came into her face, and she said to Jenny as she handed her the bonnet she hurriedly removed—

"Here—take this into the other room and put it away."

The moment Jenny retired, Mrs. Lee turned to Mark, and after looking at him somewhat sternly for a moment, surprised him with this speech—

"If I ever find you here again, young man, I'll complain to your grandfather."

"Will you, indeed!" returned Mark, elevating his person, and looking at the old lady with flashing eyes. "And pray, what will you say to the old gentleman?"

"Fine doings, indeed, for the likes o' you to come creeping into a decent woman's house when she is away!" resumed Mrs. Lee. "Jenny's not the kind you're looking after, let me tell you. What would your poor dear mother, who is in heaven, God bless her! think, if she knew of this?"

The respectful and even affectionate reference to his mother, softened the feelings of Mark, who was growing very angry.

"Good morning, old lady," said he, as he turned away; "you don't know what you're talking about!" and springing from the door, he hurried off with rapid steps. On reaching a wood that lay at some distance off, Mark sought a retired spot, near where a quiet stream went stealing noiselessly along amid its alder and willow-fringed banks, and sitting down upon a grassy spot, gave himself up to meditation. Little inclined was he now for sport. The birds sung in the trees above him, fluttered from branch to branch, and even dipped their wings in the calm waters of the stream, but he heeded them not. He had other thoughts. Greatly had old Mrs. Lee, in the blindness of her suddenly aroused fears, wronged the young man. If the sphere of innocence that was around the beautiful girl had not been all powerful to subdue evil thoughts and passions in his breast, the reference to his mother would have been effectual to that end.

For half an hour had Mark remained seated alone, busy, with thoughts and feelings of a less wandering and adventurous character than usually occupied his mind, when, to his surprise, he saw

Jenny Lawson advancing along a path that led through a portion of the woods, with a basket on her arm. She did not observe him until she had approached within some fifteen or twenty paces; when he arose to his feet, and she, seeing him, stopped suddenly, and looked pale and alarmed.

"I am glad to meet you again, Jenny," said Mark, going quickly toward her, and taking her hand, which she yielded without resistance. "Don't be frightened. Mrs. Lee did me wrong. Heaven knows I would not hurt a hair of your head! Come and sit down with me in this quiet place, and let us talk about my mother. You say you knew her and loved her. Let her memory make us friends."

Mark's voice trembled with feeling. There was something about the girl that made the thought of his mother a holier and tenderer thing. He had loved his mother intensely, and since her death, had felt her loss as the saddest calamity that had, or possibly ever could, befall him. Afloat on the stormy sea of human life, he had seemed like a mariner without helm or compass. Strangely enough, since meeting with Jenny at the cottage a little while before, the thought of her appeared to bring his mother nearer to him; and when, so unexpectedly, he saw her approaching him in the woods, he felt momentarily, that it was his mother's spirit guiding her thither.

Urged by so strong an appeal, Jenny suffered herself to be led to the retired spot where Mark had been reclining, half wondering, half fearful—yet impelled by a certain feeling that she could not well resist. In fact, each exercised a power over the other, a power not arising from any determination of will, but from a certain spiritual affinity that neither comprehended. Some have called this "destiny," but it has a better name.

"Jenny," said Mark, after they were seated—he still retained her hand in his, and felt it tremble—"tell me something about my mother. It will do me good to hear of her from your lips."

The girl tried to make some answer, but found no utterance. Her lips trembled so that she could not speak. But she grew more composed after a time, and then in reply to many questions of Mark, related incident after incident, in which his mother's goodness of character stood prominent. The young man listened intently, sometimes with his eyes upon the ground, and sometimes gazing admiringly into the sweet face of the young speaker.

Time passed more rapidly than either Mark or Jenny imagined. For full an hour had they been engaged in earnest conversation, when both were painfully surprised by the appearance of Mrs. Lee, who had sent Jenny on an errand, and expected her early return. A suspicion that she might encounter young Clifford having flashed through the old woman's mind, she had come forth to learn if possible the cause of Jenny's long absence. To her grief and anger, she discovered them sitting together engaged in earnest conversation.

"Now, Mark Clifford!" she exclaimed as she advanced, "this is too bad! And Jenny, you weak and foolish girl! are you madly bent on seeking the fowler's snare? Child! child! is it thus you repay me for my love and care over you!"

Both Mark and Jenny started to their feet, the face of the former flushed with instant anger, and that of the other pale from alarm.

"Come!" and Mrs. Lee caught hold of Jenny's arm and drew her away. As they moved off, the former, glancing back at Mark, and shaking her finger towards him, said—

"I'll see your grandfather, young man!"

Fretted by this second disturbance of an interview with Jenny, and angry at an unjust imputation of motive, Mark dashed into the woods, with his gun in his hand, and walked rapidly, but aimlessly, for nearly an hour, when he found himself at the summit of a high mountain, from which, far down and away towards the east, he could see the silvery Hudson winding along like a vein of silver. Here, wearied with his walk, and faint in spirit from over excitement, he sat down to rest and to compose his thoughts. Scarcely intelligible to himself were his feelings. The meeting with Jenny, and the effect upon him, were things that he did not clearly understand. Her influence over him was a mystery. In fact, what had passed so hurriedly, was to him more like a dream than a reality.

No further idea of sport entered the mind of the young man on that day. He remained until after the sun had passed the meridian in this retired place, and then went slowly back, passing the cottage of Mrs. Lee on his return. He did not see Jenny as he had hoped. On meeting Mr. Lofton, Mark became aware of a change in the old man's feelings towards him, and he guessed at once rightly as to the cause. If he had experienced any doubts, they would have been quickly removed.

"Mark!" said the old gentleman, sternly, almost the moment the grandson came into his presence, "I wish you to go back to New York to-morrow. I presume I need hardly explain my reason for this wish, when I tell you that I have just had a visit from old Mrs. Lee."

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