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A WAITING RACE

BY

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A WAITING RACE.

CHAPTER I.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song !
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound !
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May !

WORDSWORTH.

It was the glorious month of May, and the landscape of Northern Virginia was awakening from its long winter sleep. Everywhere, in consequence of unusually heavy rains through April, the tender green of grass and trees refreshed the eye and cheered the mind and heart.

It was with "vital feelings of delight" that a young man alighted from his seat in a Pull-

man car at a crowded station, carrying his valise, umbrella and a small camera.

After certain inquiries of a portly negro, who seemed to be a sort of major-domo for the general public, and being conscious of numerous country eyes being fixed on him as a stranger whom they instantly recognized as "citified," our traveler entered a shabby old carriage, drawn by two bony horses, and was rolled away from the small town of S—— into the exquisite rolling country three miles beyond. Turning to look back at the amusing collection of small darkeys, fat old butter women, good-for-nothing idlers, who year by year seemed to spend their time whittling sticks and sitting about on cracker boxes, the inmate of the creaking vehicle almost laughed out, so full of humor to him was the strong local color before his observant, yet kind eyes.

For Arthur Leighton, now twenty-five years old, fresh from studies and travels in Europe, his mind full of recent pleasures and adventures in the city of New York, had no merriment in his composition that was tinged with sarcasm, and his glimpses of the great world had never robbed him of that greatest of all

possessions—the heart of a child. That worldly over-wise, weary look he had so often seen on the faces of other young men was a mystery to him; and truly to be chronically bored and *blasé* has nothing to do with age necessarily; for there are many people born tired, apparently, and others whose hearts, even in early youth, are like withered apples.

A sense of humor, then, mellowed in the sunshine of a prosperous and happy youth, and watered by the dews of kindliness and contentment, was the strongest characteristic of Arthur Leighton's strong nature. He was frank and generous to a fault, proud with the pride of the *wohl-geborn,* acutely sensitive to good impressions (yet able, like many people of great force of character, to rid his mind of bad ones), and very demonstrative in his affections. One look at his broad, slightly-sloping shoulders, and at his firm mouth and firmer chin, would have made any timid woman feel safe in his presence—for he possessed courage of the highest order.

His father, seeing this, had been eager for a West Point appointment for the son; but Arthur had written back from Europe that the

army, he felt sure, would not suit him, for many reasons, but letters being unsatisfactory he would wait till his return home before unfolding his plans for the future, vaguely hinting, however, at his taste for law.

On this lovely May day his heart beat high with the hopes that laid dormant away from his native heath, and bright visions of a future in which his name and fame would be on the lips of friends or foes crowded thick and fast into his busy brain. An early marriage sometimes made and sometimes marred a man, he reflected, and how would his turn out? At that very moment the image of a certain little girl of seventeen, whom he had parted from four years earlier, rose to his mind. She was sweet and pretty then, but immature, and he was an inexperienced youth, twenty-one years old. There were no tears and no passion at parting, although each had agreed that their long summer of friendship having ripened into an engagement, they would remain true to each other until Arthur's return from Europe.

Leighton père had advised his son to take advantage of the recent wave of family prosperity to continue his travels on the Continent,

at the same time reading and studying law at night, in order to be ready for his final course on his return home.

In the meantime a desultory correspondence was carried on between the so-called lovers, the letters at first being exchanged rather often and with some enthusiasm, and gradually becoming rarer as time went on and their lives drifted further apart. Neither Arthur nor his little sweetheart realized then that two or three years even made all the difference in the world in two growing, unformed, inexperienced young people; and it had yet to occur to them that a girl at seventeen and a man at twenty-one may readily have ideals that are no longer cherished and wept over when the first flush of youth has passed.

As this young man tried to analyze his feelings he seemed to dimly comprehend that the loadstone that had guided his feet for four years past had been ever the quiet eyes of his mother. Did it seem strange to him that his first thought was of her as he neared home, instead of the bright face of the loveliest young lady in the country? He told himself that to-morrow would be time enough to find Eleanor, as she was cer-

tainly not expecting him back so soon, he having come down from New York without preparing his parents.

Just at this point in his meditations the old carriage came to a dead standstill, and the driver tugging in the reins to the poor, weary horses, called out lustily, "Whoa!"

Arthur sprang out hastily, running two steps at a time up the pretty old colonial flight of stone and rapping sharply with the brass knocker on the quaint front door. The sound, reverberating through the wide, quiet halls, soon brought a pair of feet shuffling along from the rear of the house, and in another moment a bright bandana-handkerchief head was stuck out to greet the newcomer.

"La! My sakes alive! Ef I don't see spooks, there's Marster Arthur done come home again!"

"Yes, indeed, Aunt Sally," the young man answered gaily. "I have come at last, and I'm really glad to feel that four years did not change me so much that you could not recognize me. How is dear mother, and where is father, Aunt Sally?"

Before the faithful old ex-slave and family factotum could reply, a soft sound of light feet

on the stairs was heard, the rustle of a silk skirt, and, as if by magic, Arthur's mother seemed to float through space until her form stood at the side of her son. Overcome with joy, and taken so suddenly by surprise, Mrs. Leighton could only gasp out in broken words: "My son, my dear, *dear* son!"

He was, indeed, the worthy son of a worthy mother, and the very core of her heart as he stood there looking down lovingly into her eyes.

She was about medium height, slender without thinness, and wonderfully youthful in appearance for a woman forty-six years of age. Arthur was as proud of his mother as she was of him, and after the first greetings were exchanged he passed his arm around her waist and led her to a comfortable seat, with the purpose of having a long, uninterrupted chat.

"My boy," she presently said, "why did you not let us know you were coming?"

"Well, mother dear," Arthur answered, "I thought I would give you a pleasant surprise, and you know I wrote father only last week that I would have to stay a little while longer in New York, in order to see the sights thoroughly, and renew a

few old acquaintances. You see, mother," he went on, "I can't go back to the city now for all that, as I have come home to buckle down to work. I mean to graduate soon in law, and begin practising as soon as Dame Fortune favors me. Don't you worry over me, mother," patting her cheek affectionately, "for I am young and strong, and, God willing, I shall yet be able to show you and father how I appreciate all you have done for me. By the way, where is father?"

Mrs. Leighton replied that he had driven to town, not having known Arthur was coming; and after this mother and son spent the rest of the forenoon talking and eagerly going over the most agreeable and interesting of their respective experiences during those memorable four years.

So passed Arthur Leighton's first happy day at home, and before going to bed that night he made a solemn resolve that he would conquer in the race of life, and that failure and poverty should never be his.

Bright dreams of youth, and happy the young man who has them! For, as surely as sloth, that enemy of the soul, eats its way into the

character, ambition dies quickly, and with it self-respect itself, sometimes. Sleep on now, young wrestler with fate, for you will need your strength some day. The Powers of Darkness are far from you now with your white soul in the keeping of the Infinite!

CHAPTER II.

She was a Phantom of Delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
A lovely apparition sent to be a moment's ornament ;
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair ;
Like twilight's too her dusky hair. . . .

WORDSWORTH.

ELEANOR MACDONALD sat sunning herself, and looking reflectively over the bright sunlit meadows that were part of her father's property, on the charming estate separated from that of the Leighton family by a distance of a mile and a half.

There was something very attractive in the attitude of the girl who had come out to enjoy the pure draughts of morning air on the spacious southern veranda. Her supple young figure was gracefully leaning against one of the supports of the heavy stone facade, while her face, although in repose, was dimpling with happy content, and her hands were full of white lilacs she had just been gathering in the

garden. A large, picturesque straw hat, tilted a little now off the piquante oval face, seemed to set off to perfection a head graced by stray curls that blew naturally over the smooth, low forehead. The hair was of the darkest shade of brown, and so were the lovely eyes—clear pools in which one could read the little history of a pure young life. The nose was small and straight, though not in the least Grecian, and the mouth was a little large, the lips curving slightly at the corners, and quick to part in a smile that lit up the whole face and displayed a set of firm, white teeth. The round, rather broad chin for an oval contour had the faintest suggestion of a dimple, and in the rosy cheeks were two very active ones—the constant delight of Eleanor's father, who knew how to keep them in evidence.

For no girl ever lived who had a more devoted, indulgent father, and she was his sunbeam continually as she danced about the house, lightly touching this and that object with her artistic fingers, and lingering lovingly sometimes over favorite vases and ornaments that were part of her child-life before the death of her mother.

Mrs. MacDonald had not succumbed to the effect of the four years of anxiety and separation from her husband, brought by the Civil War, and had lived happily in her home until the year 1879, when, during that rigorous winter, a sudden attack of pneumonia had carried her off after a week's illness. Her little Eleanor was only five years old, a bright, winning, little darling, the idol of the house which had known for years nothing but sorrow and death. Out of the five lovely buds on the paternal stem all had been boys, except Eleanor, and all swept away by the ruthless hand of Death in an epidemic of scarlet fever.

No wonder, then, that the little girl became the light of her father's eyes, and it was more than a passing regret to him when she told him at seventeen that she and Arthur Leighton were engaged to be married. The fact that the latter was very young, with no definite career mapped out, and a father only moderately well off in this world's goods, seemed to General MacDonald a distinct drawback to a marriage with his daughter. He was not at all purse-proud, and was too accustomed as an ex-Confederate officer to sights of distressing poverty

among his own class to judge Arthur's father for having had a tough struggle to support his family, after sheathing his sword in 1865 and returning to his native state.

But it happened that Mrs. MacDonald had been a northern woman, her father a strong Union sympathizer, and his home became the refuge of his distracted wife, who had failed in trying to keep her husband from entering the Confederate service at the outbreak of the war. When peace came she rejoined him with all her worldly possessions to beautify a home, and with money enough to build a comfortable modern house, a mile and a half from a growing town, and with land enough to be self-supporting. It was here that Eleanor had grown up, and had passed a peaceful childhood, even her mother's death coming when she was too young for passionate sorrow, and her memory only remaining as a secret image in the heart of a child naturally reverential.

The day that Eleanor sat enjoying the air was the tenth of May, 1895, the one succeeding Arthur's return home. Apparently the young girl enjoying her lilacs was not thinking of him; for, in the country, news travels slowly,

and in his last letter, now a week old, there was no time fixed for his return. Just as she was going into the house, however, she suddenly noticed a buggy about a hundred yards away, driven by a young man whose familiar face and figure, in spite of four years' change, were easily recognized. Almost before she could prepare herself he had looked into her eyes with an affectionate greeting, in which there was not a suggestion of passion, however, and had taken her hand, advancing near enough to kiss her lightly on the brow.

"I am so glad to see you, dear little girl," Arthur said, checking himself suddenly as he noticed that a deeper blush came into her cheeks.

"I am very glad to see you," Eleanor replied, "only I am no longer a little girl, Arthur, for you must remember I am twenty-one years old now, and since you left home I have grown into a woman."

"That is true," he said, looking at her suddenly in a new way, and noticing how very pretty the flower was that had burst into bloom during his absence. "It's hard to realize that we are both older, and perhaps wiser than we

were when we said good-by, Eleanor; but for my part I am glad to feel that I am no longer a stripling, but a man. And, as for you, Time has dealt generously with you in giving you so charming a face and figure—and surely that seems to come first in the attractions of a young woman. For," he added, laughingly, " although no one judges a woman for being ugly, still it takes a tremendous amount of brains and character to make up for the disadvantages of possessing a turn-up nose, mouth from ear to ear, and a bushel of freckles."

She laughed haughtily at this exaggerated speech, coloring slightly at the compliment to her own charms, and shifting her position so that her hat almost touched Arthur's cheek as he sat. There was something very frank in their talk, and an atmosphere of *bonne camaraderie,* though romance, and sentiment still less, were absolutely lacking.

The conversational ball was kept rolling for an hour or more, after which Arthur rose to go. During that time he had unloaded himself of the choicest reminiscences connected with his life in Europe, every now and then questioning his listener as to her own life and pleasures, and

receiving in return a spicy account of two society seasons in the cities of New Orleans and Washington.

"I have more to tell you next time," Eleanor said as they shook hands, "and you must think I have forgotten my manners not to have asked you in-doors, where you would be more comfortable, instead of perching, like Poe's raven, on the edge of this step!"

CHAPTER III.

She walks in beauty like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meets in her aspect and her eyes,
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

BYRON.

A FEW hours later, when the soft moonbeams were filling her room with a silvery radiance, Eleanor MacDonald sat by the window, a book open on her lap, her hair unpinned of its fastenings, a loose, flowing robe falling like a soft pink cloud around her lithe figure. She had said good night to her father very early, on the pretext of wishing to do some reading before retiring, and he did not try to prevent her, although he felt some little disappointment at the prospect of being left alone. It was so unusual, too, for Eleanor to behave in this way, and she had been so reticent on the subject of

Arthur Leighton's morning visit that General MacDonald turned quickly around in his chair, with a gesture that detained his daughter.

He was a well-preserved man about sixty-three years of age, the dark eyes, keen as an eagle's; the skin firm and healthy, the hair very gray and carefully brushed, that gave a distinction to features more or less ordinary. The shape of the head and brow was unusually fine, denoting a clear intellect and good judgment; and he had another decided physical attraction in possessing a pair of shapely hands. Brown and manly-looking as they were, showing that the owner was no idler, they were still the hands inherited from aristocratic ancestors.

For General MacDonald was a Virginian gentleman of the old school; high-bred, courteous, dignified and refined, and his polished manners were the result of careful training from a mother who had been one of the most beautiful and attractive of the daughters of the Old Dominion.

Now, as he turned to address Eleanor, it was with no prying curiosity that he said: "My daughter, I think you said young Mr. Leighton was here to-day; did you not? "Yes, father,"

Eleanor answered, "he was here for an hour, and I was too stupid to think of asking him indoors, for I was enjoying the air."

A dead silence then ensued, for Eleanor knew that her father forbore to ask what was trembling on his lips—whether a reference to their engagement was made during the conversation. He wished Eleanor to give her confidence unsought, and he shrewdly conjectured that her silence was due to an unsettled frame of mind. Any coercion now on his part might affect exactly what he wanted to avoid—a cementing of the tie of friendship into a sentimental attachment, which had already misled both young people.

"I think I shall say good night, dear father," Eleanor finally said, "as I am not in a talkative mood; and the heroine in the book I am reading is in such difficulties that I want to extricate her to my satisfaction before going to bed."

With a light kiss and a laugh Eleanor left the room. She was sincere in saying that she wished to read, but she also wanted to think; and the passionate story she was just finishing seemed to give color and form to her own re-

flections on that all-important subject, Love. The girl Eleanor read about was certainly not like herself in anything that touched so serious a step as an engagement of marriage. There were descriptions all through the story of the meetings of the two lovers by daylight, by moonlight, on all sorts of occasions, and always there breathed a spirit of romance through it all. When had these two devoted young people ever spent an hour in each other's society, discussing solely such topics as travels, books, art or music without a word that indicated their mutual love?

"And yet," Eleanor thought, "Arthur and I were separated for four years, and when he comes back he gives me one little compliment that any society man might have ready for the first girl he meets, and there is not a single thing in the course of our conversation that spoke of a happy present, and a future to be made still happier through love. I am fond of Arthur, too; but it is necessary for me to feel a distinct thrill whenever he comes to see me, or to run to the gate to meet him, write notes all through the week, and even have his face in my mind to such an extent that I find my sleeping, as

well as my waking hours, full of his image."

A certain happy family came before her mind's eye at this point, and she saw a pretty little picture that was the best answer to her self-examination. On one occasion Eleanor had driven over to call on Mrs. Leighton before Arthur's return from Europe, and as she neared the house she caught a glimpse of two figures seated on the wide piazza. Both husband and wife were so deeply interested in conversation that they did not hear the sound of approaching carriage wheels, and this fact gave Eleanor a peep into the private life of two people who had always commanded her highest respect, though knowing nothing of their affectionate home relations.

As she drove nearer to Mrs. Leighton, Eleanor could see that her face was flushed with enthusiasm; one arm stole softly to the back of her husband's neck; she leaned towards him with a happy smile; and Eleanor watched as though fascinated, the tender love-light in her pure eyes as she said something to Mr. Leighton that the young girl did not catch. It was all over in a moment, and the hostess rose hastily to greet her visitor with a slight

flush of embarrassment, fearing that she had appeared foolish to an outsider.

The memory of that sweet impression was with Eleanor now, as she pictured herself as Arthur's wife, mentally comparing herself with Mrs. Leighton—to her mind the ideal wife.

"I have been deceived, foolishly deceived," the girl cried out at last, "and I have never known what love really is. All this time Arthur and I have been a pair of children, playing and pretending a game, yet never stopping to analyze our feelings towards each other in this silly boy and girl affair. If I am cool and indifferent now, what would I be after ten years of marriage? And he! What kind of a husband would he become, after trying to love me for years, for duty's sake? Oh, God!" she suddenly exclaimed, "give me the grace to act wisely and well, and show me what I must do, and when!"

The moon streamed down on the uplifted face and hands of the troubled suppliant. And peaceful thoughts came to her as she listened to the vibrating notes of a bird mingling with the whispers of the night wind.

CHAPTER IV.

. . . Roughs winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date. . . .
SHAKESPEARE.

THE week that followed Arthur's return and first call on Eleanor MacDonald was one of gusty and fitful weather, and for the most part the girl was housed with her father, which gave her ample time for reflection.

The deep impressions made by Arthur's sudden appearance, the changes that had developed him in four years from an immature youth to a full-grown man, and her own pleading petition for Heavenly wisdom and grace, on that moonlit night that followed their first meeting, all combined to rob Eleanor of her former peace of mind.

Moreover, Arthur had ridden over to see her several times, in spite of the inclement weather, and Mr. and Mrs. Leighton had also exchanged

calls with General MacDonald and Eleanor. The girl became more and more convinced that there existed a mutual indifference between herself and Arthur, and that to continue the engagement under such circumstances was not only derogatory to pride and dignity, but must also later hamper her and be a drag upon her independence.

In forming these conclusions, Eleanor's mind was more than ordinarily influenced by the receipt of a letter from her father's sister inviting her to spend a month at the White Sulphur Springs when the gaieties there should be at their height. To go there as Arthur's fiancée would mean, of course, one of two things—either that her engagement being announced she would not receive special attentions from other young men, or, in the event of her affairs being kept strictly private, she should appear "heart whole and fancy free," in order to enjoy a summer flirtation.

Neither course appealed to her as the correct one; the second, in particular, being a sort of dishonor both to Arthur and herself, and one from which her intuitive sense of refinement shrank as from a blow.

One morning Arthur was strolling in the garden of the old colonial house that his father had rented ever since his return from the Civil War. The property had been very valuable at one time, but, being owned by a careless and parsimonious landlord, had lately almost fallen to pieces, and all the repairs of any note were made gradually (as their means would permit) by the Leightons. The pretty old colonial pillars that supported a roomy, comfortable piazza had been recently renovated. Bright pots of flowers, with hanging baskets of ferns, ornamented the front entrance; while the rear of the place and the side porch were covered with trailing vines that lent color and picturesqueness to an otherwise somber-looking home.

On the front piazza Mrs. Leighton had tastefully arranged a large *jardinière* filled with potted plants, and two rustic benches at each end. The roomy divans filled with luxurious-looking pillows, the wicker chairs, and often in the afternoon a cozy little tea-table, presided over by the charming mistress of the house, were magnets of attraction for Arthur's friends.

Now, as he walked about the old place that had sheltered him from babyhood until his

school-days, he fell to examining the recent improvements that his father had superintended. He stopped very often to pick off a dead leaf here and there, or throw away some useless branch that the stormy weather had broken off in the night and flung down on the neat walk. He took a deep interest in the little things that make up so much of life, and he was a man never to neglect simple duties for greater ones; so that every day had its little pleasures and interests that were for the most part the result of possessing an observant eye.

Just as Arthur was going back into the house to ask his mother to join him a negro man rode up, handing him a note. He recognized Abraham, familiarly dubbed "Abe," the colored field-hand on the MacDonald estate, and smiled a simple welcome—that smile and manner so well understood in the South by the black race as indicating kindness and good feeling, but never familiarity, which always in the case of the darkey brother breeds contempt.

Abe, having delivered the note, touched his hat respectfully and rode off, looking back once or twice at the handsome young man he had

given it to, inwardly commenting on the situation by muttering: "I suttenly do wish I knew what Miss Eleanor means by writin' notes this early in the mornin' to that city young man. Reckon she's engaged to be married, or he's bin tryin' to cote her."

Arthur meanwhile had opened the note, which ran thus:

"MEADOWLAND, May 17th, 1895.

"MY DEAR ARTHUR:

"Perhaps when you have finished this note you may think it presumptuous of me to still call you by your Christian name. I hope not, however, and that the cordial relations of a sincere friendship, begun at an age when we were both too young for formalities, may never be broken by anything I am writing to you to-day.

"We met when I was scarcely more than a child of sixteen years, and became engaged the following year, writing to each other at intervals all of the four years that you were traveling in Europe. During that time we were slowly growing, both mentally and physically, and on your return I think we both experienced a sort of shock to perceive how great were the

changes that had been at work. It was not possible to realize it through letters, which, though often a good indication of character, are most unsatisfactory and misleading in other ways.

"Since your return I have been mentally restless and dissatisfied, and have come to the conclusion that neither of us are in love; and also that to continue an engagement under these circumstances is a foolish waste of time. I am not willing to bind myself to a promise of marriage, made under the influence of a flippant boy-and-girl affair, and I feel that to marry you, now that I am grown and fully know my own mind, would be to lay the seeds of future unhappiness for us both.

"In the future, therefore, we must meet on a different footing, merely as friends, for I do not feel conscientiously that our present relations should continue another day. And I am sure that when you think the matter over you will agree with me.

"I hope you may understand me thoroughly, and that you realize the sincerity with which I subscribe myself,

"Your true friend,

"Eleanor MacDonald."

CHAPTER V.

. . . And what so rare as a day in June ?
Then, if ever, come perfect days. . . .

LOWELL.

A MONTH had passed, both happily and profitably for Arthur Leighton, since the breaking of his engagement, and he had more than fulfilled his promise to his mother of going to work in earnest.

He had answered Eleanor's note the next day, praising her for her perfect frankness and sense of honor, and assuring her that he would deem it his highest privilege to be her friend, since Fate had decreed that he should not remain her lover. He admitted that she was right in saying that neither of them was in love, and added that it was hardly possible for any great degree of passion to exist between them. They had been separated from each other for four years, at the very beginning of their engage-

ment, and now it was but natural for each to realize the difference in his or her feelings.

Having written all this quite simply and naturally, Arthur felt that the moral atmosphere was immensely cleared. Consequently, he continued steadily his law studies at night, some days having long hours of reading and *dolce far niente,* lying on his back and drinking in the delights of June. At other times he helped his mother weed and water the flower-bed; discussed with Mr. Leighton the successful business venture that had given so many advantages to the son; superintended the work of the gardener, and often stopped at the kitchen door to have a little friendly talk with "Aunt Sally," to whom the laws of the Medes and Persians were as nothing compared to the will of her "dear young Marster."

She was the typical negro Mammy of the South, and her views on what she termed "the good-for-nothing niggers" of the present day were both racy and valuable, because indicating the vast difference between the rapidly disappearing type and the new.

"Jes look at dat triflin' thing calls herself

Lucy Jane," she would exclaim. "She don't know nothin' 'bout quality, case she never heerd of the way my Mistus used to live down in Souf Ca'lina wif all her nigger slaves 'round her. Lucy Jane would have a duck fit and never come to ef she could hear tell of how Marster Leighton's mother drove her four-horse team of a Sunday; and then went out in silks and satuns to call on her neighbors, and then invited 'em in to take dinner and supper wif her.

"And such meals, too! My sakes alive! It makes my mouf water now to think of de great dishes of fried chickun with cream gravy, de beat biskits, de huge ham, de plates of batter cakes piled up on silver dishes mos' as high as yo' head! Lucy Jane and her kind ain't never seen the like, and never will; and yet she dares to toss back her wooly head when she looks at me and snap back at me: 'I'se free. I ain't never bin nobody's slave like you, and I'se as good as the people I wuk for, too!'"

While Aunt Sally was holding forth on the subject of the degenerate modern negro and negress, and Arthur Leighton was enjoying his home life, Eleanor MacDonald had said good-by to her father and had joined her aunt at

the White Sulphur Springs about the second week in June.

Heretofore her social festivities had been confined entirely to a season in New Orleans and another one in Washington. The pleasures that many girls in the South of twenty-one have exhausted entirely, from being at dances from the time they are fourteen, were to her quite new and fresh.

She had been educated at home with a foreign governess, her father not being willing to part from his only child during that important period between fifteen and nineteen years of age, when the fresh young mind and heart are so quick to receive impressions. General MacDonald had a horror of large boarding-schools, where his daughter's identity should be sunk in that of ninety-five other daughters. Yet, knowing that a girl's education is not always satisfactory if the English branches are taught by foreign teachers, he decided to give her lessons himself in grammar, history, geography, arithmetic, chemistry, English literature, simple astronomy and physiology. These lessons were so dexterously intermixed for the student with those of the governess in French, German

and music that there was no overtaxation of the brain, the results being distinctly pleasing to the ambitious father—a graduate of West Point and a finely-educated man, from his love of books.

The modern college curriculum for girls, with its unending list of appalling studies, for the most part never put into practical use (except when the graduates are fitting themselves for teachers), did not appeal to General MacDonald as what he wished for Eleanor. To fit her thoroughly for a woman's place in her home life and in society was his first object; and she had consequently developed into an accomplished and charming young woman, while receiving her education so easily and naturally, and in such a healthful climate that nervous prostration and other modern evils were far from her. She was fond of walking, riding and driving, and every natural pursuit that the young and vigorous indulge in when no exorbitant mental tax or artificial, unhealthy stimulus are thrust upon them.

Her hours of piano practise were probably the most injurious of all her studies; but she deliberately set to work to undo the pernicious

effects of the discomfort of the piano stool by having a springy easy bench made for herself. Her father, also, put the old Steinway piano in summer out on the vine-covered back porch so as to have her practice in the open air; and as Eleanor grew older her talent for music became so marked a gift that where most students worked five and six hours a day she made rapid progress on three.

Now away from home, Eleanor began to reap the fruits of her faithful piano practise, and her beautiful, brilliant playing made her the centre of attraction in the little circle of her aunt's friends, who quickly adopted her on her arrival at the White Sulphur. Her voice, though untrained, was sweet, clear and strong, and her ear for music so quick and true that she sang and played every good thing that she heard.

One evening Mrs. Goodman, her aunt, brought up for introduction a young man who had singled Eleanor out as the prettiest and most attractive girl on the ball-room floor the night before. He had not made her acquaintance then, and now, having been listening to the exquisite notes of one of Mendelssohn's

"Songs without Words," that dropped from Eleanor's fingers like pearls from a chain, Mr. Thompson felt anxious to meet her. Eleanor bowed, without offering her hand, and in a few moments Mrs. Goodman left her niece to play to, or be entertained by the matrimonial catch of the White Sulphur Springs.

CHAPTER VI.

Much allowance must be made for men.
TENNYSON.

HE was a very small, spare man, about thirty years old, dressed in the height of fashion. His face was remarkably handsome, with a pink-and-white complexion, good features, and a pair of large blue eyes that, but for their lack of intellect, were singularly beautiful in shape and color. His hair was auburn and inclined to curl, and the eyebrows and lashes were long and silky. Altogether he had the reputation of being a very handsome man, in spite of his great lack of inches. That he enjoyed this reputation was very apparent from the self-satisfied smile that played around his lips; and, moreover, in addition to his looks, Mr. Thompson, it was whispered about, was an orphan with a large fortune.

Stout, middle-aged ladies beamed upon him

as they passed him with their daughters in the halls; and that genus, the female match-maker, being in a flourishing condition at a large resort, did not hesitate to angle for the smiles and favors of the young man so greatly blessed as an eligible *parti*. In less than a week after his arrival, therefore, Mr. Thompson became the "observed of all observers," and no entertainment was considered complete without his elegant little person. He drove the handsomest pair of horses at the White Sulphur, was very generous in his attentions, invariably polite to old people and naturally popular wherever he went. There was a rumor that he had a singular way of reading all night, too—which lent an interest to his words. But as he had never been known to mention anything in the shape of literature, except the Duchess' novels, one story by Jules Verne, and two of Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, this remarkable statement concerning his burning the midnight oil was generally discredited.

However, Mr. Thompson's style of mental vapidity did not in the least matter to the pleasure-loving throng of women, who sat for hours and hours at a time rocking violently in

their chairs in imminent danger of cracking their skulls on the veranda of the summer hotel. For, of all that number, there were comparatively few who could have enjoyed Thackeray or Charles Reade, still less Shakespeare or George Eliot; and the vast majority read any book simply for the story to be gotten out of it, and never for the style or for information.

The amount of energy these women displayed in dancing, morning, noon and night, when not engaged in gossiping, would have accomplished as great wonders in the practical world as the faith that removes mountains. Eleanor was not accustomed to the over-dressing in the morning hours which she saw at the White Sulphur Springs. Almost her only companion for sensible morning walks, attired in a simple waist and short skirt, was a rosy English girl, one of a thoroughly wholesome and delightful type, who did not hesitate to express her disapproval of the artificiality of the summer resort they were visiting.

Although Mr. Thompson was far too indolent to wish permission to join Eleanor and Miss Wood in their morning rambles, he was at the head of all the riding and driving parties,

and soon became very attentive in a special way to Eleanor. Their mutual bond of congeniality was music, which both loved intensely, and Mr. Thompson actually warmed up enough in his conversations to play on the piano several times. He had a perfectly correct ear, a charming natural touch and excellent taste in his choice of music. But in his squeaky, cracked voice he more than once informed Eleanor that "life was too short to practise five-finger exercises"; and it was evident that everything that a lack of ambition could do had been done, to rob the possessor of a fine natural gift. He would select the most comfortable seat in the large, airy hotel parlor and give himself up to the delights of Eleanor's music as often as she was inclined to play. And the girl who frequently felt a species of starvation for musical companionship was involuntarily and irresistibly attracted by the quiet attention and admiration of her listener. Every one loves sincere praise, also, and though she was not vain, she would have been less than human had she not enjoyed Mr. Thompson's compliments on her touch, execution and the fine feeling that she put into her playing.

So passed the month of June, and the two young people, though very different in character and rearing, still found one element of real pleasure in their daily intercourse. I have said, too, that Mr. Thompson was both amiable and generous. The first is one of the marked characteristics of the stupid and inert of the earth; and the second was largely due to an income which amounted to fully $40,000 a year. It is easy for most men to appear very liberal in the matter of gifts to young ladies of flowers, candy and books if the sum required for such an outlay does not demand a personal sacrifice. Alec Thompson had never been accustomed to denying himself anything, and it is doubtful if his reputation for giving would have lasted very long had he suddenly met with some reverse of fortune. And it is quite certain that under such circumstances much of his amiability and *all* of his popularity would have suddenly disappeared into thin air.

No such calamitous blow, however, struck this lucky young man. He continued to smile blandly, to waltz mincingly, to carry the shawls and chairs of the fat, elderly ladies, who were generally in his train, and to make himself

useful and ornamental whenever it did not seriously inconvenience him.

In a very comfortable and happy frame of mind, and with very little effort on his own part, he drifted into a state more and more resembling love as the days passed by, and Eleanor's charming face and figure, so poetic and suggestive of her music, were before his eyes constantly. She had had a very fair amount of attention before meeting Mr. Thompson; but as soon as it was noticed that he began to pay his addresses to her every man in the place clamored for her favors and dances. Men are very like sheep in following each other obediently, so that long before it was time to turn her face homewards she had become the reigning belle of the White Sulphur.

CHAPTER VII.

How sweetly smells the honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness.

TENNYSON.

THE long, hot days of July were nearly over, and the glorious summer nights were at the height of their beauty. Delicious odors of roses and honeysuckle filled the air, and the whole aspect of Woodlawn, Arthur Leighton's home, was almost like fairy-land.

In the rustic summer house two figures were easily recognized from the front piazza in the brilliant light of the midsummer moon. One was that of little Miss Wood, Eleanor MacDonald's newly-made English acquaintance, on a visit to the latter at Meadowland; the other was that of Arthur Leighton. Both girls were spending this particular evening with Mrs. Leighton, who wished to mark Arthur's return in some pleasant way by giving a small evening

affair. The hospitable old colonial place never looked prettier than it did on that occasion; the flowers and ferns growing in bewildering variety and profusion, and the halls and rooms beautifully decorated with banks of sweet-smelling rosebuds, smilax and petunias. The deep window seats of the drawing-room were receptacles for tall vases filled with the most delicate blossoms; and even on the piano Mrs. Leighton had stood a dainty moss-grown wicker basket full of violets, as if to entice some one to that end of the room.

Mr. Leighton coming in while she was looking about with satisfaction at her handiwork reminded her that it was almost time for her guests to arrive. He was a quiet, unobtrusive man of medium height, narrow-chested and delicate-looking, a great contrast in appearance to the son, who had inherited his good looks from his mother. Mr. Leighton had a pair of small, twinkling light-blue eyes, and an insignificant nose; but the mouth and chin were finely molded, indicating a good character, and the smile was hearty and genial.

He was an excellent business man, shrewd and energetic, though never grasping or mean,

and his love of family amounted to a passion that was the keynote to all his actions. In general, he had been much more successful than the majority of his friends who had returned penniless from the Civil War; and this was due to the perseverance and energy he displayed in all his affairs. Arthur was very much like his father in all the essentials of character, while possessing the gentleness and demonstrativeness of his mother.

The latter was particularly attached to Eleanor MacDonald, and though the engagement of the girl to her son was broken there was a strong tie of friendship between the two women. Eleanor admired and even loved Mrs. Leighton, and when any entertainment took place at Woodlawn there was no one in the neighborhood so quick to offer assistance to the hostess. This evening she had driven over from Meadowland with her guest an hour or more before the appointed time for Mrs. Leighton's evening party to begin. Miss Wood, the ever-sensible and useful, offered to accompany her friend, and the two girls filled the carriage with the choicest flowers they could find as a present to their hospitable neighbors.

Arthur had recently been thrown with Eleanor on an entirely different footing, and once the obligations and restraints of their hasty engagement were removed he began to see the girl in a perfectly new light. She was frank and cordial to him, without affectation, sincerely devoted to his mother and perfectly true as a friend. All this he had full opportunity to notice as the summer passed by, and the days brought their round of social festivities. There was no regular season of gaiety, of course, in a town as small as that of S——. But the warm weather naturally induced a series of picnics, garden parties, driving parties, and even card parties; and everywhere Arthur and Eleanor met.

In her own home, now that she was grown, he saw her in a new rôle as hostess and housekeeper for her father, and the beautiful relations between the two were intensely attractive to the young man. General MacDonald had never referred, except to Eleanor, to the breaking of their engagement, and, indeed, the older man had known Arthur so slightly before he went to Europe that it was a surprise and

pleasure to find what an agreeable companionship had sprung up between them.

Mr. Leighton had never been what Miss Wood called "a booky man," was younger by fifteen years than General MacDonald, and their education had been entirely different. The former was a mere boy when he ran away from home and joined the Confederate Army; so that having attained only the rank of captain during the four years of fighting he decided to drop the title entirely, and asked to be called plain Mr. Leighton.

"I have not the cheek to go over and call on so distinguished a man as General MacDonald," he said laughingly to his wife, "for the purpose of airing a very small handle to my name, and giving him the benefit of my military experiences. When we meet, it must be understood that the honor of acquaintance is distinctly conferred on me, and not on him."

It is needless to say that a man as polished as the General, was equally unpretentious and simple in his manner to Mr. Leighton; yet there was no special congeniality between them. Arthur, however, had found favor in the eyes

of Eleanor's father, and they enjoyed many a delightful talk on books and travels.

At first the visits to Meadowland were intended solely for General MacDonald, and Arthur was contented to appear and disappear as a friend of the family, without inquiring for Eleanor. Occasionally, she would pop her head in the door of the library, say a few words *en passant* to Arthur, ask her father if she could get him anything, and then run off, humming a song as she went. On other days, she would bring a small work-basket and seat herself at her father's feet; looking up at him fondly from time to time, and scarcely noticing Arthur's presence as she plied her needle in and out of her fancy work.

The very fact that he was her father's special friend, and that he did not come to see her, made her appear perfectly natural in manner, without a trace of the consciousness that many girls would have shown in the presence of an attractive young man. She would laugh and talk to him without reserve or shyness, sing her pretty songs, play on the piano, and offer to teach him croquet—all with the same frank smile, and not the faintest trace of coquetry.

If all this had been a piece of acting, it could not have been more effective, or more fascinating. Daily her charms seemed to increase as Arthur watched her in her own home, noted the ease and refinement with which she fulfilled her simple household duties, and saw more and more clearly what a pearl he had lost.

About a week after the pleasant little gathering mentioned a little earlier, General MacDonald and Arthur Leighton were sitting on the shady veranda that ran the entire length of Meadowland. The two men were smoking, and had been playing a most interesting game of chess. Eleanor had flitted backwards and forwards during the morning, looking as fresh as a daisy in her pure white dress; and had just brought out from the house a small table on which stood two tall glasses, a large sprig of mint, and all the other necessary ingredients for concocting one of the ever-famous Virginia mint-juleps. The day was unusually warm, and though both the General and Arthur were very temperate men, there was no denying the fact that at that particular moment a cooling, yet stimulating drink would prove very refreshing.

Just as they were replacing their glasses on the table, Eleanor returned to the veranda. She was just in time to see a very high cart, with a large high-stepping horse, driven around the carriage drive by a young man whose elegant, gimp-waisted expression made Arthur smile. The dandified, band-boxy attire belonged to none other than that of the popular Mr. Thompson, who had accepted Eleanor's invitation to call at Meadowland, some time during the summer. Both the General and Arthur rose from their chairs, while Eleanor quietly advanced to the edge of the steps, holding out her hand and greeting the newcomer warmly.

At the first introduction it is frequently the case that neither the person who introduces nor the one who is presented pays special attention to the new name or face. Arthur was on the point of reseating himself, without any feelings of special surprise, when a turn of the head on the part of Alec Thompson, and a slow glance from the dreamy blue eyes, caused him to give a slight involuntary start.

"I think I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Thompson before," he said a little nervously, "though perhaps he has forgotten me."

"Why, to be sure!" exclaimed the amiable little man; "we traveled together last year in Switzerland. I am glad to see you again," he added, glancing at General MacDonald and Eleanor as he spoke, and seating himself leisurely on a very large rustic chair, that seemed to engulf his diminutive proportions. "If you should come to the White Sulphur, in the next month, I shall be glad to see something of you."

Arthur thanked him, but suddenly decided to take advantage of the general move for his departure; and in another moment he had mounted his horse and was riding back to Woodlawn, in a very thoughtful frame of mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

Money can be repaid ;
Not kindness such as yours.

TENNYSON.

To look into the reasons which led Arthur Leighton to leave Meadowland so hurriedly, we must go back a little in our story, to the time when he was traveling in Europe. The sight of Alec Thompson's smooth, unruffled little person recalled in a flash a certain experience that made Arthur wince; and he heartily wished that Eleanor had never made the dandy's acquaintance, and that Fate had not thrown them all together, just at this particular time.

About a year earlier, when Arthur was enjoying a summer of mountain climbing in Switzerland, he had met Alec Thompson in the home-like pension where both young men were staying. A certain amount of association with each other was only natural, both being Americans, and from the sister States of Maryland

and Virginia. And although Arthur had a secret contempt for the laziness and aimlessness of young Thompson's life, the latter was so imperturbably good-natured, and took such an evident fancy to Arthur, that there was nothing to be done but to accept the situation gracefully and make the best of it. The pension contained other travelers, of course, and other young men; but to Alec's mind Arthur was by far the most attractive one he had seen, and he secretly told himself that here was a manly, interesting companion to be entertained by on dull days—an opportunity not to be missed. Having no resources within himself, and being too indolent by nature to accompany Arthur on his walks and sight-seeing expeditions, he waited impatiently the evening meeting, and invariably sought to ingratiate himself with Arthur. Occasionally, acting on the spur of the moment, when the latter would show great enthusiasm over some bit of mountain scenery, Alec would actually rise from his chair, stretch his short legs, yawn once or twice, and then offer to accompany the sight-seer to some spot not far off, where the gorgeous sunset could be seen in all its expiring glory.

Not by any chance, however, would he consent to give up his morning nap to gratify Arthur's anxiety for a glimpse of the incomparable sunrise—that great sight all travelers in Switzerland enthuse over and cherish. The sun, just peeping out in its morning gown of pink and gold, seemed to conceal in its soft folds a cloud of cherub heads; and as the morning advanced, and a greater effulgence tipped the peaks of the Alps, Arthur fancied he could see the tiny, rosy, angel fingers lingering caressingly on each lovely spot.

One evening he was away later than usual, and the kind, rosy-cheeked landlady expressed some concern over his absence. The delicious Swiss bread and butter at his plate, the bowl of golden honey, the pitcher of rich cream, and the preserved fruit of her own making were still untouched when the last boarder had finished the simple evening meal.

Alec Thompson awoke from his usual mental stupor and decided he would go in search of Arthur. He was possibly at that moment nearing the pension, which was situated on the top of a high hill, overlooking the little town of Bâle, and in a few moments more the two would

meet and walk back together. With these comfortable reflections, the little man sauntered along, whistling softly, and pluming himself in a very peacocky style as he jauntily picked his way along the gravel paths.

Not seeing Arthur, however, when he hoped to, he continued the walk until he had gone fully a mile from his starting place, and was just on the point of wheeling around in the opposite direction, when his eye caught sight of four men, who seemed to be carrying some sort of litter between them. Curiosity and a vague fear of some misfortune having befallen his friend, induced Alec to walk on until he met the party coming in his direction.

It was composed of stalwart Swiss peasants; and the form lying still and pale on the impromptu bed was that of Arthur Leighton. In a few words, Alec heard the whole story as told by the kind-hearted countrymen, which was that looking out of the windows of their little Swiss châlet, at the foot of a very high hill, they had seen a man fall with great force; and watching in vain for him to rise had come to his rescue. On nearing the place where Arthur had fallen, they had decided that he had simply

slipped from the loose stones that obstructed the steep path up the mountain side; his staff had fallen from his hand, and as he was an inexperienced climber, he had not known how to recover his balance.

The fall had stunned him, and some sharp stones had cut a painful gash in his head, besides which, one foot was twisted in a peculiar way, making his helpers fear there was a sprain in prospect. Recognizing the injured man to be the young Virginian who was so indefatigable a sight-seer, and staying at the pension of Madame Grünenwald, the Swiss peasants lost no time in raising Arthur as gently as possible and carrying him back to the tender mercies of his friends.

A good American physician living not far from the pension was hastily summoned by the faithful Alec Thompson; and everything that could be done for Arthur's comfort was superintended by the landlady, who exclaimed: "Ach mein Gott!" when she found that he was still unconscious an hour after the accident had occurred. Dr. Blake, thinking Alec was a near relative, from his untiring attentions at Arthur's

bedside, told him the whole truth concerning the condition of the patient.

There had been a very slight concussion of the brain, and perfect quiet was absolutely necessary. The wound in the head was not dangerous in character, but would require watching, and Arthur had also sprained his ankle in the fall. With injunctions to allow no noise or disturbance in the sick-room, and saying he would be back again early in the morning, Dr. Blake gave Arthur's case into Alec Thompson's care.

For the next three weeks a more faithful pair of nurses could not have been found than the leader of the cotillon, and the buxom German Hausfrau, underneath whose hospitable roof the unfortunate mountain climber always found a welcome. Madame Grünenwald was a born nurse, and Arthur's accident was not the first that had come under her special care. She soon saw that her helper was absolutely ignorant of what should be done for poor Arthur, but that he had unlimited means at his disposal and was anxious to procure every comfort possible for the sufferer.

As the convalescing period approached, Alec

kept the sick-room filled with flowers; alternated with the landlady in sitting with Arthur and beguiling his weary hours; brought delicacies in the shape of jellies and fruits; and showed such real concern, that Arthur chafed under the sense of his obligations. Alec being untiring in his attentions, however, Arthur could only accept them gratefully, and hide as far as possible the *ennui* that he invariably felt in his society. As soon as he was well enough, he inquired for the peasants who had carried him back to his pension, and was told by Madame Grünenwald that Mr. Thompson had rewarded them liberally, and that they had gone home praising "the young American traveler, so rich, so generous, so fond of his friends."

Arthur, being once more on his feet after six weeks of illness, had tried several times to approach the subject of his indebtedness to Alec Thompson, only to have that smiling young man turn the conversation into another channel as quickly as possible. He would give a slight cough, twist a little in his seat, and deliberately remark: "By Jove, Leighton, this is an uncommonly fine day! Pity you went and knocked up your foot. Did you hear our land-

lady say we are to have a dance to-morrow? You can find recreation enough in your books, I suppose, just now, but there would be the deuce to pay if I had to read all that stuff you like!" Arthur would smile, and take himself off for a quiet smoke and some reading, after several attempts to get Alec in a serious frame of mind, inwardly chewing a bitter cud to realize the impossibility of repaying such kindness as that he had received from both Madame Grünenwald and the dandy.

This was the summer experience that now weighed on Arthur's mind, as he rode away from Meadowland, leaving Eleanor's charms to fascinate the very man he had wished to avoid; and feeling that suddenly the brightness of the past month was overclouded.

CHAPTER IX.

O Love, what art thou ?
Some called thee blessed, and would die for thee ;
Others are blessed in renouncing thee.

A. A. ROGERS.

DURING the next few days, Arthur Leighton became more and more convinced that the reasons for Alec Thompson's call on Eleanor were more serious than he at first thought probable. The little man stayed around in the neighborhood, driving or riding to Meadowland every day, or taking the proffered seat in General MacDonald's carriage, whenever the father or daughter happened to be going into town. As the amiable dandy was on hand morning, noon and night, Arthur could but face the situation boldly, and in his turn pay attentions to Eleanor that a short time before might have seemed puerile to both of them, after dissolving the tie by mutual consent.

Arthur had not meant to be in any hurry, as

the summer passed easily and happily in the companionship of General MacDonald, feeling that his chances for attracting Eleanor were better by this leisurely conduct on his part. He said to himself that she would surely reject any lover-like attentions if suddenly thrust upon her; and it had been his intention to finish his law course, steadily win over her father, and by being thrown with the girl in a neighborly and friendly way to accomplish his purpose finally in so gradual a manner that Eleanor would have an opportunity to fall in love, as he had through the power of association.

Now, however, all these carefully laid plans were knocked in the head, and to his intense chagrin he saw that unless he changed his tactics instantly, his chances for eventually winning Eleanor would dwindle daily. It was hard for him to find out how far her own feelings were involved in regard to young Thompson, as she evidently was on her guard continually, knowing that she was being watched by both her father and himself.

Once coming suddenly into the drawing-room, he surprised both Alec and Eleanor, who had just finished playing a duet. The little

man read music very well, and always enjoyed trying over new sheets with a thorough musician; though no power under heaven could induce him to play them over a second time, still less to perfect himself in his part. Indeed, as with many people, reading music was a species of dissipation; and to dip into one musical sweet after another, taste it and then throw it aside, was a form of enjoyment that appealed to his indolent, careless nature. Superficiality, which was inborn, and overindulgence in home training, which was inbred, had done their worst; and Eleanor often sighed, as she tried to influence Alec to take up his piano practise in earnest. Seeing her interest in the matter, he half promised to consider the request, and followed up his advantage in the personal turn affairs were taking by more and more assiduous attentions.

He loved the girl as genuinely as his natural capacity would permit; and Eleanor certainly did nothing to discourage his tender passion, but fed the sacred flame daily, with no effort or reasoning on her part, simply by being her natural self. Dressed in her dainty white, her bright charming face aglow with youth, health

and good spirits, her supple fingers gliding deftly over the piano keys, and her whole soul shining out from her lovely dark eyes, what man could resist such a creature? Alec Thompson looked at her and pictured her in his home, the queen of his heart, the lovely ornament of his fireside, the wife to whom he could proudly present his friends, as the finest musician he knew. It was characteristic of his shallowness that he never thought of her practical qualities, never tried to sound her on books or pleasures of the intellect, and never had once probed into the deep recesses of a nature alike thoughtful, sincere, religious, and as true as steel.

Another man was looking at her too, his fine, clear gray eyes misting as he saw her move gently about the room, and under the influence of her pure presence he half closed the lids, and allowed his thoughts to wander. She was, to him, "the perfect woman nobly planned, to warn, to comfort and command," no doll to be played with, or putty idol to worship from afar. He did not underrate her great musical gifts, feeling the charm of her playing, and enjoying it as something more than an agreeable

noise—the mental definition the majority of people apply to good music.

Arthur was no musician himself, but was too artistic by nature to be insensible to the power of Orpheus; and he could not wonder at the pride of Eleanor's father, as he would turn to her listeners for their approval. There was nothing resembling boasting or arrogant assumption in the General's manner; but a beautiful love that gilded his simplest act, removing all the dross of egotism with magic touch. He was getting old, and his young daughter was his all. As he watched her with the two young men who were both so hopelessly in love, suddenly a pang of jealous fear shot through his heart, and he rose hastily and left the room.

Why had he thought her so safe from loving—only because she had broken her engagement to Arthur, as a silly boy and girl affair? And which of the two men did she really care for now? In his anxiety lest it should be Alec Thompson, he thought at first of speaking to Arthur and asking his advice; but remembering the look of pain on the face of his young friend, as Eleanor accepted a seat near Alec a few moments earlier, General MacDonald decided

to wait until the coast should be clear, and he could speak to Arthur unreservedly. It was true he had no objections to young Thompson of a serious nature; though the manly old soldier, who had fought through several wars, did not take very kindly to the idea of a mincing, lady-like son-in-law.

The dandy, however, was well connected in point of family, had good social position and money, and many a worldly advantage that most parents would have pronounced invaluable. To the General's mind, however, there was no comparison to be made between a rich suitor of Alec Thompson's type, with no brains to spare and less ambition, and Arthur Leighton, with plenty of both, little money, but a well-defined career in prospect, and a character which, for sterling worth, could not be surpassed. He resolved, therefore, to sound Eleanor and try to find out her feelings, and also talk to Arthur, in the hope that it was not yet too late to co-operate with him in discouraging Alec Thompson from pressing his suit.

With this hope, the father returned to the drawing-room, where he found Eleanor making an effort to entertain both of her admirers at

the same time. In her heart she was sorry for Arthur, as her quick eyes took in the situation, and she saw his pained, jealous face flush and grow pale in the society of his rival. She could not blame herself for the complications that existed since Alec Thompson put in an appearance; for had not Arthur willingly given her up, and had he not always come to Meadowland, afterwards, as her father's friend? As she looked back on the past few weeks, she saw that it was this that had misled her; and it was now too late to undo anything she had done, while she took it for granted that Arthur did not care for her. She heartily wished she could explain, but that was impossible, as he had never said a word of love to her. He contented himself, day after day, by looking at her mournfully, sighing occasionally as she passed near him, and by bringing her new books and music, and sitting as near her as the obnoxious presence of the ubiquitous Thompson would permit.

Day after day they tried to outsit each other, until at last the situation suddenly striking Arthur as having become ridiculous, he stayed away from Meadowland for two whole days;

after which he was so thoroughly miserable, that he felt forced to go back to find out what had happened in his absence. He was met at the front entrance by the General, who glanced quickly at his haggard face; and laying a kind hand on the shoulder of the younger man led him without ceremony in' the smoking-den, carefully closing the doo

CHAPTER X.

"Some men's hearts are like egg shells,
Breakable, but very hard to mend."

THERE was silence for a moment, each man looking keenly at the other, Arthur hoping to see something in the General's face that would be an indication to him of the day not being lost; yet secretly fearing that, by his hesitating course in regard to Eleanor, he was to meet his Waterloo. He was by no means of a timorous, vacillating nature; but the bitter force of circumstance had tied his tongue in the presence of the girl for whom now he would gladly sacrifice anything. The painful sense of obligation he was under to the young man every day gaining ground, forbade his making use of a friend's privilege to Eleanor or her father, by depreciating Thompson as a suitor. Feeling instinctively, however, that General MacDonald did not altogether approve of the

match, Arthur took the bull by the horns, and opened the way for a clearer understanding, and more confidential relations.

"I think you know that in coming here to-day, General," he said, "my visit was intended for you, and not for Eleanor. Lately, I must confess that I have been coming to your house for other reasons, and I have no intention of being in the least secretive or mendacious." Here there was a slight pause, and Arthur glancing up met a look so friendly and warm that he was encouraged to go on.

"You know that all along I have not had half a chance in regard to Eleanor, for neither of us were at all in love when I first returned from Europe. Doubtless she has told you her reasons for discontinuing our engagement, and of my perfect acquiescence at the time. Circumstances, however, have changed entirely since then, and as soon as I was thrown intimately in her society, it was impossible for me to remain indifferent to her. For weeks past I have basked in the sunshine of her radiant presence, have associated her with everything that is pure and lovely and loveable; and now, God help me! I love her more than words can

say—hopelessly perhaps, but so truly that no time can change my feelings."

General MacDonald glanced quickly at the eager face of the young man before him, evidently approving most thoroughly of the perfect frankness of his remarks. He rose before replying, pulled down the blind a little, methodically straightened a pile of magazines on the table, opened a drawer containing his smoking materials, handed a cigar and match to Arthur, and reseated himself. Here was a situation that deserved his undivided attention, and the inspiration to be derived from his favorite weed might help him to a solution of the difficulties.

It was easy to see that the events of the past two days had disturbed the peace of mind of the older man, as well as that of the younger. He had had a restless night, and had risen early; somehow the usual look of freshness in his clear skin was missing, and there were a few new lines of care around the quiet mouth, that told of a pressing anxiety. He decided to be equally frank with Arthur, now that the latter had made no excuses for himself, and had so earnestly declared his love for Eleanor.

"I cannot tell you how very sorry I am that I can do so little towards straightening out your difficulties," began the General, "for I realize that you have had an unusual combination of circumstances to discourage you. As yet I have not heard your whole story; for you were eager no doubt to get to the end by giving your love as a reason for your frequent visits to Meadowland. In this you were quite right, for I had already guessed that I was no longer the chief attraction," with a mischievous smile, "and to tell the truth, I could not blame you. It is only natural that as you parted with Eleanor when she was so young and immature, she developed remarkably in the four years of your absence, and she is now a thoroughly womanly woman; one worthy of the love of a fine man. I am not flattering you unduly when I say that my own choice of a husband would have been given to you; since I cannot possibly hope to keep my daughter always as just my own little girl. True, I opposed her marriage at first, because I did not know you; nor did I think she knew her own mind. As a father, it is hard for me to give her to any one; but you have won my esteem by your manly

life, and if Fate were not perverse, I should be glad to shake your hand, and call you my son."

Arthur took advantage of the General's pause to murmur his thanks, although the words almost choked him, so great was his emotion. It was true, then, all too true! That sleek, simpering, little dandy had won the day, and he was destined to lead Eleanor to the altar! For a moment the room swam, and poor Arthur felt as though everything was slipping from him. As if to add to his agony, he heard a light footfall underneath the window; and glancing in its direction, he saw the lovely object of his affections walking towards the flower garden, her girlish figure shimmering white in the golden morning sun—her whole person radiating life and light. The sweet face was half turned towards him as she passed the low window of the smoking-room, and Arthur thought there was a more spontaneous gayety than usual in her manner. Fascinated, in spite of his inward pain, his eyes followed her until she was out of sight.

Before the General could continue, the vision of loveliness had disappeared; and Arthur came down from heaven to earth to realize

with a groan that this simple incident was prophetic. Eleanor had passed by on the other side; she had gone, and with her all the light of day.

CHAPTER XI.

I had not loved thee, dear, so well
Loved I not honor more.

LOVELACE.

INVOLUNTARILY a cry arose to his lips, and starting from his chair he laid a heavy hand on General MacDonald's shoulder. "Tell me the truth, tell me all!" the lover exclaimed; "let me know the worst. I cannot bear the suspense a moment longer."

The old soldier was startled by the sudden passion in Arthur's tone, and distressed for him as well. He had intended to break the bad news concerning Eleanor as gently as possible, after hearing the young man's own confession; and it was with a note of distinct pain and effort that he replied: "Calm yourself, my dear young friend, and listen to me. Last night I had a talk with my daughter, and asked her to tell me frankly how she felt in regard to Mr.

Thompson. I never dreamed that matters had already reached a definite conclusion, although I suspected that there was a good deal in the air. To my surprise, however, Eleanor told me that she had intended to have a talk with me to-day, when Alec came to the house; that he and she were both happy and settled in their minds, and that they only wished to gain my consent before announcing their engagement."

The General stopped a moment, for Arthur was looking at him with such a world of pain in his deep eyes, that it seemed impossible to ignore it. Holding out a sympathetic hand, he gently urged the young man into his seat, and continued: "I had hoped, up to yesterday, that it was not too late for you to speak to Eleanor yourself, plead your own cause, and win her at last by your persistent devotion. She had never said she cared for young Thompson; and has been carefully concealing her feelings, I think, wishing to be quite sure of herself before discussing the matter with me. You can trust a woman's acute perceptions, however, to know what others feel in regard to her; and she has probably rightly guessed all your reasons for silence.

"It is true that you have not yet told even me what mysterious spell seemed to be thrown around you whenever Alec Thompson's name was mentioned. I have more than once felt, with her that there had been something in your life, somehow, that touched his; and that your delicacy forbade your mentioning your experiences, while it was very evident that you were ill at ease in his presence; and that you were really barely tolerating him, inasmuch as he could not be avoided. A certain amount of jealous chagrin was but natural in a lover; yet instinctively I felt sure that there was something else back of your manner. I have no wish to pry into your affairs, and you must not feel it incumbent upon you to tell me that part of your past that concerns only you and Thompson."

Arthur raised a miserable, careworn face before speaking, that smote the General's kind heart. "I feel that you would surely misunderstand me if I did not tell you frankly the causes of my silence; and in reality, they are very simple to understand, and not at all mysterious after all."

In a few more moments, Arthur had given a

full account of his unfortunate Switzerland accident; and with generous candor had praised Alec Thompson's part in the affair, warmly dwelling on that dandy's kindness.

"I feel that I should have been an ungrateful brute not to have remembered how much I owe him," the young man said simply. "Though I could not depreciate him, either to you or to Eleanor, after his loyalty to me; yet my heart sank day by day as I saw what great advantages he had over me, and how by my silence I was ruining my own chances of success in winning Eleanor. However bitter my pain and disappointment now, to know that she has given her heart to a man whom I can never like, in spite of my obligations; yet my only crumb of comfort lies in the fact that I have been true to those obligations, and have not stooped to an act of meanness and dishonor, by pressing my own claims after ousting my rival. This day has brought me a sorrow that I can never explain even to you, her father; yet I feel that my course cannot be blamed, and if I have erred at all, it was an error of judgment and not of the heart."

General MacDonald could wait no longer to

express his admiration for the honorable manliness in the young fellow before him; and grasping Arthur warmly by the hand, his honest face aglow with feeling, he said: "You are made of fine stuff, my boy, and I admire your simplicity and frankness. Would to God Eleanor did but know you as I do."

Then checking himself, for fear of criticizing her in her singular choice of a husband, he dropped Arthur's hand, and turned away suddenly, with deep shadows under the keen eyes that spoke of some inner pain. He was too proud to tell even his best friend how much the giving up of his daughter cost him, especially to such a person as Alec Thompson; and though he had not resented Arthur's open acknowledgement that he did not like the manikin, he felt that it would have been both ill-bred and disloyal to his daughter to agree with him. The latter could guess to what extent the fine old man was disappointed; but whatever the pain, it was locked safely in his own breast, and no power on earth could draw it out.

General MacDonald was made of the fibre that took the martyrs into the lions' den. Though the world would see no sacrifice he was

making in marrying Eleanor to a rich suitor, and would pat her on the back approvingly, metaphorically; yet the father winced at the thought of giving his lovely young daughter, with so superior and charming a mind, to an insignificant dilettante, who had led a purposeless life, and had never properly cultivated the one talent he had been given. He could bring no objections to young Thompson that could reflect on his character; and he felt it to be his duty to say something to Arthur before they parted that would be doing justice to the fiancé, at the same time pouring a little balm on his own wounded pride.

Turning to Arthur, who was rising with the intention of ending an interview that had been longer than he had foreseen, the General said: "Before you leave me, my dear Leighton, I want to say a word about our friend Thompson. He is a good little man, in the ordinary sense of the word, not noble at all; but distinctly inoffensive and without vices. If he is good to my girl, I shall forgive him for being an out-and-out dandy. You know that, as Thackeray says, we can't all be roaring lions, and there must be some sheep among us. He is congenial

to Eleanor, no doubt, on account of his musical gifts, and they spend many a happy hour playing to and with each other. God knows, I have only her happiness at heart; and if she loves him, she will be contented, I fancy. He idolizes her, and has the means to shower upon her everything that her heart could desire. All this does not concern you, of course, except in so far as your unselfish love is concerned. I think too well of you not to realize that her happiness is so great a thing that even in your pain you can be glad. And now, good-by, and God bless you!"

Arthur wrung the General's hand and looked up at the face of his old friend. Seeing that the eyes were growing moist, he could not trust himself for another word; and with a gesture that expressed volumes, he stalked rapidly to the door, and went out from the presence of the man whose heart was aching to comfort him.

CHAPTER XII.

There is a comfort in the strength of love
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart,
WORDSWORTH.

THE gray morning light was struggling through the half-closed blinds of Arthur Leighton's bedroom, and made barely discernible the quiet figure of its only occupant. He had returned from Meadowland to find that his father and mother were gone on a visit for the day into the next county; and the dejected lover experienced a sense of relief for once that he was alone. Explanations would follow later; but Arthur breathed more freely to realize that for the next two hours he would not have to meet the fond, questioning eyes of his mother. By the time she returned and heard of his trouble, the battle with self would be over and he would have gotten the mastery.

Crushed as he felt in his loss of Eleanor, he

did not behave as the hero of a romance is commonly supposed to under great suffering. He remembered that he was a Christian and a gentleman; and forbore, therefore, to tear out huge tufts of hair by the roots, to break up the furniture into kindling wood, or even pace the floor like a caged bear. He had too much consideration for the servants to disturb any one on the place during that long night of suffering; but old Aunt Sally, having caught a glimpse of his drawn, white face, decided that her favorite should not be entirely alone in his pain. Her skin was black, and the African soul narrow and prejudiced; yet her soul was as white as that of her "dear young master," and she loved with that woman's love of self-sacrifice that brought her joy even in her sorrows.

At midnight, therefore, Aunt Sally's light was still burning, and she was watching to see if Arthur had put out his; her poor old eyes filling with tears at the thought that he was perhaps needing something, or some one. After a light supper, he had gone early to his room, with instructions to the servants that he was not to be disturbed, except on urgent business. But for this fact, Aunt Sally would most

likely have gone to his door hours earlier, as she had often done before since his childhood, to tempt him with some dish of her own making, if she saw that he was out of spirits, or "off his feed."

As the hours wore on, and there was no sign that Arthur had any intention of going to bed, she felt that she could wait no longer to offer him comfort. Slipping on her softest old shoes, and throwing a shawl around her shoulders, she left the wing of the house which contained the servants' quarters, and noiselessly crossed the hall until she reached Arthur's door. Here she stopped and bent a listening ear to the key-hole, her good old face meanwhile a study.

There was dead silence in that room, and Aunt Sally remained a moment in the same position. Arthur was kneeling by the table, his head buried in his arms, his lips moving in silent prayer. So strong was the force of habit, that at a time when many another man would have cursed his fate, and violently stormed and raved, he was following in the footsteps of his Master, and treading the wine-press alone. His heart bled in his own Gethsemane, and a few tears of the deepest grief and disappoint-

ment he had ever known trickled slowly through his fingers. Suddenly he raised his head, and Aunt Sally saw his young face, the clear profile, distinct and pale, turned in her direction.

The faithful old servant had but one thought, and waiting no longer for Arthur to finish his prayers, she timidly knocked at his door. There was no immediate response, and she heard a sound of chairs being moved. Another and louder knock followed, and this time there was an answer; for Arthur had heard the first knock, and had risen hastily from his knees.

Without opening the door, he called out: "Who is there?" Aunt Sally shuffled closer still to the door-handle, which looked so coldly shut against her; and puffing out her lips half whispered, and half muttered: "It's me, Marster Arthur, yo' po' old Sally!" Arthur had to smile and felt that although he did not want to admit the affectionate old servant he must thank her for thinking of him.

"Thank you, Aunt Sally," he called out simply, as he knew that both understood it was unnecessary to ask why she had come to him at that hour.

"I'se here jus' outside yo' do', Marster

Arthur," Sally went on as a gentle hint that she would prefer that he open the door. But Arthur did not take the hint, and only called back: "I don't need anything at all; so you can go now, Aunt Sally."

This remark, which seemed like a dismissal, wounded a little the solicitous old creature, and she called again: "Please, young Master, do open up dat do'. 'Tain't like you to be so muley-like!"

From a gradual smile, Arthur broke into a clear, infectious laugh. With his quick sense of fun, which was never dulled by pain, he fully appreciated the tender humor of the situation; and throwing open the door he caught the delighted old Sally by the arm and pushed her laughingly into his bedroom.

"Now, what can you possibly want with me, at this hour, Aunt Sally," Arthur asked almost gaily.

"Whut I want—well I'se surprised at you for axin' me such a fool question. Don't yo' s'pose I knowed yo' was in trouble of some kind, eh?" To this there was no reply, though Arthur had grown a little graver, and a shade

paler under the scrutinizing inspection of the old woman.

"I could break her hade, I could," she went on, without reference to anything that went before. "'Pears to me she must be some upstart to dare to say no to the likes of you!"

Arthur started with surprise, to realize that a sudden hit in the dark had been made at Eleanor. It was not possible that Sally knew the real circumstances; but with the quick insight of her sex, she had shrewdly guessed that her pet had met with defeat to his hopes at Meadowland, and unjustly blamed Eleanor for the whole trouble.

"Don't speak that way about Miss Eleanor," Arthur answered after his first surprise had passed. "She is the loveliest young lady in the world, and would not hurt a fly, much less a friend. She is going to marry young Mr. Thompson, and we must all say 'God bless her, and make her happy.' I can't tell you, for you seem to know already, that I love her and would like to marry her. I never told her, for I saw she cared for some one else; and now Aunt Sally, you must really go back to bed, for it is morning."

"I ain't gwine to stir a step, Marster Arthur," Sally retorted, "less you promise me you'll go right smack to bed yo'self. Your ma would be in a putty way ef she could see you with them owl eyes!"

Arthur laughed again, and assuring Sally that he would lie down and take a good rest; and patting the old black hand affectionately, he half pushed, half led her from the room. She went away with reluctant step, all the time muttering imprecations against Eleanor, and dark, mysterious utterances aimed against the house of MacDonald; her bent old back, even, expressing displeasure in every line, and the mobile face scowling itself into a thousand wrinkles.

CHAPTER XIII.

". . . The heart of Autumn must have broken here,
And poured its treasures out upon the leaves. . . .'

THREE months had passed, since the announcement of Eleanor MacDonald's engagement to Alec Thompson; and in the third week of October after a simple wedding and short bridal tour, the young couple returned to Meadowland where the General warmly welcomed them. The glory of the rich autumn foliage was at its full height, and from the brow of the hill the flaming maple trees seemed to warm the landscape into a burnished gold. The crispness of the country air made the blood tingle in Eleanor's cheeks; and she looked particularly girlish and sweet, as she jumped quickly from the carriage and fairly rushed into her father's arms.

The husband pattered along meekly behind, carrying his innumerable canes and umbrellas,

which were far too precious to trust to a servant; and giving vent to a series of ejaculations and mild, inconsequent remarks upon everything in general, and nothing in particular. He greeted the General with amiable *bonhomie,* and proceeded to hop about and twitter out small nothings; looking not unlike an animated canary bird. His happiness in having won "the sweetest, prettiest girl in Virginia," as Mrs. Leighton had affectionately called Eleanor, showed itself in a decided awakening of his small energies. The General was amused at the change, after having grown accustomed to the little man's lethargy through the summer; and wondered if he would return to his former manner when the novelty of matrimony had worn off.

Eleanor, meanwhile, had her arm through her father's and was walking over the dear home that she had left three weeks earlier; her heart very full to realize that its walls, hallowed by tenderest memories, were still to shelter her as a married woman.

A week before the great event General MacDonald had called Alec Thompson aside and had told him that after the wedding journey was

over he hoped Eleanor would return to Meadowland for several weeks, at least, until their plans for a permanent home were decided on. In the course of the conversation the natural reluctance of a father to give up an only child was so evident, even to the obtuse Thompson, that at last he turned to the General and exclaimed: "Well, by jingo, I don't believe you want her to leave you at all! Can't blame you, you know. Would feel the same way myself. Very natural, very natural; especially about such a girl as Eleanor, for she's a daisy, General, and there's no mistake about that!"

So it was agreed that Meadowland should continue to be graced by Eleanor's charms, and that the General should not be left to a lonely existence in consequence of her marriage.

"Why, you dear father," she had said more than once, "I would not be willing to leave you alone; and it is far easier for us to come to you, having no home yet, than for you to desert dear Meadowland and come to us."

This practical view of the matter satisfied the General; and he saw that his daughter loved both him and the home so well that she was not sighing for a change to fresh pastures, nor sac-

rificing herself simply to gratify his fatherly whims.

During the week after her return she had settled back into her old life, taking up its threads as naturally as though she had never gone away, and bringing such cheer to every one around her that poor Arthur, cut off from her society, and only hearing of her from his mother, groaned in spirit. "Blessing she is, God made her so; and deeds of week-day holiness fall from her noiseless as the snow; nor hath she ever chance to know that ought were easier than to bless," he quoted to himself one morning, after a glowing account Mrs. Leighton had given of Eleanor's dinner to sixty of the poor in her immediate neighborhood.

The days were filled with pleasure for the young wife, who, as a rich woman, not only entertained royally all her friends with the hospitality she had always been accustomed to in a simpler form, but found ample time for wise and helpful charities among the mountaineers. She was soon greatly beloved by many a poor soul, who had known her but slightly as she developed into womanhood on her father's place. Day by day her sweet face became

dearer as the refined features grew into the hearts of those who came to her with their troubles; and no tale of suffering was ever neglected.

But with characteristic moderation, and the decision of will that had always made her attractive, she regulated her life so systematically that only a given number of hours were dedicated to her charitable work. "I love to give and make people happy," she would say; "but I think a life is always narrow that has only one interest. Several hours of each day I owe to my husband; certain others to my home duties and my dear old father; and with my music and reading I cannot find time for more than a moderate amount of philanthropic work."

Arthur Leighton had gone away on some pretext of business before Eleanor's wedding, and on his return had, of course, avoided, as far as possible, the entertainments at Meadowland. Mrs. Leighton, who was in her son's confidence, suffered keenly to see how dark the shadows had grown under Arthur's eyes, and though he laughingly protested against being

coddled, she told her husband again and again that their son was certainly growing thin.

The tender mother heart had many a pang in those days that was borne in silence, but which left its mark, as all real pain must. It had been her dream that Eleanor should marry Arthur, and the tie between the two women had grown steadily stronger as Eleanor developed from an affectionate, impulsive child into a lovely young girl with a deep and passionate nature. The Leightons had lost their only daughter, by accidental drowning, at the age of sixteen, just when the tender bud was unfolding; and this was the sorrow that seemed to bring Mrs. Leighton in such close touch with Eleanor. "If only this girl could become my daughter," the older woman thought, "though she could not take dear Margaret's place, yet she would help to fill the emptiness and cheer the loneliness."

And so, in his bitter disappointment, Arthur was not alone, and the common sorrow made his own lot seem lighter as the days passed in the sympathetic society of his mother. General MacDonald, with genuine tact and good feeling, left the newly-married pair very much

to themselves for a month after their return, often driving over to Woodlawn to see Arthur, in those bright fall days when it seemed a sin to sit in the house. The latter felt greatly flattered at this attention and strove in every way to arouse himself to the full enjoyment of those discussions of books, politics or travel that had been such a source of pleasure to him only a short time earlier.

A dull weight seemed to be on his brain, and a heavier one still at his heart; but his natural fine feeling and breeding enabled him to play the part of host to perfection, and the old General would go away well satisfied with his visit. In truth, Arthur did not realize until long afterwards that these efforts of will, on his part, were very good for him. Friction at that particular time with a mind so sound and clear as that of the General, and a nature so wholesome, prevented Arthur from growing morbid in his sorrow and daily aroused him to greater strength of purpose.

CHAPTER XIV.

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will. . . .
TENNYSON.

ONE morning early in November, when the first balmy breath of Indian summer was covering the hills with a bluish haze, and Nature seemed at peace with all her children, Arthur Leighton started off for a walk in the woods.

Directly back of Woodlawn there was a picturesque clump of trees and an inviting stretch of ground that frequently tempted young people on picnics bent. Here Eleanor often had gone during her girlhood with Mrs. Leighton to gather baskets of wild ferns; and even with Arthur alone occasionally, unromantic and prosaic as their early engagement had been. Arthur had been studying quite hard since the return of the young couple to Meadowland, which he gave to Alec Thompson on every

occasion as an excuse for not calling oftener. The effort to keep up and to hide his pain, coupled with persistent brainwork and restless nights, had begun to affect to some extent his fine constitution.

Now, as he sauntered along in the quiet little wood, the brown, dry leaves rustling under his feet, and the fallen twigs cracking under his step, he renewed all the resolutions of the past three months. He saw that there would have to be some let up from the monotonous routine that he had forced himself into, and he decided to live more in the open air and give up for a little while, at least, the most technical of his studies. He would take his mother driving oftener, and he would indulge more frequently in long rambles over the hills, and this out-door exercise would surely bring back lost muscle and vim.

He could go on later with his law course, and would make up for lost time in the long winter evenings, when Nature was more forbidding and her sweets carefully stowed away till another spring. Ah, yes, he would be a man, he would be true to those vows, made on his knees that night that Aunt Sally had come

to him. To be sure the real incentive to work was gone, and his dear love was lost to him forever, but there remained his affection for and duty to his mother, and her purity and sweet refinement were a constant source of pleasure to him in the old home. He saw how much he had to be grateful for, even now, and his heart thrilled with tenderness, though thoughts of Eleanor made his face flush quickly and grow pale again.

Suddenly he heard a plaintive little sound, and looking back he saw a tiny kitten, which was evidently making a desperate effort to follow him. Not only was the little creature very young, but Arthur noticed that one foot had apparently been hurt on the way. Without a moment's hesitation he retraced his steps, and kneeling down caught up the unfortunate animal. Gently and tenderly he folded it closely to him, the dumb creature nestling prettily in his strong arms; and, too exhausted to attempt to escape, it allowed its friend to examine the wounded foot.

Arthur was no doctor, but a natural pity and sympathy for all God's creatures frequently taught him just what to do at a critical moment.

The kitten had severely cut the tender little foot on a sharp stone, and it would be necessary to carry his pet to a neighboring farmhouse for water to bathe the wound.

So intent was he upon his examination that he had not heard a light footfall coming closer and closer at his back, and before he could collect his senses, or prepare himself for an interview with Eleanor, she had come up to him. She, too, had come to the woods at this early hour to be alone with Nature, in the hope of meeting no one, and it was with genuine surprise that she greeted Arthur.

He rose instantly from his stooping position, and with a nervous, flushed face looked her full in the eyes. She was charmingly dressed in a becoming pink morning costume, with a large picture hat that exactly harmonized with the delicate pink in her cheeks, and the dark, curly hair blew softly around her brow and neck. Her ungloved hands were filled with wild plants and autumn leaves, and Arthur felt that every detail of dress and figure was stamping itself on his brain, to come back again and again when he should be left alone.

She was the first to speak, for with quick wo-

manly instinct she realized what this meeting must mean to him. "Why, Arthur! I had no idea I would meet any one here this morning, for we have not yet breakfasted. How curious that you should be here, too! And have you become a champion of cats since I last saw you?"

Eleanor was looking at Arthur with a little smile, in which there was not the faintest trace of vanity, and was so bewitching that the poor fellow looked quickly down at the kitten again. The animal was becoming restless and gave short, pathetic little wails from time to time. Arthur saw that here was his opportunity for escape, and in a flash decided what to do. "I was walking through the wood simply for exercise, and this poor little creature tried to catch up with me," he said quickly. "Evidently he has had an accident of some kind and has strayed away from the mother. Just as you appeared I was busy examining the wound, and as there is no brook near here I shall have to carry my *protégé* to some kind woman at one of the farmhouses. I am too big and rough, I fear, to do much for a kitten, but no one could have resisted this little sufferer, and I hope to get relief for it."

Eleanor was interested immediately, and, relieved that the conversation had not taken a personal tone, she came closer to Arthur and looked critically at the animal. "Poor, dear little thing," she said, "a kitten always appeals to me as the most pitiful little creature in the world. You must let me come with you to old Mrs. Brown's cottage, and there I will bind up the wound and get the good old woman to care for the little unfortunate until we can find out where it belongs."

Arthur thanked her, and as the walk to Mrs. Brown's was quite short he saw that there would be no need, once there, for him to remain until Eleanor had finished her work. In truth, so disturbing had been this glimpse of her fresh, lovely face that it seemed to the earnest young man as though all his struggle with self had been for naught. He longed to get away alone again and tear out from his heart that dear image that had no right there. Never by look or word should she guess what he felt; and, after a time, he thought, when two or three years had passed, he would have learned to school himself to the situation and would be her friend. It was all too new now, though,

and the wound at his heart bled freshly every time he saw her.

He walked on by her side, and presently Eleanor looked timidly up from under the brim of her dainty hat. Ignoring his silence she began talking of the woods, the ferns, the lovely weather, going from one subject to another with such naturalness and ease that Arthur blessed her in his heart, and soon losing the constraint of manner that had been so painful at first he successfully carried on the conversation for the next ten minutes, tiding over the awkward *rencontre* to the satisfaction of both Eleanor and himself. She had, of course, noticed how thin and different he looked; but her delicacy forbade her mentioning it, while her sensitive heart was pained at the thought that she had somehow, in some way, been the cause of his suffering.

At a turn of a few yards from the wood they had just left, Mrs. Brown's cottage came into view, and Arthur stopped perfectly still and laid a hand on the kitten. "You are so close now to the house that I suggest you give me your ferns to leave at Meadowland, and let me turn over this little creature to your tender

mercies," he said to Eleanor, "for I am sure I shall be only in the way if I stay any longer."

She gave him her hand with a simple dignity, and with a direct look from her lovely brown eyes that seemed to Arthur to pierce his soul like an arrow, she thanked him and walked on.

His last view of her was one never to be forgotten, he thought—the dark head bending low over the tiny kitten, the sweet face, softening in every line as she gently pillowed the little creature in her bosom, and one stray curl kissing her round cheek as the morning breeze sprang up suddenly and played with her hair. "Adieu, to you, dear heart," he whispered, "adieu to love, to hope, to everything."

CHAPTER XV.

It is the little rift within the lute ;
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

TENNYSON.

THE spruce little Thompson was lazily sunning himself on the comfortable piazza of Meadowland, his whole person expressing the same contentment that a purring cat does stretched out on a warm hearth-rug.

Breakfast was only just over, at half-past ten o'clock, and Eleanor had left her husband to attend to some household duty that she was eager to have behind her on account of the lateness of the hour. It had been her special wish that the eight o'clock breakfast, which she and her father always took together, should continue after her marriage, thus giving her ample time for her work during the forenoon.

But as it was not within the range of possibilities to get the indolent Alec out of bed " be-

fore the earth was well aired and sunned," as he expressed it, Eleanor abandoned the idea of having an early morning meal. True the amiable little husband was quite content to have his own breakfast served separately, after the General and Eleanor had finished, but this the latter refused to do. She conceived it to be her duty to conform her life, as far as possible to suit her husband's tastes, rightly judging that in such simple matters she could readily make a sacrifice of her own wishes.

The General, who could not change the habit of a lifetime, enjoyed an early cup of coffee and crackers with his daughter, and this was to her one of the sweetest periods of the whole twenty-four hours. She was as unselfish in caring for his comfort as for that of her husband, and with infinite tact never made the older man feel that in any respect she had changed in herself with the changing of her name.

Now, as she went from one duty to another, she remembered suddenly that it was the hour set aside for reading with her father, after which she and Alec invariably played on the piano together. As she passed her husband on the piazza for the first time a shade of annoy-

ance and irritation were noticeable on her hitherto serene face. He looked so utterly indifferent to everything around him, and the mental resources which made her life so happy were so meaningless to him that in a flash a comparison presented itself to her. She went up to him, however, and touching him lightly on the shoulder, said: "Alec, do come and join father and me this morning at our reading."

With a sleepy yawn, her husband looked up and smiled a smile of amiable vacuity. "By George, Eleanor, it's asking too much of a man this early in the day, to buckle down to hard thinking. You and the General beat me all to pieces at that sort of thing. I never could take in that style of reading, any way; and Drummond is too deep for me, I must admit."

A slight contemptuous curl of the lip was Eleanor's only answer, and Alec continued: "Why don't you read some light novel by the 'Duchess'? I read one once, and I could really stand that for about half an hour. But you would soon finish me if you compelled me to grapple with anything deep." Eleanor was conscious of such a mixture of amusement and annoyance that she was on the point of turning

away with some commonplace rejoinder when her husband caught sight of her face.

Jumping up quickly he caught her affectionately by the arm, exclaiming: "Don't mind me, dear old girl! You know I didn't mean to offend you, and I never expect to compare to you in any way. You're all right just as you are, and when you get done with your father let me know and we'll have some of those delicious Saran polonaises." Eleanor smiled and, saying something that was as non-committal as possible, left the partner of her joys and sorrows to doze comfortably for the next hour in undisturbed bliss.

The General noticed that she was more *distraite* than usual, and Eleanor herself was conscious of a certain disappointment and chagrin that she could not exactly put into words, but which made that day a little different from other days.

Why had it never occurred to her, before marriage, to sound Alec on the subject of books? She was too busy playing on the piano with him, driving, riding, accepting his pretty gifts and enjoying the delights of summer to seriously imagine what a life would be to her with

no intellectual companion. Having been bred in a bookish atmosphere, it was as natural to her to read as to breathe, and it never occurred to her that any human being could live and be happy without feeding the mind as well as the body.

Of all the men and women who come to the altar to take their vows for better or for worse, at least one-half that number are separated from each other by a difference of taste, and more than one-third are actively unhappy through an inability to read character. It is not in those cases that either the man or woman is necessarily full of faults, but simply that what faults they have are not understood before marriage. Consequently there is no attempt made by either person to adapt himself or herself to the existing conditions, and the results to happiness are, of course, fatal.

Eleanor would have denied indignantly that the first cloud had touched the horizon of her married life, through her loyalty to the husband who loved her so well, yet it was evident that the simple incident of the morning had made more impression on her than on him.

In the afternoon he was quick to propose a

drive, and asked for the light buggy, so that their pleasure should be *à deux,* instead of in the society of the General, who frequently went with the young couple on expeditions into the next county. The day was exquisite, and the dreamy melancholy that seemed to be in the air exactly corresponded to Eleanor's mood as she lightly stepped into the pretty vehicle that her husband had given her as a special present on their return to Meadowland.

Alec drove well and was thoroughly accustomed to horses, but was reckless to a dangerous degree, and the General often warned him against "Prince," his favorite of all the beautiful horses in his stables. This was not altogether a hopeless brute, but was certainly far from being a safe animal for riding and driving. The solicitous father extracted a promise from Eleanor that she would have nothing to do with him; and Alec substituted, for her personal use, a pretty black horse called "Gipsy."

Eleanor was so well accustomed to his ways that it never occurred to her that an occasional habit of shying would bring trouble of any kind. He seemed on this day, however, to be a little more restive than usual, and no sooner

had he gotten well out into the country than he began to prick up his ears, arch his head and prepare himself for some fresh caper. At a turn in the road a large white piece of paper blew suddenly into Gipsy's path, and at the same moment another horse and buggy came swiftly around the corner.

Mrs. Leighton and Arthur were just returning from a charming drive, and were so engrossed in conversation that in a twinkling there would probably have been a disastrous collision of the two vehicles had not chance so ordered it that the offending paper almost blew into Arthur's carriage. This was a choice of evils, as it happened that the horse, shying in the opposite direction from the paper, had no room in which to effect a sudden spring, and before Alec Thompson could rein in the frightened animal he had dashed down a steep embankment, upsetting the light carriage and landing both of its occupants on the ground.

In a trice Arthur had stopped his own horse, and, dropping lightly from the buggy in which his mother was sitting, he ran to Eleanor's help. His heart was beating furiously, and his anxiety so intense that by the time he reached her

side he could scarcely speak. To his relief, however, she was trying to rise unassisted, and the fall had evidently but bruised and shaken her. Fortunately the carriage was very low, and both she and her husband had simply rolled out, so that in a few moments Arthur had helped the limp young couple to their feet, and the explanations and laughter that followed relieved both Arthur and Eleanor of their embarrassment.

"I am glad to feel that I could be of any use," he said with a forced smile in answer to Eleanor's thanks, and, looking at the dusty Thompson, who was wofully inspecting his clothes, "especially as my own accident, long ago, might have ended fatally but for the timely help I received."

Nonsense, my dear Leighton, I did nothing at all, and any one else would have behaved the same way for a poor devil trying to climb a Swiss mountain, you know, And now, by jingo, I hope you'll come often to Meadowland," the little man went on, regardless of Arthur's sudden blush. "We shall always be more than glad to see you," he cruelly

persisted, "and Eleanor and the General will second my invitation."

With tactless emphasis upon the two names, and much *empressement* at parting, he held out his hand for Arthur to shake, leaving the latter inwardly smarting with pain and chafing over the perversity of Fate which threw him in the society of the woman he loved against his will.

CHAPTER XVI.

The day was such a day
As Florence owes the sun. The sky above,
Its weight upon the mountains seemed to lay
And palpitate in glory, like a dove
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted !——

MRS. BROWNING.

THE sunlight of Italy is certainly different from that of America, and has a golden quality in it that harmonizes with the deeper blue of the skies.

So thought Eleanor, at least, as her eyes rested on the lovely, fertile hills and the picturesque vineyards and gardens that surround Florence, making of it a genuine feast for those who travel to see something. She had decided that immediately after the Christmas holidays were over she would induce her husband to go abroad for at least six months and leave Meadowland and her father for a time—thus

bringing home refreshed and strengthened energies for the work that lay before her.

Of course the immediate reason for her decision was that Arthur Leighton was settled at Woodlawn with his parents, and after his law course was over he intended to practise in his own town. He had behaved with the utmost good feeling and good breeding ever since her marriage, and had carefully avoided her as far as possible, only to have a series of trying coincidences thrust themselves upon him that made the situation intolerable for him, and trying, to say the least, for her.

There was nothing to do but to put the ocean between them, and Eleanor wished in her heart of hearts that when she returned she would find Arthur absorbed, to the exclusion of everything else, in his work, or else interested in some sweet girl who had the power to make him happy. There was not a selfish or vain thought in her mind, and her purity of purpose and loyalty to her husband made her deeply regret that Arthur was no longer her friend, in the ordinary sense of the word.

A tinge of something like pain oppressed her, before leaving home, to realize that to explain

all this to Alec Thompson would be worse than useless, for he had neither the acumen to perceive that Arthur Leighton was in love with his wife, nor the delicacy to sympathize with the embarrassing condition of affairs that confronted Eleanor at every turn. Before her marriage she had told Alec the whole story of her engagement to Arthur, and of his perfect approval of her actions; and the satisfied Thompson had settled down into a comfortable conviction that he had never had a rival.

Eleanor felt that as long as Arthur had not addressed her, after his change of feeling, she had no duty to discharge towards her fiancé, in hinting that another man was in love with her —especially as the accepted lover had had every opportunity to see her in her own home thrown with both men in the most natural way in the world.

The gradual realization after her marriage, however, that her husband was densely insensible to a something in her life, which, though not tangible, was painful, caused the second cloud that dimmed the brightness of her young wifehood.

It was not essential to her happiness, she

reasoned, that he should know every little worry and every thought, yet, inconsistently enough, after trying to excuse herself for a lack of frankness and excuse him for needing to have an explanation given of so simple a matter, she was conscious of a regret somewhere. It would have been more ideal if he had entered into her thoughts and feelings through that sensitive affinity which is so sweet to such natures as Eleanor's. After all, Alec was her own generous and affectionate husband, and was really trying to make her happy, though it was an impossibility for her to draw a diagram, metaphorically, in order to show him her feelings.

Though they had taken each other for life, there was a wide difference in their point of view, and as the days passed and the delights of an Italian winter made Eleanor's beautiful eyes glow with a deeper intelligence the difference could not be noticeably wider. She had found that Alec took no notes on travel, had never read George Eliot's incomparable picture of Savonarola and Florentine life, "Romola," cared only to go abroad in order to satisfy his curiosity in some trivial matters that would only appeal to the shallow-brained, and finally, that

outside of giving her "a good time," there was nothing (for him) to be derived from their stay in Europe.

Not so with her, however. Day after day she accomplished a certain amount of sight-seeing with the same admirable precision and method that she had shown in the gradual acquirement of accomplishments in her own home.

The Palazzo Pitti, with its superb gallery of paintings: the Academy of Fine Arts; the Church of San Lorenzo, where Michael Angelo left two of his greatest works in the statues of Julian and Lorenzo de Medici; the peerless Cathedral, whose cupola, designed by Brunnelleschi, was so admired by Angelo that it served as a model for that of St. Peter's, at Rome—all were visited in turn.

As a rich woman with unlimited time she persuaded the tractable Alec to rent a charming villa in the suburbs of Florence, and once installed she managed to divide her hours between newly-made acquaintances, who were indefatigable sight-seers, and her husband, whose chief pleasure, everywhere, was riding and driving. One of his best traits was his generosity of feeling, which prevented petty jealousy. He was

more than willing to find his lovely young wife encircled by admiring friends, and their villa became the rendezvous of the most cultivated and charming people in Florence, both English and American.

Eleanor seemed to expand intellectually more and more, and the healthful winter climate kept the same roses in her cheeks that bloomed there as a little girl in her home in Virginia. It was to that home and her dear old father that her thoughts turned constantly; for, enjoy as she might the change of scene and thought that her travels brought, her heart was entirely unchanged, and she was as unspoiled now as if she had remained Eleanor MacDonald of Meadowland. Indeed, she received an account every month from Mrs. Leighton about her charities, that good woman having offered to give out money and clothing as practically as she could to the poor during Eleanor's absence.

To meet their demands, and to gratify his wife, Alec Thompson had placed a considerable sum in bank at Mrs. Leighton's disposal, and the latter enjoyed herself also in another way during that winter which proved to be extremely rigorous in northern Virginia.

With characteristic indolence Alec had said to Eleanor: "Now remember, old girl, you can have a nice round sum for all your poor Tommies and Johnnies; only don't bother me about them after you get the money. I don't want to hear any of their tales of woe, for, by George, it's too dismal, you know!" Eleanor had laughed in spite of herself, though in reality she disapproved so wholly of this form of comfortable selfishness that she had been tempted more than once to make some rather tart rejoinder.

It was difficult, too, for her to remember to keep all that part of her life to herself, and she deemed it unreasonable of a man who had nothing to do except to open his heart and loosen his purse-strings to object to hearing the workings of his charity. "We give as freely by sympathy and love in this world, my dear Alec," she had said one day to him, "as we do with money. Do you remember the Knight of the Holy Grail, who tossed a coin contemptuously in the dust to the poor leper? Lowell described it so beautifully in his poem, 'The Vision of Sir Launfal.'"

"I don't know anything about Sir Launfal,

nor the leper, ducky darling, and I don't care for your poets like Lowell, any way. They don't know a good suit of clothes when they see it, nor a thorough-bred horse. They spend all their time writing about a lot of fal-lal nonsense, like trees, and bees and seas, and then try to make them rhyme with skies, and flies and dies. And now, let's have some music, little girl, and then a nice drive, and we won't quarrel about poetry or poor people either."

With imperturbable good humor in his blue eyes, and an affectionate kiss on his wife's round cheek, this hopeless dilettante would summarily dismiss the subject for that day at least, and Eleanor would be forced to yield the point—though her opinions remained unchanged.

CHAPTER XVII.

. . . In spots like these it is we prize
Our memory, feel that she hath eyes. . . .
WORDSWORTH.

THE six months of European life for the Thompson couple, from January to July, had been extended to eight, and in May, the days becoming a little too warm for comfort, it was decided that the villa had better be given up. Eleanor was quite willing to go to Germany to enjoy the baths, open-air concerts, walks and drives, before Alec took her to his old haunts in Switzerland. She often longed for her father to enjoy the delights of travel with her, and missed his sympathetic, intellectual companionship more and more, as that first dissatisfaction over her husband's shallow-headedness grew into a distinct and painful sense of something lacking to her happiness.

The subject of books was entirely dropped,

for Eleanor had a horror of nagging; and as Alec had already admitted that he did not read, she never again alluded to his singular lack of taste. Her love of philanthropic work had been disposed of, as far as Alec was concerned, in the conversation already recorded, and on all subjects like pictures and other works of art he showed as profound an ignorance as on books. In short, he had the physical inactivity of a snail, about as much imagination as a turnip, and the soul of a grub-worm. But his heart was in the right place, and his supply of the milk of human kindness was better than the average. As long as nothing seriously interfered with his creature comforts he was quite willing to give liberally of his ample means, and such attentions as he had shown to Arthur Leighton were due to a genuine admiration for a man whom he recognized as his superior.

The latter, however, was not a person whom Eleanor cared to discuss, and with distinct adroitness she managed to stay clear of this subject to a great extent by a few non-committal remarks that were not of a character to excite suspicion, and yet that quietly disposed of the matter at hand.

Mrs. Leighton had rarely alluded to her son in the letters she had sent in regard to business matters, but General MacDonald generally added a few extra lines to the weekly budget to say that he had spent a pleasant evening at Woodlawn, or that Arthur had driven over to Meadowland with a new book for him to read. The considerate old father tried in every way to make Eleanor feel comfortable in regard to her long stay abroad, for, as an unselfish parent, he delighted in her advantages and pleasures, and never once hinted at his own loneliness in the long months that followed her departure.

Eleanor, however, seemed to read between the lines occasionally, and one day she told her husband that in spite of all her enjoyment she greatly missed her father. "You know, Alec," she said, "this is my first real separation from him. I was educated entirely at home, and as I lived in the country I had no burning intimacies or bosom girl friends even. I am afraid you think me silly sometimes, but I get very homesick as soon as I see father's letters from Virginia.

Alec chucked his wife under the chin and smiled blandly. "Do you want to go home next

week, little girl? I am sure I don't mind! It's quite as comfortable in Virginia as here, and I'm ready to go whenever you say the word."

Eleanor laughed softly, half to herself, before answering, and then said: "I think we had better leave Switzerland by the first of September, for a month at Bâle will be long enough. You and I have both had our musical treat in Dresden, Frankfort and Baden-Baden, and I shall never forget it. You are a good husband to indulge me so much, Alec, and I am enthusiastic over our trip. If I were not married, and father were here with me, I would want to stay two years in Germany for the music alone, outside of all the art wonders, the mysterious delicious Black Forest, the lovely drives and walks, and a thousand other delights."

Then checking herself, suddenly, after a glance at the listless expression of her husband, she added, with a little sigh: "You don't seem to share my enthusiasm, my dear; but I must say what I think sometimes, for I have no one else to talk to. Germany is the land of poetry and music, in my opinion, though many have

said Italy. We have now seen both, and somehow, in spits of all the beauties of Florence, my affections seem to go out to Germany. In my mind are running scraps of Heine's poems, and in my heart and soul are sounding those grand choruses of Handel's oratorios, that seem to me to rise to the very throne of Heaven. Oh, Alec, there you must feel with me," she cried out suddenly, "for you, too, love music!"

At the mention of Heine the habitually placid, amiable expression on Alec's regular features deepened into one of hopeless stupidity, and Eleanor regretted having given way to her enthusiasm. But in another moment her allusions to Handel stirred up the sluggish stream of his thoughts, and Alec answered: "Handel's a daisy, any way, little girl. I can't quite follow you in your high-flown notions about Heaven. Hope the old fellow got there, and suppose he had about as good a chance as any of us. His music is fine, and I'd like to hear a good oratorio once a week!"

This speech being so much longer than usual it was evident that Alec had no intention of wasting his breath for the rest of the day, and

Eleanor, finding that in answer to her comments on Germany and the Germans she received nothing but monosyllabic replies, or short grunts, buried herself in an agreeable book in self-defense.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Life, I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part. . . .
BARBOUR.

GENERAL MACDONALD and Arthur Leighton had just parted on the steps of Woodlawn, after two hours of congenial companionship, and quite frankly the subject of Eleanor's European stay had come up for discussion.

The old father seemed to Arthur to have aged a little in the months of separation from his daughter, as men in the sixties frequently do under some disappointment or worry that would not quickly affect a younger man. Although Eleanor had sent delightful, chatty letters, full of glowing descriptions of sight-seeing, there seemed occasionally a faint note of sadness in her words, so unlike her former self, that the tender-hearted father was conscious of unrest.

He was not long finding out that she was

homesick, and he was too intelligent not to conjecture (in spite of Eleanor's silence on that subject), that Alec Thompson was no companion for a cultivated, ambitious young wife who had gone abroad to improve herself. The General opened each letter with the hope that she spent a good part of her time in playing on the piano for and with her husband, besides going to concerts, as originally he felt that their mutual love for music would be a distinct bond.

Yet, even in this, Eleanor was doomed to disappointment, for the indifferent Alec was never willing to really study music, and it was not possible for her always to be ready to give up her mornings to dabbling in her art. She was ready to come home, she wrote, and now that the time was fixed the General felt so warm a thrill of emotion and delight that the memory of the weary months without her almost faded away. Many were his injunctions to the old housekeeper to be in readiness for the young mistress's return, and Mrs. Leighton's dainty fingers were pressed into service to decorate Meadowland with the finest of the early fall plants in honor of the young couple. She marveled often at the spontaneous manner in which

the devoted father warmed up to anything that was connected with Eleanor, and having only one child herself it gave her a keen sympathy for the loneliness of the General.

It was in a balmy summer temperature that he drove into the dusty little town of S—— to meet the travelers on the 20th of September, 1896. The summer had been a hot one for that section of the country, and there was no suggestion of autumn, as yet, in the abundant vegetation. Arrived at the station, General MacDonald pushed hurriedly through the crowd of loungers, and in his anxiety to find Eleanor almost ran over the insignificant Thompson, with his inevitable supply of canes and umbrellas.

"I beg pardon," the older man said, apologetically, "I was a little late and feared you and Eleanor would be looking for me."

"Ah, yes! to be sure; thank you," answered Alec in disjointed sentences. "Eleanor was right behind a moment ago." A happy laugh from that young person was music to the General's ears, and in a few more moments the whole party, brought up in the rear by an attractive French maid

and a portly Dutch man servant carrying the usual complement of traveling rugs, band-boxes and bird cages, were on their way to Meadowland.

Having left there in all simplicity, and with no servants in attendance, the General could not but smile at this change, knowing full well who to attribute it to. Alec had a large and generous notion of what was proper for Eleanor, and as she made no objections to bringing home a pretty little French girl, who had taken the most sincere fancy to the lovely American, he selected for his own body servant a respectable Dutchman, who was eager to come out to America under the impression that the streets were paved with gold, that milk and honey would literally flow into his mouth with no effort on his own part, and that in less than a year he would be a rich man.

Thus Babette and Hans, the two foreign domestics, became installed at Meadowland, Virginia, bringing much amusement to the negro element on the farm, but also much comfort to their employers.

Eleanor was, in her turn, secretly convulsed with laughter on one occasion to overhear a con-

versation in broken French between the serious-minded Hans and the irrepressible Babette, to the effect that the negro cook must have been originally some very great man. On being asked why, Hans went into a long-winded account of having seen on the Continent a black prince from India gorgeously attired and with a retinue of slaves. For some mysterious reason the Dutchman took it into his absurd head that Virginia was full of such people, and that General MacDonald and the wealthy little Thompson had filled their pockets with the surplus wealth of the East Indian travelers, had then forced them into servitude and were enjoying the fruits of their scheme. In spite of all explanations to the contrary this obstinate sauerkraut eater clung persistently to the wild fancies of his brain, always treating William, the shiny, coffee-colored servant (twenty years at Meadowland) with the utmost consideration.

A week after Eleanor's return, Alec emerged from the lethargy that seemed to have settled upon him permanently, and announced his intention of going on a long ride. The mercury had dropped fifteen degrees in the night, and af-

ter a heavy rain storm the air was deliciously bracing and clear as crystal.

"It's been deucedly warm and enervating, you know," Alec said to the General as they stood together at the front window of the dining-room, looking out on the shining landscape. "I felt like a washed-out rag, I assure you, last week, and to-day I seem to want a good gallop on Prince to get the cool air well into my lungs."

At the mention of the horse the General turned quickly around, and said: "Why not take Gipsy, my dear boy; he is a safer horse, and has enough spirit, I should think, to satisfy you. I fear you will kill yourself some day if you persist in riding Prince, and as an old soldier and cavalryman I can honestly say I would not like to tackle him myself. He is uncertain, high-tempered and not averse to kicking on occasions, and though you are a fearless whip, the best riders are often thrown by such brutes as that."

"Ah, by George, General," Alec answered drily, "you are too solicitous about me, for I have ridden Prince a hundred times without an accident, and hope to ride a hundred more.

It's very good of you, to be sure, to warn me, but," with an amiable smile, "I can look out for myself all right, and I must get out." Without another word he left the room to give orders to Hans, and the General, seeing that Alec was obdurate, took up his newspapers and settled himself for a comfortable smoke.

Eleanor had excused herself just as breakfast was coming to an end, and had not heard the conversation between her husband and father. Half an hour later she passed the latter in the hall, and inquired where Alec was. On being told that he had gone for a ride, she quietly continued her way to the housekeeper's room at the end of the wing. It had not occurred to the mistress to ask any one what horse was taken out of the stable for her husband, and as he often left the place suddenly on fine days for an hour's gallop there was nothing in his absence to occasion unusual alarm.

One hour later she began to think of Alec as the time approached for their duets, and growing a little restless she stepped out on the piazza to see if he were in sight. It was high noon now, and growing warmer, and she thought he surely must come soon. Shading her eyes with

her hand she stood in an attitude of easy grace, half leaning against the stone support to the steps, her mobile face a little pale, and her idle hand nervously fingering her dress.

Hans had just come around from the kitchen to ask if she wished to take Gipsy for the afternoon drive, and in a flash it occurred to her that Alec had selected Prince for his ride. Often before now the same thing had happened, and she felt far less uneasiness than to-day, but with that instinctive dread of knowing the whole truth that seems to precede a disaster she hesitated some moments before asking Hans if Prince were off the place. The answer in the affirmative was hardly out of his mouth before Eleanor turned white to the lips, stammering out: "Look there, Hans, your master—out there—look—O God!" Her breath came in quick gasps, and she clutched the startled Hans by the shoulder. What they saw was Alec, pale and exhausted, about a hundred yards away, tugging violently on Prince's bit, while the white foam from the horse ran down in streams to the ground. It was evident that the animal had run for miles at break-neck speed, and that Alec had only just succeeded in getting the

better of him—though from the pallor of the rider one judged this advantage could not last long.

Hans lost no time in rushing to the assistance of the unfortunate young man; but as he neared the horse Alec waved to him to stand aside. He thought that the man servant would irritate the already infuriated animal: and with a single lash of his whip he attempted to force Prince to go up to the gate calling Hans to step behind it until he passed through. One moment more, which seemed a year to Eleanor, as she watched with a beating heart, and horse and rider were plunging wildly in the air. Prince had determined to go no further; and before Hans could rush from behind the gate and seize the horse's bridle, a loud cry broke from Alec Thompson as he went down; the horse first throwing him violently to the ground, and then giving a vicious kick with his front feet as if to finish his victim.

With a courage born of desperation Eleanor could wait no longer, and like the wind she had rushed to the scene of trouble. The distracted Hans, seeing her light, flying skirts, caught and held the horse despite his violence, as she

brushed past them both to reach her husband's side.

One agonizing moment more, and she had knelt by the prostrate form, and felt his unresponsive hand. He was quite dead, the fall having broken his neck in two places. The blue eyes were closed forever, and the almost boyish curls of auburn hair were damp with the dews of death.

A cry of horror broke from Eleanor, as she touched the lifeless flesh; and as suddenly as she had rushed to Alec's aid, so now she recoiled. Stepping backwards, and throwing her arms wildly over her head, she fell full length to the ground, exclaiming: "Alec, Alec, Alec!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove;

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

SHAKESPEARE.

Two years have passed away, and autumn has come again with its yellow and red foliage, its cool, delicious nights and days of regal splendor.

At Woodlawn, Mrs. Leighton's bright pots seem brighter than ever to Eleanor, as she sits in her quiet black dress under the shade of an old oak tree, and watches her hostess moving about from flower to flower. The girlish gaiety that had once seemed almost childish, had been sobered by the wearing of her widow's

weeds, and the sweet young mouth had a few tiny lines around it despite its healthful redness. In the deep brown eyes, one can still read of some great shock that had swept over her like a storm, some regret that had left a pathetic look of appeal and distress; but they were not the eyes of one who has loved and lost all that life holds dearest; and in their pure depths, from time to time, a brightness as of the sun breaking through the clouds, makes one faithful heart glow with pride and hope.

During the twenty-four months of Eleanor's widowhood, Arthur Leighton had shown the same reserve, the same consideration that had marked his conduct after the announcement of her engagement, and after her marriage. As a family friend and on account of the cordial relations between his mother and General MacDonald, it was impossible for the young man to stay away from Meadowland at the time of Alec Thompson's tragic death.

To make clear the events of that terrible day and those that followed, it will be necessary to go back in our story to the time when Hans, after conquering Prince, rushed about the house like a madman—a volley of Dutch words

pouring out of his mouth. The General had difficulty in understanding everything he said; but missing Eleanor, and alarmed at her absence, he hastily summoned all the domestics and ordered them to follow him. He feared she might have been hurt in trying to save her husband; and as he approached the white form, lying so still, something like a hand clutching his heart seemed to seize him. From that awful suspense and shock he never fully recovered, and in Eleanor's two years of widowhood, he had seemed to age fully ten, though still at sixty-six years a fine specimen of a soldier and gentleman.

To arrange for the carrying of Alec Thompson's remains to the house, and to raise Eleanor gently from the ground, was the distressing duty the old General discharged with a dignity and forced calm, pathetic to see. And in the dreadful hours that followed, in which he hung anxiously over his beloved child he seemed to have suffered the concentrated misery of years.

She was unconscious for a period of two hours after her fall, and on her coming back to the reality of life, she had burst into wild sobs and shrieks intermingled with broken,

inarticulate words more distressing than tears. Mrs. Leighton and the nearest physician had been hastily sent for, and with gentle care and prudent nursing the young, untried constitution asserted itself to the satisfaction of her watchers. Gradually, the wild look of horror in the eyes was replaced by a more natural calm; and in a few weeks Eleanor seemed quite herself to those who were not observant enough to notice a subtle change.

After Alec Thompson's funeral she rarely spoke of him even to her father; but Mrs. Leighton with a keen insight into the girl's character, saw that her silence was not due to hopeless grief; and she quickly set to work to reason out the real cause. Mrs. Leighton had seen very little of Alec Thompson since the marriage; yet even that little was enough to convince her that he was very far from being the ideal man.

In the eight months that the young couple had been abroad out of the eleven of their short married life, she had never reasoned much about Eleanor's happiness, until suddenly brought face to face with a calamity that would have proved overwhelming to a deep na-

ture like that of the girl the older woman had known from childhood. In the time that she spent at Meadowland immediately after Alec's death, she seemed to get closer than ever to Eleanor, and saw more and more clearly that had that marriage continued until old age, the wife would most likely have developed into a disappointed and unhappy woman. As it was they were both young, Alec was generous and affectionate; life had many pleasures in store for them; and the beginnings of discontent for Eleanor were silenced for ever by the strange fate that had overtaken her husband in the very height of their prosperity.

It was not unnatural, therefore, as time went on and the loving mother saw Arthur Leighton's faithful devotion, that she should hope and pray that one day he might receive his reward. Her refinement and good sense prevented her from importuning him or cross-questioning Eleanor; and only to her husband did she ever breathe a word of that fond hope that had been cherished so long and so reluctantly given up, when Eleanor became the wife of Alec Thompson. Mr. Leighton would smile indulgently at his wife's flights of fancy,

when she would speak of Arthur's one day winning Eleanor, as in reality he had paid very little attention to either of them; and not being of a sentimental turn of mind he went to his business each day, entirely oblivious of the fact that a real romance was going on under his very nose.

The first year of Eleanor's widowhood was spent in the closest retirement, and she was rarely ever seen by Arthur; so that the poor fellow had a dreary time hoping and waiting for better things in the future. But on account of her youth, General MacDonald persuaded her in the second year to come downstairs in the evenings when company called; and Mrs. Leighton drove over from Woodlawn frequently to take her for a drive, or to ask her to spend the day.

Gradually and naturally, and with the delicacy that was inherent in Arthur he worked faithfully towards the goal before his eyes; and as gradually Eleanor yielded herself to the delights of being loved. At first she did not reason about her own feelings at all; she only knew that an unselfish loving nature was giving to her all that he had; that an unspoken

sympathy for her trouble was constantly near her, never needing to ask a question, and anticipating her every wish. He seemed to know instinctively when to speak and how, and he felt it to be only right and natural that the horror of her husband's sudden death should be uppermost in her mind for many months.

There might, indeed, be other thoughts and feelings for her that would be painful and inexplicable; moments of remorse in her fear that she had not loved Alec as truly as he loved her (though she had seemed to those who knew her the ideal wife), and a half-expressed wish that she had been able to reach his side sooner. These were all useless regrets, perhaps, for she had nothing to reproach herself for; yet Arthur respected and loved her all the more for them.

She had not loved Alec as truly as she could love, simply because it was not in him to call out the best that was in her nature; and in marrying him she had simply mistaken her fancy for a man who was kind and generous to be genuine affection. Like many another strong character, she did not know then the hidden depths of passion in her nature, but it

was destined for her that she should find them out under the influence of a character like Arthur Leighton's.

He had gone on steadily with his work until he had become the finest lawyer in his town, winning a place for himself in the regard of the older men that was worth far more than money, and holding his own in spite of all discouragements and drawbacks. Little by little Eleanor began to talk naturally of her own life to him, and almost unconsciously slipped from friendship into love. They read together, took walks and drives, each day drifting nearer and nearer to a perfect understanding—a halcyon existence as unmarred and unclouded as a June day.

One glorious evening when Eleanor had gone over to Woodlawn with flowers and fruit for Mrs. Leighton she had found the place almost deserted. Aunt Sally informed her that "Marster Leighton and the Missus" were at church, but that "Marster Arthur" had not been out of the house all day, as he was complaining of a headache, and looked "kinder puny and dauncy-like."

The old woman had long since changed her mind with regard to Eleanor, and that young

person had so completely won her over that she constantly sung her praises to Mrs. Leighton, occasionally venturing a sly remark to Arthur to find out just how far their romance had progressed. She now looked attentively at Eleanor, who made a pretty picture, in her black and white costume outlined against the rosy, evening sky, and decided mentally that she "would do."

"Please give these flowers and fruit to Mrs. Leighton for me, Aunt Sally," Eleanor said, holding out her hand. "I am very sorry she is out, but I could not stay long any way, as I must be back before dark. Father is not very well, and he asked me to leave a message for Mr. Arthur Leighton to come over to see him soon. How are you getting along, Aunt Sally, and how is your rheumatism? Now I must really go in a hurry, so good-by," and with a bright smile and nod she tripped down the steps and hurried away.

Not so fast, however, that Arthur could not catch up to her, and with a few long strides he was at her side. "I heard your voice, though I could not see you from my seat in the dining-room," he said a little breathlessly, "and I

hope you will wait a little while for mother to come in. I have been a little out of sorts all day, Eleanor, and you can cheer me. You know a man with a headache is not very pleasant company for himself—and sometimes not for others either. Now do stay a little while, and let's have a talk, and I can take you home later."

Eleanor hesitated before replying, the temptation to remain being great, yet with a secret feeling that she ought to go home. At the sight of Arthur's eager face, however, her resolutions immediately weakened, and she yielded to the gentle influence near her. She had tried to get away after all, and he would not let her; therefore she was not to blame. She had no home duty at this hour in the evening, and there was nothing wrong in talking to Arthur for half an hour. "I will use my feminine prerogative and change my mind," she said, with a gay little laugh. "Father will not miss me too much if I stay a little while, and perhaps I shall cure your head by taking the pain away."

There was a slight nervousness in her manner now that Arthur noticed, and that for the

first time disconcerted him. A sudden flush rose to his face, and looking quickly at her he saw that she had changed color also, and had dropped her handkerchief at his feet.

CHAPTER XX.

O true hearts, what is gold and glitter ? What are
The pomp and pride of state,
To the joy that comes with a full fruition,
To the patient heart that can love and wait !

MARIA C. VINTON.

THE picking up of a lady's handkerchief can bring two heads in as close proximity as the shaking of a carpet, so humorously described by Charles Dickens—that master of tender touches of human nature.

Eleanor was the first to recover self-possession, as she had been the first to lose it; something in the situation seemed to amuse her. She laughed a little, and with easy, graceful step walked on down to the gate, Arthur following her and devouring her with his eyes. Suddenly he turned around and said very solemnly: "Eleanor, it was pure chance that brought you here to-day; but had you not come I think my own feelings would have forced me

to seek you." No answer to this, but Eleanor turned her head in his direction, her lovely eyes grave again now, and the sweet mouth a little droopy. She knew what was coming, and gave herself up simply and naturally to the happiness of the hour. What woman does not know instinctively that a man loves her? Be she princess or shepherdess, the human heart is constructed on the same principles, and vanity aside she knows when to anticipate the important words. "Do you not think I have been patient all this long, long time," Arthur went on, "and could you refuse to hear me now?"

Still no answer from Eleanor, and the dark eyes were lowered now to the ground. It was not shyness nor coquetry that kept back her words. Arthur deserved to hear her, she thought to herself and she knew her own heart too well to doubt the strength of her love for him. The fulness of her happiness, however, was so overwhelming that, before Arthur could continue, tears had welled up in her eyes, and she hastily put up her hand to brush them away. He looked at her again, and all his faithful, unselfish devotion shone in the strong, manly face and voice. "My darling, tell me

that you love me; I cannot wait to hear you speak?"

The spell was broken now, and Eleanor was on the point of answering when, to her amazement, she caught sight of Abe galloping towards her. Before either she or Arthur could alter their manner towards each other the farm hand had accosted her in an excited voice, saying: "Come home, Miss Eleanor, right away, please, 'cause your pa suttenly is sick. He keeps a callin' for you, and as I knew you come down here to see Missus Leighton, I jes' got on this here hoss and we suttenly did come a hummin'!"

Eleanor lost no time in jumping in her buggy, and after putting a few questions to the man servant sent him into town for the family physician without a moment's delay. Arthur, eager to be of assistance, his own heart beating hard with the mingled distress and pleasure of the hour, followed Eleanor and drove rapidly to Meadowland.

It was enough for him that she had listened to him, had sought his eyes with her own, had let him call her his darling. He could wait for her final "yes" till she was relieved about

her father; he would not press her now that her mind was so troubled. With his customary unselfishness his first thought was for her as he glanced at the pale, sweet face, the lips trembling, and the dear eyes full of unshed tears. He longed to take her in his arms and shield her from the whole world, and as her protector he felt that he could weather the storms of life for her sake, and bring her safely through them all.

As George Eliot so beautifully says: "In the love of a brave and faithful man there is always a strain of maternal tenderness," and this was true of Arthur Leighton. His love was of that exquisite tenderness and delicacy that is only seen in natures of that kind, and is as rare in women as in men. Vanity and selfishness are such common faults that often the priceless fruits that love can yield are killed in the bud, and the heart itself withers because the seeds are sown on a sordid ground.

This man had shown that he could love and suffer and wait, and yet there was no change in his feelings. For him time did not exist where Eleanor was concerned, and he would love her till the day of his death, and after that through

eternity. He had said so long ago to his mother, and he had meant every word. Now that his happiness was within his grasp he contrasted his present feelings with those of a year ago, and inwardly thanked God for His goodness. The supreme moment of his bliss was not far away, and the full realization of the love of such a woman as Eleanor would be doubly sweet in the fuller possession.

In amusing contrast to the romantic reflections of Arthur Leighton were those of Abe, as he rode into town for the doctor. "My patience, there suttenly must be something new up between them two young people. 'Pears to me like I tuk a note onced for Miss Eleanor to that young man, and Sally told me she thought it giv' him the grand bounce. Anyhow, later on she married that leetle fellow with lots of money, and Marster Arthur never did git over it, so Sally told me. She was wuked up 'nough to fight, and kep' on sayin' sour things 'bout my young mistus that riled me till I was so mad I couldn't see straight. Anyhow, the young folks is all right now, and I suttenly am real glad Miss Eleanor ain't gwine to stay a lonely widder woman.

"She's too young and peart to set all by herself in the chimley corner, and she's gwine to have a fine young husband, too. Sakes alive, they'll make a handsome pair a walkin' up the church cyarpit! Reckon Sally'll never leave her young master as long as he lives; and when po' old Genral kicks the bucket Miss Eleanor will git all his boodle, besides all dat rich husband left her. There'll be some fine doin's at Meadowland some day, and even po' old Abe'll have his good times. Every dawg has his day, anyhow, and I ain't had mine yet!"

Vigorously slapping his knee and forgetting entirely for the moment the sad errand upon which he had been sent, this worldly-minded old African entertained himself with castles in Spain during the rest of his ride—that ride that brought to Eleanor the keenest anguish her heart had yet known.

CHAPTER XXI.

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
WORDSWORTH.

THE long night of sorrow and suffering was gone, and towards daylight, Eleanor, pale and exhausted with weeping, had thrown herself on her knees by her father's bedside, chafing the dear hands in her own, and calling him by every loving name that her tender heart suggested.

The physician had spent the night at the house, and so also had Arthur and Mrs. Leighton, to be near Eleanor in that terrible moment when she should be called upon to give back to God, the Father of all, that which had been given to her. Mrs. Leighton was one of those women ever ready to go to the sick and dying, and her distress for the sorrow that was hang-

ing over Meadowland was emphasized in the sweet pathos of her voice. All night she and Eleanor had watched closely for a change in the condition of the sufferer, as the physician had told them he might linger twenty-four hours, but that with returning consciousness he might die more suddenly, his vitality being lower than was at first supposed.

The heart attack from which Eleanor found him suffering on her arrival at the house with Arthur had brought the most alarming fainting spells; and in the early morning light Eleanor waited breathlessly for a sign of recognition from those eyes that had always lit with pride and joy at the sight of her face. She yearned for his returning consciousness for another reason, and a heavy weight of some responsibility seemed to rest upon her that made her young face paler and sadder than ever.

Her father was a good man, she knew, and all his people had been members of the Church of England, even before coming to America. Eleanor herself was a devout Episcopalian, and often the General had attended church service with her. Yet she could not recall his mention of the Holy Communion; and once having

asked him if he would prepare for the reception of it, he had said: "Some day, my child, I really will do as you ask." With that inconsistency in men that sees that a religion is good and wishes all the women of the family to keep up with it he had put off looking to the salvation of his own soul till the time when he should be called upon to answer for it at the hands of his Maker.

To Eleanor's mind it was horrible for any human being, no matter how pure, to be rushed into eternity with absolutely no preparation, no heavenly food to sustain and strengthen the soul for its journey through the dark shadows of the unknown. She told her fears, therefore, to the sympathetic Mrs. Leighton; and it was decided that the rector of their church should be sent for as soon as the physician had succeeded in bringing the patient to a partially normal state.

Meanwhile poor Arthur had had a terrible night, and with thoughtful love for both Eleanor and his mother he had stayed within reach, but out of sight, his heart aching to see and comfort Eleanor, and suffering a thousand pangs over his helplessness to prolong for one

hour the life that was ebbing away under her eyes. He had asked his mother to tell the General that he was in the house, to try for him to show his sympathy, and after that there was nothing left but to wait and hope and pray—as he had done before now in waiting for Eleanor's love.

The hours dragged on, and at last the General opened his eyes. They rested on the girlish, kneeling figure at his side, and he made a feeble movement with the hands she was holding. Instantly she aroused herself and peered into his face, her dark eyes gazing at the changed features, all her soul shining through their moist depths. "Father, dear father, don't you know me?"

At the sound of her voice the films that seemed to cover both brain and eyes of the patient were driven away, and a look of intense love and eagerness lit up the pallid face. "Eleanor, my darling, my little girl. God bless you! I have been ill, and I feel very weak. Tell me, can you read me something now, my favorite collect that you know so well?"

Eleanor started, and it seemed as though her

own thoughts had penetrated to the mind of her father. She rose quietly, and bringing her little prayer book to the side of the bed she began to read: "O God, the protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen."

With the last words Eleanor's voice broke and died away into a whisper, but her father still retained that eager look, and in a moment more spoke again. "That is the collect for the fourth Sunday after Trinity, and I remember hearing in church the beautiful Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. Read to me darling, once more."

Poor Eleanor, her heart bursting with grief, began a second time; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

A pause, during which Mrs. Leighton had passed her arm protectingly around Eleanor,

who finished with a sob. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," she went on, when her father checked her. Ill as he was, and within a few hours of death even, his fine mind was clear to the last, and the impressions made in time of health were the ones now that came back to comfort him.

"There is something in there about the glorious liberty of the children of God; read that."

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," Eleanor continued, her voice quivering more and more, and her efforts at self-control giving way under the emotions called up by the words.

"My child," the General began again, "my soul is troubled. I have not been the Christian I ought to have been. Will He forgive? Can He receive me, wretched and blind as I am, to go into that Holy of Holies?"

"My darling father," Eleanor cried, greatly

distressed, "I know that He can and will. I will call Mr. Williams, and he will talk to you far better than I can," and rising from her knees she was on the point of leaving him for a moment.

Motioning to Mrs. Leighton to retire, the General put his hand lovingly on his daughter's head, and said: "Tell me, darling, where is Arthur?"

Eleanor blushed deeply and turned her face away a moment before replying. "He has stayed here with his mother all night. He is so fond of you, so anxious to help, so distressed for me."

A sweet gleam of sunshine seemed to break through the room as the sick man listened to her words. "He loves you, my darling, with his whole heart, and can make you happy when I am gone. His heart is true and pure, and I have hoped you might learn to love him, for surely he must have told you."

"Yesterday, dear father," Eleanor answered, "he was just telling me of his love when Abe came to say you were so ill. I never had a chance to answer, for I was terrified about you."

"And your answer, darling, what would that have been?"

There was no hesitation now in Eleanor's voice or manner, and stooping over the bed, her lips close to her father's ear, she whispered: "I would have told him that I love him. Be comforted, dear darling." And with a burst of sudden tears she kissed again and again the dear face, and hurried from the room.

One hour later General MacDonald was resting quietly. The sick room was full of those who had known and loved him so many years in health, and who were to stay beside him until he passed into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Abe and William had come to pay their last respects to the dying man, and poor Abe, who now reproached himself bitterly for his flippancy the day before, was sobbing audibly. The penitent had made his peace with God, had partaken of angel's Food, and though the sands of life were slowly running out, that look of anxiety and pain had faded completely away, leaving the strong face as calm as a lake in summer.

Every known remedy had been used to prolong life, but it was clear, from the extreme

weakness of the patient, that the next sinking spell would be his last. Eleanor treasured each moment of that painless consciousness as a priceless pearl, the memory of which would be with her through all the agony of parting, and soften, as far as possible, the blow that else must have crushed her with its cruel weight.

Her lovely, tear-stained face seemed to Arthur already to have received that heaven-sent strength he had prayed for; and in the lustrous dark eyes, despite the look of suffering, there was a courage and dignity that thrilled him through and through as he watched her. The masses of her dark hair had become loosened from the agitation of the past night, and one love-lock almost touched her father's face as she leaned towards him. He noticed it, and with a look of ineffable tenderness whispered something to her. In a moment she had placed the brown curl in his hand, pressing it gently to his lips, and burying her head in her arms to hide the suffusion of blood which rushed over neck and brow at the thought that Arthur was watching her.

But she need not have minded those quiet gray eyes; the indulgent eyes of affection are

the ones that never misunderstand. To him she was the embodiment of purity and grace, as free from affectation as the wild rose that bloomed beneath her window, and as eet. Suddenly, still looking at Eleanor, he came nearer to the dying man and laid his hand on that of his friend. It was not too late to say some little word of comfort surely; and he had kept away only in order to allow undisturbed quiet to those who had greater claims upon the precious moments.

A burst of morning light suddenly flooded the room, the dancing sunbeams darting here and there till they seemed to brighten every object with unnatural realism. To the eyes so soon to look upon the Heavenly Vision this earthly flood of radiance seemed a prophetic sign that his soul would find favor in the realm of Mysteries.

Motioning to Eleanor for her hand, and clasping his feeble fingers around those of Arthur, the last great effort of General MacDonald's life was to join those two young hands. "Eleanor—Arthur—God keep you!—For—better—for worse—in sickness and health—till death——" The last words were inaudible,

and only the guardian angel heard that faint echo before the tired spirit winged its flight into a heavenly Paradise.

But Arthur Leighton had regained his earthly Paradise, and in that moment of exquisite pain and exquisite bliss his eyes sought those of Eleanor. She turned them upon him in all their glorious beauty, and the dark night clouds of doubt were transformed into the love-light of endless day.

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