

"And so within one short month from the time the news came, we bade farewell to our beautiful happy home, and soon after you and your mother took possession."

Here I stopped, for a great lump in my throat prevented my utterance and I could have wept aloud as all these old memories rushed upon me.

For some time my cousin and I sat silent—I thinking of other days, and she—of what was Helen thinking? as she sat there, her fair face so sad and thoughtful.

Presently, raising her great blue eyes to my face she said slowly: "Cousin Enis, if I were dead would your father be squire of Upfield?"

"Yes," I answered abruptly, startled by the suddenness of the question.

"What can I do Enis? Life is very beautiful to me just now, I cannot wish that I were dead; but I am so truly sorry for the wrong which has been done your family. What can I do? If I could give back his inheritance to your father, or even divide it with him, how thankfully I would do so; but I cannot, I have not the power; my knowledge of legal matters extends so far. Oh Enis! what can I do to atone to your father for the bitter wrong that has been done him?" Startled by this outburst of Helen's, I had remained utterly silent while she spoke. But when she burst into a paroxysm of tears I seated myself beside her, and drew her head to my shoulder, and there the poor child wept heart-brokenly, in spite of all I could say.

■ I did not want her to die. Oh God! no, not even in my bitterest moods, before I had seen and learned to love her, had I ever wished my cousin dead.

So now with loving words and caresses, I soothed the trembling, sobbing little creature, and then gently rebuked her for what she had said.

That night I happened to go into Helen's bedroom for something, before retiring, and we sat awhile talking by the open window, for it was a lovely moonlight night, when suddenly, and without warning, she fainted. I lifted her on to the bed, and without ringing for assistance, quietly set about restoring her. She soon recovered, and smiled at my anxiety.

"It is nothing Enis dear; I often faint this way; it is very foolish is it not?" wistfully.

"Not foolish at all, because you cannot help it," I replied kissing her; and I felt a sudden pang as I looked at her wan little face lying back on the pillows, I realized then that I loved most dearly this frail girl, whom I had determined to banish from Upfield, and if it had not been for her own assurance that she would willingly give her inheritance back to my father, I would for love of her, have relinquished the purpose for which I had come to Upfield. When I had assisted her into bed and was bending down to kiss her good night, she took my face between her two little hands and said pathetically: "I am such a miserable little creature Enis; do you think Douglas can really love me?"

"No one could help loving you yet," I answered evasively, "And now good night."

"Good night!" she answered, and then, pressing my hand said with a wistful little smile, "Uncle Alex. may yet be squire of Upfield."

After what Helen had said that morning about her wish to restore Upfield to my father, my mind was relieved of a great weight. I cared not a jot for Mrs. Godfrey nor her disappointment, should the estate pass from her daughter's possession; indeed the prospect of revenging myself upon her was an added incentive to go on with my undertaking, although I knew that love for and pride in Helen were at the root of her desire for wealth and position, far more than her own gratification. To see her daughter admired, rich and powerful, with the power which only wealth and position can give, was the cherished ambition of this cold, sneering woman's life; her intense love for this one child of hers, was the redeeming trait of a cruel, calculating nature.

Now that I knew from Helen's own lips that she wished papa to have Upfield, I felt that I could pursue my object unwaveringly and without any qualms of conscience. So I resolved to commence my search upon the following night. I would wait till the household had all retired, and a little after midnight would descend to the library and search the cupboards which had figured so conspicuously in my dream.

The next day I could settle to nothing, so nervous was I at the thought of what I purposed doing on the coming

night. To my restless, excited fancy, the minutes and hours seemed to creep by, so slowly did they pass to me. Mrs. Godfrey was absent a great part of the day, returning calls in the neighborhood, a fact upon which I congratulated myself, as otherwise I should have been in constant dread of those terrible eyes of hers, reading my purpose in my tall-tale face. Helen made no allusion to our conversation of the previous day. She had that morning received a letter from Douglas, announcing his intention of very shortly paying a visit to the Manor. Her mind was wholly taken up with the, to her, delightful prospect of seeing her lover; and she flitted gaily in and out of the house and from room to room, singing snatches of songs, playing with Prince, the hound, and anon throwing herself down at my feet as I sat trying to fix my wandering attention upon an intricate piece of fancy work, and telling me in glowing, loving words, some story of Douglas' goodness and kindness to the poor; or giving in short, laughing sentences some comic illustration of his imitable humor. Ah me! As if I did not know as well as she.

Dear little Helen! She never dreamed of the inward torture her words caused me, nor of the mighty effort I made for her sake to put from me the love which had grown with my growth, and struck such deep roots in my heart, that it well nigh killed me to up-root it.

At last that seemingly endless day drew to a close. There had been visitors to dinner; and afterwards in the drawing-room, I had sung and played to the entire satisfaction of Mrs. Godfrey and her guests; but it was with intense thankfulness that I at length saw the latter depart, and I was free to retire to my own room. I could hardly have borne the strain much longer.

I sat for some time before my mirror, brushing the long dark hair which formed my chief attraction, and thought of many things, hoping, despairing, wondering, as the mood seized me.

I mused long over Douglas' approaching visit, and wondered in what manner he would meet me, and how I should bear to see him and his betrothed together, "To witness his wooing of the girl who had come between me and—and everything," I said to myself with momentary bitterness.

"But if I succeed to-night as I hope—I hope I shall, then I will not be here when Douglas comes; for to meet him now, to hear his voice, and touch his hand, would be to taste of the bitterness of death."

I arose and put on my crimson dressing-gown, letting my hair fall loosely over my shoulders. "It must be near the time," I thought with a tremor, and kneeling down by the open window waited for the great bell of Upton Cathedral to tell forth the hour of midnight. From where I was I could see the windows of the library now all dark and silent. Hark! What was that? From across the mere came the boom of a great bell, each stroke falling clear upon the still night air, I counted them one by one, and as the last one clanged forth and then died away with a mournful cadence, I shuddered and hesitated for an instant, but conquering my timidity, arose and taking a candle, and a box of matches from the table, turned out the gas jets, and left the room, softly closing the door after me.

I did not dare light the candle for fear its glimmer would attract someone's attention, the corridors through which I passed were very dark, save here and there, where, through some window, the slanting rays of the moon fell in bars of light athwart the oaken floor. Though naturally brave, it was not without some inward trepidation I traversed corridor after corridor, coming suddenly from deep darkness into the ghostly moonlight; and starting at every shadow on wall or floor, until I reached the stair-case. My aunt's bedroom was close by, and I shuddered lest she should hear my footsteps, and open the door to see who it was. If she had I am afraid I should have cried aloud with fright. Noiselessly I descended the stairs, and crossing the great hall passed into the dark drawing-room; with slow, cautious steps, and feeling my way as I went lest I should knock over a chair or a table. I at last reached the library, and went in, closing the door after me. The room was flooded with moonlight, and I stood a moment listening with strained ears for the slightest sound to indicate that I was followed. But all was silent as the grave. Crossing over to the windows I lowered the blinds, and drew the curtains close, that no ray of light from