

herself was, that no earthly temptation could have made her leave the house for five minutes. She rose up early—for he might come then; and she sat up till impossible hours, lest they might be the only ones left free by business. But under all this watching, the keen, three-pointed pain never relaxed its pressure. What was the use of anything, after that? and yet she longed for his coming with an intensity that could not be measured.

Earlier in the year, certainly before his declaration, she would not have waited so long, without taking the matter into her own hands and writing. But the twenty-fifth was close at hand; how could she do anything to bring herself to his notice, or call him to her side? And he was almost a stranger now; she had seen him but once since near a year ago. And on the twenty-fifth, at least, she must see him. Alas! what could she say to him then? unless—that—

But she could not think of it now. Her mind clasped hold of just one thought: he will come then. "He wants me to understand how angry he is," thought Hazel to herself as the tenth day crept slowly by. "Does he think I am made of iron, like himself, I wonder?"

And so we judge and misjudge each other, the rest of us; and how can we help it? Misjudgments will be, must be; the only thing left to human finiteness and short-sightedness is frank dealing. There is one possible remedy in that. Rollo did not come to Chickaree, and he did not write. How long Wych Hazel could have borne to wait without herself writing, to clear herself, it is difficult to say. A week passed, the second week was in progress, the twenty-fifth was not more than a week off, when Mr. Falkirk announced at dinner one day that Rollo was just setting off upon a journey.

"He's going to see some great manufacturing establishment in the northeast somewhere, and can't attend to my business, he tells me, before the fifth or sixth of next month; he hopes to be back by that time."

Mr. Falkirk thought the non-intercourse between the Hollow and Chickaree a very significant fact; but it was not his plan to annoy his ward by seeming to see anything it was not necessary he should see. It cannot be said that he was quite satisfied with the condition of things, indeed; however, he knew it was hopeless to attack Wych Hazel in the hope of getting information; and with what patience he might, he waited too; the third in that unrestful attitude.

With that strange double life which she had been leading of late, Wych Hazel heard Mr. Falkirk's announcement and poured out his "after-dinner coffee" with a steady hand. Then asked when Mr. Rollo was to go. He had gone already, that very day. And till when must this other business wait? Till the second week in October. Then she knew that he had thrown her off. No other earthly thing would have kept him away on the twenty-fifth, without even a word. Could he have done it, unless his liking for her had changed? *Would he have done it, caring for her as—she thought—he had cared a year ago?* With these questions beating back and forth in her mind,—so she went through the rest of the day. Receiving visitors, giving Mr. Falkirk his tea, sitting with him through the evening; until, at last, it was done and he had gone, and she could be alone. It never even crossed her mind to go to bed that night.

Whatever the new day may do with things that are sure, it is yet rather gentle with uncertainties; making far little suggestions, and giving stray touches of light, in a way that is altogether hopeful and beguiling. And so, when that weary moonlight night had spent its glitter, and the tender dawn came up, Hazel breathed freer over a new thought. Mr. Falkirk might be mistaken! His own business might fill Mr. Rollo's hands until the second week in October,—that word proved nothing at all about his staying away. She would wait and see. No use in trusting people just while you can keep watch. And so, though the secret pain at her heart did never disappear, and though at best her next meeting with Mr. Rollo could not be very pleasant, still Hazel did hold up her head, and hope, and wait, with a woman's ready faith, and a courage that died out in the twilight and revived in the dawn, and kept her in a fever of suspense and expectation. It worried her so unspeakably, in the long hours of practical daylight and unmanageable night, that sometimes she could hardly bear it. The world seemed to turn round till she could not catch her thoughts; and nerves overstrung and on the watch, made her start and grow pale with the commonest little sounds of every day and every night.

She had never had many people to love; she had never (before) loved anybody very much; and the truth and dignity which had kept her from all forms of love trifling, so kept the hidden treasures of her heart all sparkling with their own freshness. They had never been passed about from hand to hand; no weather-stains, no worn-out impressions were there. What the amount might be, Wych Hazel had never guessed until in these dark days she began to tell it over; making herself feel so poor! For, after all, what is the use of a treasure which nobody wants?

Not the least among her troubles was the painful hiding them all. She must laugh and talk and entertain Mr. Falkirk; she must guard her face when the mail-bag came in, and steady the little hand stretched out for her letters; must meet and turn off all Mrs. Bywank's looks and words; must dress and go out, and dress and receive people at home. Ah, how hard it

was!—and no one to whom she could speak, no lap where she could lay down her head, and pour out her sorrows.

Slowly, as the days went by, and hope grew fainter, and the dawn turned cold, there grew up in Wych Hazel's mind an intense longing to lay hold of something that was still; something that would stand; something beyond the wind and above the waves; and slowly, gradually, the words she had read to Gyda came back, and made themselves a power in her mind:

"I will be with him in his trouble."

Oh for some one to be with her! Oh for something she could grasp, and stop this endless swaying and rocking and trembling of all things else! And then, following close, came other words, more lately learned. Not now read over, with those pencil marks beside them; but read often enough before, happily, to have been learned by heart; and now passing and re-passing in unceasing procession before her thoughts.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us."

The love that could be counted on; the Presence that was sure!

And so, reaching her hands out blindly through the dark, the girl did now and then lay hold of the Eternal strength, and for a while sometimes found rest. But there came other days and hours when she seemed to be clinging to she hardly knew what, with the full rush and sweeping of the tide around her; conscious only that she was not quite swept away: until when at last the twenty-third was past, and three days of grace had followed suit, Hazel rose up one morning with this one thought: if she did not see somebody to speak to, she should die.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CROSS THREADS.

And in all the world there was but one person to whom she could speak, for but one had guessed her secret; even Gyda. It seemed to the girl afterwards as if at this time again her mother's prayers must have been around her; so clear and swift and instinctive were her decisions, in the chaos of all other things. No danger now of meeting any one at the cottage. But how to get there? Not through Morton Hollow, not on Deannie Deans,—oh no, oh no! If she went, she must go by that other almost impossible way, which was not a way. She would drive to the foot of the hill, and leave the carriage there, and not take Lewis to see where she went.

How she did it, Hazel never remembered afterwards. She left the carriage with a cheery word to Roe, and then set her face to the hill; the little feet toiling on with swift eagerness through briars and over stones, finding her way she knew not how; conscious only that she did not feel the ground under her feet, but seemed to be walking on nothing, so that she had every now and then a sort of fear of pitching forward. She had set out in good season, but it was past midday when she stood before the cottage. If she knocked as no other hand had ever knocked there; if her face at the opening door startled Gyda beyond words; of this, too, the girl knew nothing. For with the first sight of Gyda, there came such a surge of the sorrows in which she was plunged, that Hazel stepped one step within the door and dropped all unconscious at the old Norsewoman's feet.

Gyda was quite unable to lift her, light as the burden would have been; but what she could she was prompt and skilful to do. She brought cushions to put under Wych Hazel's head, applied cold water and hartshorn; for Gyda was too much in request as a village nurse and doctor to be unsupplied with simple remedies. With tender care she used what she had, till the girl opened her eyes and found Gyda's brown face hovering over her. Even then the old woman said not a word. She waited till Wych Hazel's senses were clear, and the young lady had roused herself up to a sitting position on the floor. Gyda's eyes were too keen not to see that the mind was more disturbed than the body.

"My little lady," she said wistfully, "what ails thee?"

Hazel passed her hands over her face, and tried to collect her thoughts.

"I am a great deal of trouble," she said slowly; for the touch of the wet hair was suggestive, and it seemed to her just then that she was nothing but trouble to anybody.

"And what is it that is troubling thee?" said Gyda, stooping down with her hand on Wych Hazel's shoulder, the wrinkled, sweet old face looking earnestly for the answer.

"How can you set things right?" said Hazel, with her usual inroad to the midst of the case.

"How can you set them right, when you do not know where they are wrong?"

"Will my lady tell me what is wrong?" said the old woman, probably judging this statement of the position too vague to be acted upon.

"But come and sit down, and see the fire, and get comfortable; and tell me; and then we'll know."

Wych Hazel rose and came to the fire as she was bid, and looked at it, seeing nothing; but her next words touched another point.

"Why do such things come upon people?" she said.

The old Norsewoman stood beside her, watching with all the wisdom of her loving, wise heart to see where the hurt was and what the medicine must be. She put her hand again upon Wych Hazel's shoulder as she looked.

"What has come?" she said. "It's not—my lady?" she added, with evidently a sudden startle of apprehension.

"He is away, you know," said Hazel, with an immediate reserve of voice. "I know nothing of him."

"What has come to my lady's lady?"

A quick spasm of pain passed over the face she was watching. "Hush!" the girl said under her breath. "I am not that."

"Then something wants to be set right," said the old woman quietly. "What is it, dear? Tell me, and the Lord will show us how to do."

"If he cared, he would have hindered," said Hazel drearily.

"He doesn't hinder, sometimes, to show us that he cares," said Gyda. "You may not question his love, dear; you'll be sure to get wrong if you do." And then bending nearer, so as to look close in the girl's face, with her little black eyes shining both keen and tender, she repeated, "My lady's lady, what is it? I am his servant, and so I am her servant."

If anything could have broken down the fierce self-control in which Hazel had been entrenched for the last ten days, it was perhaps the repetition of those words. But tears were bidding their time; none had come, none could come yet. Only her lips trembled.

"Please, please!" she said, raising her hand in mute pleading. Then adding in a tone that went to Gyda's heart, "He has doubted my word. There is nothing to be done."

"My lady! Olaf!"

"Yes."

"It seems you've doubted him. Is that it?"

"His truth. Never."

"No, not his truth. But you have doubted him, yet. What cause had he to doubt your word?"

"Appearances. They were all against me. But there is no use in trusting, unless you trust."

"Has Olaf done you wrong, you think, and no cause?"

"I did not come to complain of him," said the girl quickly. "But—I had nobody to speak to—and I was—dying by inches."

"Suppose you complain, dear," said the old woman, with a smile which was anything but unsympathetic. "Complain, and make the worst of it; then we will know how to begin. Say all he has done, as bad as it is, and we will see what it means, maybe."

The wistful eyes looked up at her, then down again. She answered softly:

"He thought, he had reason to think, that I had broken my promise. And he did not wait, nor try, for an explanation. That is one thing."

"How could he have reason to think that, my lady?"

"Because of something I could not help," said Hazel. "You know that *etc.*," she added with an appealing look, as if to see whether Gyda doubted her too.

"Did you speak to him?"

"He gave me no chance. I have not seen him since—since—he looked at me so," said Hazel.

"Maybe he had his own part to bear," said the old woman. "But Olaf will be back again in a few days."

"Yes," said the girl slowly,—"that makes no difference. He has given me up."

"Love doesn't give up," said Gyda. "He asked me, a few days ago, to pray for him, that he might be strong to do right. I wot, it'll be an easier part than he thought of!"

But the words touched a sore spot. "No," the girl thought to herself. "Love does not give up!" She sat very white and still. Then, after awhile, looked up at Gyda—one of her fair looks.

"You did not know," she said gently, "that he was asking you to pray against me."

Gyda met her eyes, first without replying; her hand left Wych Hazel's shoulder and came upon her hair, touching it softly. The old, brown, wrinkled face was so sweet and quiet that it seemed a very stronghold of comfort and counsel and help. Counsel and comfort came in a very simple form this time.

"Dear," she said, in her slow utterance,—"he loves you."

But Hazel was not inclined to debate that question with anybody but herself. She leaned her head back and shut her eyes, finding curious soothing in the touch of Gyda's hand. Nobody ever touched her so in these days, and she had been very, very lonely. Then suddenly she started up, sitting forward and speaking eagerly.

"You must not tell him!" she said; "you must not even tell him that I have been here. You must not say one word. Promise me!"

"Will you tell him?" said Gyda placidly.

"Will you promise?" Hazel repeated. "Things that cannot stand of themselves had better—fall."

"What is it that cannot stand, dear?"

"I did not come here to talk about that," said Hazel, laying her head back again. "I came to talk about myself. Or to do something besides think."

"I'll hear," said Gyda. "Nothing is going to fall that ought to stand. Talk, my dear."

All the while she was standing just at Wych Hazel's shoulder, touching her head with a light touch; in her face and voice the utmost soothing charm of tender tranquillity. She had been doubtless a Norwegian peasant woman, and had known little of what we call refining advantages in outward things; but love and peace and sympathy had made her wonderfully delicate to divine the needs of those with whom she dealt. It was a hard little hand, but a very soft touch upon Wych Hazel's curls. Furthermore it was evident, that beyond her sympathy with her

visitor's present distress, Gyda was not disturbed about the matter in hand.

"The days have been so long, all these weeks," said Hazel. "And the nights were longer than the days."

"Ah, yes. And you couldn't trust the Lord with your trouble?"

"I think—I did try, sometimes," said the girl slowly, "but I do not quite know. I was in such confusion, and other things came in, and I was afraid of doing it—only to please him, because—"

"Eh," said Gyda. "Yes, to please who, dear?"

Hazel put up one little hand and laid it upon Gyda's, so giving her answer.

"Because," she began again presently, "I had thought it had seemed as if—maybe—that was the reason of it all. Do such things come upon people when they do not know they are wrong?"

"Mayhap," said Gyda, who through the obscurities of this speech threaded her way to one thing only. "It's only the straight way, dear, that has no crooks in it. But see—isn't my lady's lady in the straight way?"

"But I mean—I do not know how to tell you," she said, covering her face with her hands. "When he had grown so good—and I had not,—I thought, perhaps, that was the reason. I thought of it last winter, before this came; and I have never seen him since—but once. I might seem—different—to him you know," Hazel added in her girlish way. Then she took her hands down and looked at Gyda, searching for her answer. But Gyda gently smiled.

"I think you'll soon know," she said. "Suppose you don't think any more about it, till he comes."

Hazel was silent a few minutes, but thinking all the while as hard as she could. She was in no hurry now for Mr. Rollo to come; her dread of seeing him again was extreme. And by this time another matter claimed her attention, over and above everything else; she must get home while she could. If physical prostration and reaction went on at the rate they had begun, it would not take much longer to make the scramble over the hill a sheer impossibility.

"I must go," she said abruptly. "But you will let me come once more!"

Gyda was about to answer, when she turned her head sharply towards the door. Her ears caught a sound in that direction, and the next instant Wych Hazel's ears caught it too; the sound of steps, quick steps, a man's steps, coming along the flag-stones outside the cottage. A hand on the door, the door open and Rollo himself was there.

(To be continued.)

### MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

M. ALEXANDRE DUMAS is finishing a piece founded on his father's novel of "Joseph Balsamo," and which is intended for the Odéon.

COUNT VON BEUST, Austrian Ambassador at London, has published a waltz, "Le Temps Passe," dedicated to Queen Caroline of Saxony.

M'LEE ALMEE made her last appearance for the present at the New York Academy of Music last week, for the benefit of Mr. Maurice Grau. The second act of *Madame Angot* was given with the sex of all the characters reversed. M'Lee Almée playing Ange Pitou.

LYDIA THOMPSON's new company is said to be the strongest and most numerous that has ever surrounded her. She is under positive engagement for twenty weeks for the sum of \$50,000, with the privilege to the contracting party of ten weeks longer for \$35,000. Should she play thirty weeks she will realize \$115,000.

MR. VEEGER, the dramatic agent of Paris, has engaged Signor Rossi to make a tour to the United States. The engagement is one of a hundred nights, which may be prolonged to a 150, at the option of the manager. Rossi is to engage his own company.

RUBENSTEIN carried away to Russia eight or nine thousand pounds sterling as the fruit of the London season. His last performances at St. James' Hall produced six hundred and twenty-five pounds, the largest amount ever received there during a representation by a single artist. Mr. Dickens' entertainments not excepted.

MR. E. RICE, the author of "Evangeline," is busily at work on a new musical extravaganza of the same type, which will be called "Corsair, Jr." The music is composed throughout, and the orchestration is pretty nearly finished. It will be produced in Boston this summer at the Museum.

At one of the operas there is a frequent attendant who has always one of the best boxes in the grand tier, and who has had a rather singular career. Recently he unexpectedly came into a fortune of £1,000,000 or thereabouts, and he finds much difficulty in spending it. Being told that music hath charms to soothe the savage—even a dog-fancier's and race-catcher's breast—he is undergoing a course of Mozart, Meyerbeer, Verdi, and Gounod, with most exemplary patience.

A SECOND Mozart is proclaimed at Melbourne. Another "wonder-child" is now performing at the great concert-room of that place, and attracting crowds to listen to his playing. His name is Ernest Hutchinson; his age is five years and a half. He is compelled to kneel on a high chair in order to reach the keyboard of the piano. He played "Il mio tesoro" in such rapturous style as to call forth a triple encore. His compositions are equally delightful, and his musical ear so correct that he can recognize any note when struck upon the instrument, although standing at a distance and with his back towards it.

THE outlook for the variety business next season is poor. The demand for "song and dance men," "specialty artists," "Dutch comedians" and "Ethiopian banjoists," has decreased greatly of late. First-class men, like Delebrant and Hengler, who used to get \$50 a week, are now a drag in the market at \$100 and \$125. Indeed there is a notable reduction of salaries all round, except among stars and leading men and women, who, as usual, command their own prices. Good stock people are now getting less than two-thirds of their former salaries, and there is every indication that the reduction will continue.