

you really loved me all the time, didn't you, papa? And you'll love me again, if only God will spare you to us."

And so the weary days of anxious suspense passed by, and the fear and gloom deepened.

One day old Dr. Merlin with difficulty prevailed upon Evelyn to go and rest for an hour in the drawing room. He thought there might be a change that night, he told her, when she would need all her strength and endurance.

"I am not all tired now, doctor. Please let me stay," she pleaded. "I cannot bear to leave him."

"My dear lady," he replied, with gentle authority, "there cannot be any change just now, or, if there were, you should be called at once. You have not closed your eyes for so long that, though your anxiety causes you to forget your fatigue, I fear your strength may fail when you most need it. Let me persuade you to rest for an hour at least, and you shall be told when the smallest change comes."

Reluctantly she obeyed, and slowly left the room for the drawing-room, as she had been bidden. Dr. Merlin had spoken of a crisis coming soon, and though he had spoken very guardedly, she could tell only too well that he feared the worst results. The fever had run its course with such unabated violence that the strength of the patient was almost exhausted. Was it possible that all medical skill, all love and care, all prayers and tears, would be impotent to stay the death angel's sword?

"He means I shall need all my strength for the last good-bye," she said to herself. "Oh, I cannot bear it! It would kill me to lose him!"

Sophy was sitting in the drawing-room as she entered with her weary step and wan, white face. The girl was standing by the window looking out over the wintry waste of country with eyes that saw nothing, and with a heart full of bitter trouble. She did not turn round as Evelyn entered; she hardly was conscious of her approach. But the young wife, almost wild with anguish, and with a passionate yearning for sympathy in her extremity, drew nearer, and, sinking down upon a chair, held out her hands imploringly towards the girl, with a piteous cry of entreaty, "Oh, Sophy, help me to bear it!"

Sophy started at the words, but more at the tone in which they were uttered, and turned hastily round. She saw her young step-mother sitting there, with her wan, white face, and grief dimmed beauty, with dark shadows under her blue eyes, caused by sleepless nights and anxious watches, and with a world of misery in her appealing tones.

The piteous appeal of her tones, and the sight of the young wife's anguish, roused all that was best and noblest in the girl's heart. In a moment she had forgotten all the soreness and bitterness of the past - all the small jealousies and trifling annoyances, and she remembered only how the wife was breaking her heart for the sake of one who was the dearest on earth to his daughter's heart, and who even now might be slipping away from them. She only remembered how dear he was to both of them, and in the unity of their common sorrow she impulsively sprang forward and threw her arms round Evelyn's neck, with a gesture of loving sympathy that spoke more eloquently than words. Then, with a tender womanliness, she drew the weary head down upon her shoulder, and smoothed the golden hair, until Evelyn's overcharged heart found the relief of tears. She wept hysterically for a time, with passionate sobs that shook her from head to foot, while Sophy waited silently and patiently until she grew calmer. Not a word was spoken between the two of regret or forgiveness, but peace was proclaimed, and in this hour of bitter sorrow all the barriers had fallen down between them, and this storm of trouble had done what the calm sunshine of prosperity had failed to do.

"Don't give up all hope," Sophy whispered at last. "I

cannot think God means to take him from us, and he so dear to both of us." And then she persuaded Evelyn to lie down upon the sofa, and sat by her side until he fell into an easy slumber, when she stole away silently, returning almost immediately to be ready, when he weary eyes unclosed, with a refreshing cup of tea and dainty little repast to tempt her appetite.

But it was the thoughtful care and the girl's unaccustomed gentleness which did Evelyn more good than the fragrant tea, and as she kissed the girl and glided back to her anxious watch it seemed to her as if her misery was robbed of its overwhelming bitterness by the thought that she had gained the girl's heart.

And Sophy stole away to her own room to pray, to watch, and, if it were possible, to sleep. And her heart was warmed and lightened, even in the midst of her anxiety. Evelyn had only said, in acknowledgment of her little attentions to her, "Thank you, dear." But the tone had said far more than words could have expressed, and Sophy was more than repaid.

In spite of all her anxiety, Sophy slept that night, and for a time forgot all sorrow in the happy oblivion of youthful dreams. But from these she was roused in the early morning hours by a light at her bedside, and woke to see Evelyn standing there looking down upon her with eyes full of happy tears.

"Thank God, Sophy, he is better," she whispered, in scarcely audible tones. "Dr. Merlin says he has taken a turn for the better now, and the fever has gone. I must go back to him at once, but I could not help coming round just to let you know. And now you can go to sleep again with a happy mind." She bent down to kiss her as she spoke, and then glided away quickly and silently as she had come, leaving Sophy to weep out all her gladness, her thankfulness, and her relief in a burst of happy tears.

It was a long, weary convalescence, but the invalid gradually improved, and in the hearts of none of his dear ones did there seem to be any room for impatience. He was saved, he had not been taken away from them, and that was more than enough.

He used to wonder in the first days of his convalescence, in a sort of weak bewilderment, how it came about that his wife and daughter seemed to be so much together now, why they would sit side by side and chat so much together in low tones, and why Sophy had lost that hard sullen look which had grown almost habitual to her fair, girlish face. And he wondered still more with returning strength as he saw what fast friends those two seemed to have grown. He wondered what had wrought the change, but, while rejoicing over it, he did not like to speak of it. Could it be a reality? Could it be that the old difficulties had melted away, and that in future peace and love were to reign supreme in his home?

At last one day, when he was far advanced on the road to recovery, and he and his wife happened to be alone, he said, half inquiringly, "You and Sophy seem great friends, dearest?"

And then his young wife answered, with a happy light in her eyes - "Yes, thank God! there will be no more dissensions in your home, Arthur. There were faults on both sides, we have both been to blame. But sorrow taught us both a lesson we are not likely to forget. When we thought we might lose you," and her voice faltered, "we found each other, and that terrible time drew us close together, and now I think I can truly say we love each other more and more every day. Are you satisfied, Arthur?"

"More than satisfied," he replied, with a smile of utter contentment. "It was the one cloud in my sky."

"And so good came out of evil," she said, softly. "and there was a silver lining even to this cloud."