

one might say. But though her heart is beating suffocatingly, she is not to be stopped in what she wishes to say.

"In those past days," she goes on, brokenly, "I never used to think at all; now I seem to do nothing else. Oh, what a child I was! How little I valued all that you offered me! How lightly I threw it from me! And now, when I would give my life to win it back—Laurence!" she cries out, in a stifled voice, "is it too late?"

"It is precisely eight years and four months too late," he answers, with perfect composure. He is in for it, and may as well have it out. "I offered you a boy's senseless passion, and you very properly refused it. You threw me over and married Sheldon, a much better fellow. For that sort of thing, there is no resurrection. As to the rest—my uncle's fortune, and so on, I don't regret its loss. As Mr. Longworth's heir presumptive I was simply good for nothing, as a hard working editor I flatter myself I am good for something. That mad thirst for gold which some men possess I never felt, and never shall, and, like the rest of mankind, I compound 'for the sins I am inclined to, by damning those I have no mind to.' I happen to be one of the people to whom money is not the chief end and aim of life, to whom their art would be dear though it kept them beggars. It is exceedingly kind of you, of course, to think of me in this way, and regret the past for my sake; but you need not—for I never do. You see in me a perfectly satisfied man, content with to-day, not asking too much of to-morrow, and never, never for an instant wishing to recall yesterday. We will always be good friends and cousins, I hope, Totty; more than friends—never again."

CHAPTER XII.

LONGWORTH'S IDYL.

His face had shown very little feeling of any sort, as he stood leaning against the honeysuckle-wreathed pillar of the porch and rejected a woman, but this impassiveness has grown with him a second nature. But at least the brief interview has banished all present desire for sleep.

He seats himself before the open window, elevates his boots on the sill, tilts back his chair in genuine Yankee fashion, kindles the inevitable cigar, without which he can neither write nor think, and prepares to introspect himself.

Here in this quiet room, with all the house at rest around him, the low, murmurous sound of the water lapping the shore, the slipping of a branch, the tremulous twitter of a bird in its nest, innumerable sounds of silence alone to be heard, ten years of his life slip away, and he is back in the gallant and golden days of his youth, hopeful, high-hearted, enthusiastic, twenty-two, and in love.

The broad expanse of the starlit bay fades from before him; a Southern landscape, steeped in the fire of an April sun, takes its place. He sees the long white Georgian mansion, with its piazzas, its open doors and windows, the cotton fields afar off, with the negroes at work, the "quarters," a miniature village, where his Uncle Longworth's people live.

It is a fair picture, a noble domain—one day to be all his own. As a boy, orphaned and nearly destitute, his rich and childless uncle, who all his life had held himself aloof from his family and every domestic tie, absorbed heart and soul in the hot pursuit of gold, came forward and took him to his home. To his heart as well, such heart as his lifelong worship of Mammon has left him. He was a handsome lad, and gallant, brave, high-spirited, self-willed, full of generous impulses, rash to recklessness, but with a heart as tender and nearly as easily touched as a girl's.

And, best of all, with the God-fearing principles of a gentle and loving mother so deeply implanted that neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil (and all three battle hard in his life of ease and self-indulgence under his uncle's roof) could ever wholly eradicate them. He was truthful to an extreme, open and frank as the day, with a temper as sunny and nearly as hot as the cloudless Southern weather.

In short, a youth so unlike in all things the grave, self-repressed man of thirty, that in looking backward he might well wonder what had become of that old impetuous self.

Laurence Longworth was a nephew