

"Yes, the tea bell rang some minutes ago, but Beulah had not quite finished her chapter, and I would not interrupt."

As they walked on to the dining-room, he said:

"You two are going to church, I suppose?"

"No, I shall remain with you," answered his wife, gently.

"You need not, my dear. I will go with you, if you prefer it."

Beulah did not look up, but she knew that true-hearted wife was unspeakably happy; and understood why, during tea, she was so quiet, so unwontedly silent.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"I wish Hartwell would come home, and attend to his business," muttered Dr. Asbury, some weeks later; and as he spoke, he threw his feet impatiently over the fender of the grate, looking discontented enough.

"He will come, sir; he will come," answered Beulah, who sat near him.

"How do you know so well, child? Why do you suppose he will come?" asked the doctor, knitting his bushy grey eyebrows.

"Perhaps, because I wish it so very much; and hope and faith are nearly allied, you know; and perhaps more than this—because I have prayed so long for his return."

She sat with her hands folded, looking quietly into the glowing grate. The old man watched her a moment, as the firelight glared over her grave, composed face, and tears came suddenly into his eyes.

"When Harry Hartwell died (about eighteen months since) he left his share of the estate to Guy. It is one of the finest plantations in the State, and for the last three years the crops have been remarkably good. The cotton has been sold regularly, and the bulk of the money is still in the hands of the factor. Yesterday I happened to pass the old house, and rode in to see how things looked; positively, child, you would scarcely recognize the place. You know the Farleys only occupied it a few months; since that time it has been rented. Just now it is vacant, and such a deserted looking tenement, I have not seen for many days. As far as I am concerned—"

Here a servant entered to inform the doctor that he was wanted immediately to see one of his patients. He kicked off his slippers, and got up, grumbling:

"A plague on Guy's peregrinating proclivities. I am getting too old to jump up every three seconds, to keep somebody's baby from jerking itself into a spasm, or suffocating with the croup. Hartwell ought to be here to take all this practice off my hands."

He put on his overcoat, and went out. Beulah sat quite still for some minutes after his departure; then glancing at the clock, she started up suddenly.

"Where are you going, my dear?" said Mrs. Asbury, looking up from a letter she was writing to Helen.

"To walk."

"But Mr. Leonard is coming here this afternoon to see you; he requested me to tell you so."

"I don't want to see him."

"But, my dear, he has already called several times recently without seeing you."

"And if he had any penetration, he might see that the avoidance was intended. I am tired of his frequent visits and endless harangues, and he might see it if he chose." She looked rather impatient.

Mrs. Asbury had sealed her letter, and approaching the rug where Beulah stood, she laid her hand on her shoulder, and said gently:

"My dear child, do not think me officious, or prompted by mere idle curiosity, if I ask, do you intend to reject him?"

"Why, ma'am, I have rejected him once, and still he forces his society upon me. As to staying at home to see him, I won't do it."

Mrs. Asbury seemed surprised, and said, smilingly:

"Upon my word, Beulah, you seem fastidious, indeed. What possible objection could you find to Hugh Leonard? Why, my dear, he is the best match in the city."

"I would about as soon think of marrying the doctor's arm-chair, there."

Beulah went to her own room, and put on her bonnet and cloak. Charon very rarely attended her in her rambles; he had grown old, and was easily fatigued, and this afternoon she called to him, and they set out. It was a mild, sunny evening for winter, and she took the street leading to her guardian's old residence. A quick walk soon brought her into the suburbs, and ere long she stood before the entrance. The great central gate was chained, but the little side gate was completely broken from its hinges, and lay on the ground. Alas! this was the beginning; as she entered, she saw, with dismay, that the yard was full of stray cattle. Cows, sheep, goats, browsed about undisturbed among the shrubbery, which her guardian had tended so carefully. She had not been here since he sold it, but even Charon saw that something was strangely amiss. He bounded off, and soon cleared the enclosure of the herd, which had become accustomed to grazing here. Beulah walked slowly up the avenue; the aged cedars whispered hoarsely above her as she passed, and the towering poplars, whose ceaseless silvery