

ing. Meet me here at sunrise to-morrow morning, and I will tell you what you little dream. I am going in now."

Once more I passively suffered him to fold me to his heart—for the second time in his life, his lips touched mine, and then, gliding from his arms, I re-entered the Heronry. That evening I was happy. I resolutely closed my eyes against the shadows that hung around the morrow, and opened my heart to the joy-touches of the present. Horace never left my side, and when I sang he watched me with his dark eyes beaming through tears.

The next morning arose fair and calm. I dressed myself quickly and hastened to the trysting-place. Horace was there before me. What a joyousness there was in his greeting—surely I must wait a while to summon strength to dash it from his lips. Once more I yielded my hand to his clasp, and wandered along with him underneath the larches. The sun was just rising. The tree-tops glowed like golden arrows pointed with diamonds; the long grass knotted together, shone like a fairy tracery of brilliants, and over all the sunshine lay, broad and fair—the very smile of the gods. Its glad beams rested like a blessing on Horace Mann's chestnut hair, and the world seemed dressed in holiday robes, as if for rejoicing. And yet, amid all that beauty and glory and happiness, I walked on by his side, a crushed, downcast, and miserable woman, with a confession trembling on my lips, which would blot out from my own life all the sunlight, and send one forth, dearer than my life, out into the world, a heart-broken, hopelessly wretched man. I could not look at him—I could scarcely breathe. At last I could walk no farther. I planted my back firmly against one of the larches; I stood there, and lifted up my ghastly, miserable face, in the light of heaven's free sunshine. Horace turned and looked at me with the anguish of sickening terror in his gaze, and then he faltered, "Agnes, my Agnes, what is it?"

"Listen, Horace Mann, and I will tell you," I answered, and my voice was strangely calm. "You remember the fisherman's hut on the Cornwall lee-shore, and the wild, rude child whom you taught to read? And you remember this?" and I drew from my bosom, where I always wore it, the guinea he had given me. He took it in his hand, and looked at it.

"Yes, I remember, Agnes; but what of that? Go on—how came you by this?"

"You gave it to me, sir; for I am that Agnes Lee. Would you call me wife now?"

Brave noble heart! I could see the struggle, ere he answered, but his love triumphed.

"Yes, Agnes, I would call you wife, even now. It was your misfortune to have been cast upon the lee-shore; so it was mine. Shall I shut you out from my heart because you stayed there a longer time, my Agnes?"

Oh, I had hoped he would have spared me that last trial; but no, I must drain the bitter portion to the dregs; and so I did.

"No, Horace Mann, not your Agnes. I will never be your wife. Would you wed a ballet-dancer? You saw me upon the stage at Paris; I am Viola, the dancing girl."

"Oh, God! oh, God!" moaned that strong man, weeping like a child. "Spare me for this is bitter."

I knew then, as I had known before, that he was lost to me forever. I had *willed* that he should love me, and he *did* love me. Perhaps I might have been his wife, had I

willed that also, but I would not. Even had he wished it, out of the might of his great love, still would I have refused, for I loved him too well, too unselfishly, ever to cast his name with disgrace. At last he took me in his arms once more.

"Agnes," he said, "my own, my beautiful—God knows I would have gone down gladly to my death, rather than live and know that fate had put this stern and terrible barrier between us. Oh, may Heaven bless thee, Agnes, and save thee from grief like mine;" and down over my face, fell like rain the bitter scalding tears of that proud man's mighty sorrow.

That day I left the Heronry. The purpose, to which I had vowed my life, was accomplished, and even in the hour of its accomplishment, its curse came with it. Better far that I had died, than brought such sorrow to him, so noble, so dear. And yet I danced that winter better than ever. The smile that curled my red lip was as bright—the bloom died not from my cheeks, nor the light from my eyes. Still the world's homage fell upon my ear, and even the noble and the gifted knelt at the feet of the beautiful dancing girl. Very often the Lady Clara Emerson was among my audience, but I never knew whether she recognized in Viola the Miss Lee she had met at the Heronry. I thought her cheek was a little paler than of old, and I believe some of the old hatred toward her crept out of my heart, and in its place stole in a gentle sympathy.

I heard of Horace Mann upon the Continent, and amid all heart poverty and wretchedness, my life had one crowning glory—I *knew* he loved me.

CHAPTER V.

It was toward the close of the second winter, after I had parted with him, at the Heronry. I was no longer a ballet-dancer. With the departure of him I loved, came a full conviction that hereafter I *had* no private life to make rich, that I must give all to the world; and I commenced to sing, and was now *prima donna* of Her Majesty's Theatre.

It was almost the last night of the season; I had gone to the green-room with a heavy weight upon my heart, but I had shook it off, and perhaps, sung even better than usual. At last the audience dispersed, and going down by the private entrance I stepped into my carriage, but seeing the outline of a manly form upon the seat, I was about to spring back and summon my servants to my assistance, when a voice I had heard in the dreams of many a night, whispered, "Agnes?" I called "Home!" to the driver and sat down. As the carriage turned, the gas-light flashed full in my companion's face. I could scarcely restrain a shriek of surprise. Horace Mann had changed so, I could scarcely recognize him.

"You are surprised, Agnes," he said gently, "at the work trouble has done. Never mind, I shall only be at rest the sooner. I don't know what made me come to seek you, Agnes, this night, of all others. I am to be married to-morrow. I came home, and found that Clara had suffered terribly. She did not know that I had ever loved another; but my long continued attentions to her had won her heart, and upon my desertion the whole joy and hope of her life seemed to pass away. My heart smote me, when I looked upon her pale face, and I resolved to make what reparation I could, by giving her my hand, and what of life remains."

He paused, but I felt that my voice was

full of tears—I said nothing, and continued, "Agnes, I know your strength of love, but your frame is strong, too; perhaps, you will suffer more than I, but you will live longer. I want you to promise me something, will you; I will send for you when I am dying, and I want you to come. Will you come, Agnes, wherever you are? Will you promise me to come?" And putting my hand in his, I answered, "I will come!" and it was to both our souls as if an oath had been spoken.

Reader, I saw Horace Mann once more. Three years had passed, and I was rich. I had left the stage, and was residing on my own estate, a lovely villa in the south of France. I was scarcely more than twenty, and still beautiful, though trouble had wrought many a thread of silver in my jetty hair. I think my taste must have been tropical; you might have fancied my *boudoir* the abode of a Sultana. A fountain of perfumed waters danced and sparkled in its marble basin, in the centre. A glass door opened into a small but choice conservatory, where grew the Indian aloe, with its broad green leaves; and gay tropical birds plumed their wings on the whispering boughs of the Eastern palm. Tiny, graceful, little streams, flowed amid thick mossy grass, and 'neath the Eastern trees, half hidden in the foliage, stood groups of marble statuary, that you might have dreamed were Fauns and Hamadryks, the guardian spirits of the scene. Around the walls of my favorite room I had hung a few pictures, small but choice; they were mostly woodland landscapes, with here and there one of Claude Lorraine's Italian sunsets, or a head by Perugino. On the other floor were rich, heavy nettings from the far famed looms of the Indies; and lounges and cushions of Genoa velvet, in crimson and purple, were scattered around. On one of these I lay reading, and listlessly winding around my fingers my unbound hair, when my favorite waiting maid, entering the apartment, handed me a letter. I recognized the hand, and my fingers trembled as I broke the seal, it was long and closely written, but I will copy it all here. It ran thus:

"Agnes, my soul's own Agnes:

"Many months have passed since last we met. Summers and winters have been braided into years, and still on my heart is your name written; not one hieroglyphic that you traced has been obliterated. Heart and soul, I am what I always have been, yours. I married Clara the next day, and I love her very much. Can you reconcile this with what I have just told you? I am yours, as I said; you, even you, my Agnes, are more to me than all, all the rest of the earth, but it is something to feel that we can make another human being entirely happy."

"I told you Clara was sorrow-struck, and drooping. Well, after our marriage, she brightened up in my presence, as a wood-flower, beaten down by the wind and rain, but yet not crushed, revives in the calm glow of the sunshine. Soon she regained her health, and I believe she grew dear to me as an own sister. My own health was failing even then, and for many weeks I was prostrated by a low, nervous fever. During all that time, she was so devoted in her attention, so patient in her tireless vigils, you would have thought her some angel sent from Heaven to guard me. And yet, Agnes, through it all, grateful as my heart was to her, it never beat with a single throbb that was not faithful to you. I loved you, you only, you always.

"For a time after my fever, I seemed to be recovering, but the cold weather brought increasing debility, and I was ordered to