

many wondered at Clare's preference for me.

Among Clare's guests were many fine-looking gentlemen, but the handsomest of them all was Gerald Hamilton, a successful and brilliant lawyer of rising reputation. From the moment of his introduction to my lovely Clare, he paid her the most devoted attention, led her into supper, danced with her alone, and when absent from her side followed her with admiring eyes. I watched them as he led her into supper. "What a nice match it would be!" whispered some one behind me, and I agreed silently with the speaker. He was tall and large of frame, a model of symmetry and strength; his magnificent head was adorned with thick and curling ebon hair; his eyes were large, dark and bright, his features perfect, his attire faultless; he looked and moved a gentleman,—that is, in the narrowest and most common acceptation of the word. Clare was blonde, petite, and slender. They were certainly the handsomest couple at the table. I stood near them when he bade her adieu; he stooped and reverently kissed the hand he had held so tenderly for a minute, and which she had not withdrawn, and murmured a few words in a low voice that brought a crimson flush to Clare's cheeks and brow.

After the party at Mr. Vane's followed a round of parties in honor of Miss Vane's return; of course I attended none of them, as I was never invited. During the six weeks of my vacation I saw very little of Clare—not that she ever slighted or forgot me, but her time was so much occupied with her new duties and pleasures. I went back to school to finish my last year of study. Clare wrote to me quite often; letters just like herself, gentle and graceful. I have heard that the postscript of a lady's letter always contains its most important items, and I believe it is true; for the postscripts of Clare's letters always contained her allusions to Gerald Hamilton. Thus: "O Esther, I wish you were acquainted with Mr. Hamilton, he is so noble and intelligent;" or, "I attended the opera last night; Mr. Hamilton was my escort, and the music was very fine." In due time I graduated, and was fortunate enough to secure a position as teacher in my Alma

Mater. I had not heard from Clare for a much longer time than usual, and was beginning to grow uneasy, when I received a letter from her as follow:

"DEAR ESTHER,—Come to me quickly; papa and mamma are both very sick. I need my own true friend sorely.

"YOUR OWN CLARE."

Of course I went gladly, willingly, only too glad to render her any kindness for the many she had rendered me. I found Mr. Vane almost gone, speechless and motionless from a paralytic stroke. Mrs. Vane, who had been in very delicate health for many years, was completely prostrated by her husband's sudden illness. It was thought she could not rally, and I believed I saw the shadow of the wings of the Angel of Death upon her pale face. Poor Clare's grief was pitiable, but she tried to bear it bravely, weeping always silently and by herself. On the fourth day after my arrival, Mr. Vane breathed his last, and twenty-four hours afterwards his wife followed him to the shadowy land. I think Clare would have almost lost her reason if it had not been for the tender comfortings of her affianced husband, Gerald Hamilton. I had never really liked him before, but my dislike was completely overcome when I saw how his loving and tender sympathy comforted my poor stricken darling. Oh how she was changed! Her lovely face expressed all the mute eloquence of woe, which she could neither subdue nor conceal, but in those sorrowing days her suffering heart was visited by the Heavenly Comforter, and she realized more of the love of her Creator than she had ever done in all her gay and happy life. I stayed with her as long as I could, then left to return to my work. I had not been gone more than a month before I saw in a paper an announcement of the total failure of the bank in which all Clare's money was invested, and, in a day or two afterwards, I received a letter from herself, informing me of her loss, but she said, "I can bear this last loss with perfect composure. I have Gerald's love left, but I am sorry for his sake that I shall be a portionless bride." About a week afterwards, taking up a Boston paper, and turning as women are generally