

them, or roaming alone among them, was quite happy and light-hearted. Even her stern sisters were thawed and softened by her presence; and, I think, felt as much love for her as was in their nature to feel for any one, for, indeed, it was impossible to resist altogether her cheering influence, which spread itself over every thing around her with the warmth of sunshine.

On this evening on which our tale begins, and for some days previous to it, Gabrielle had been graver and quieter than she often was. She joined her sisters now in the common sitting-room; and, with her work in her hand, sat down beside them near the window, but she answered their few questions about her evening ramble with only feigned gayety, as though she was occupied with other thoughts, or was too weary to talk; and, presently, as the twilight gathered round them, they all sank into silence. The one window looked across the road in which the house stood, to a dark plantation of stunted trees that grew opposite: a very gloomy place, which, even in the hottest summer day, had always a chill, wintry feeling, and from which even now a damp air was rising; and entering the open window, was spreading itself through the room.

"How unlike a summer evening it is in this room!" Gabrielle suddenly broke the silence by exclaiming almost impatiently. "I wish I could, even for once, see a ray of sunshine in it. I have often wondered how any one could build a house in this situation."

"And do you never imagine that there are people who care less for sunshine than you do, Gabrielle!" Bertha asked, rather sadly.

"Yes, certainly, sister; but still it seems to me almost like a sin to shut out the beautiful heaven's sunlight as it has been shut out in this house. Winter and summer it is always alike. If it was not for my own bright little room upstairs, I think I never should be gay here at all."

"Well, Gabrielle, you need not complain of the gloominess of this room just now," Miss Vaux said. "At nine o'clock on an August evening, I suppose all rooms look pretty much alike."

"Oh, sister, no!" Gabrielle cried. "Have you never noticed the different kinds of twilight? Here, in this house, it is always winter twilight, quite colourless and cold, and cheerless; but, in other places, where the sun has shone, it is warm, and soft, and beautiful; even for an hour or longer after the sun has quite set, a faint rosy tinge, like a warm breath, seems to rest upon the air, and to shed such peace and almost holiness over every thing. That was the kind of twilight, I think of it so often, that there used to be at home. I remember, so very, very long ago, how I used to sit on the ground at my mother's feet in the summer evenings, looking out through the open window at the dear old garden, where every thing was so very still and quiet that it seemed to me the very trees must have fallen asleep, and how she used to tell us fairy stories in the twilight. Sisters, do you remember it?" Gabrielle asked, her voice tremulous, but not altogether, so it seemed, with emotion that the recollection had called up.

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