

a summons home. In consternation Edith obeyed. Sickness such as she had never witnessed before greeted

her arrival; yet with wonderful presence of mind the girl took her place

beside her mother's bed and listened

to the delirious ravings in which her

own name was constantly reiterated. One week did the sufferer linger after

her daughter reached her, but that one week wrought an afarming change in Edith. In those long hours of strainer

attention to the outpourings of a bur-

dened spirit she had learned a secre

which crushed hope and happiness ou

of her young breast. Did the nurse suspect the truth, she often wondered, but that professional seemed to give

no heed to anything her patient said, and often dozed through the hours of

the night when the most distinct utter

Her father, pressed with basiness, was not at the bedside for any length of time till the end came. Indeed, hus-

pand and wife had become estranged

and though he did grieve after a fash-ion, Mr. Norton was cold and unsym-

pathetic by nature. After the funeral he withdrew within himself, and his

daughter was left to find what conso-

made again of school, and Edith would

servants reported that they believed their young lady was going crazy; she hardly ate anything and seldom smiled

or spoke, but shut herself up alone in her room and brooded over her loss.

Several ladies took the liberty of speak-

ing to Mr. Norton about his daughter's health, advising change of air and scene. The result was that about six

months later he wrote to his sister in Georgia, asking permission to place

Edith under her care for a while, to which he received a warm response in the affirmative. But the favorable moment to interpose a helping hand had passed. The foundation had been

laid for a morbid nature such as years

of brighter influences might never be able to counteract. The love of soli-

tude had become a mania with the poor

child, and it was only after bitter pro-test that she yielded to her father's

wishes and set out upon her Southern

Of the new life to which she was

going she was entirely ignorant. Her relatives were complete strangers, ex-

cept for the vague memory of having once seen her aunt, a slight, delicate woman who had won her childish

fancy by the fascinating mystery of

meeting any one, so sensitively con-scious was she of that one terrible fact

be enveloped as by a shadow from the

knowledge, totally unprepared to meet with life in any form, but possessed of an impressionable nature, sensitive feelings, an impulsive heart and a vivid

imagination, the most dangerous gift that can be bestowed upon a young,

unsophisticated and beautiful woman.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.

As the train quickened its speed the

strained tension of each nerve relaxed,

and though her figure remained pas-sive her eyes rested with more interest in their pensive gaze upon the dark-ened landscape without, where the glimmering lights of the city were re-

lected in the still waters of the Ohio

pository, a secret whose weight no child should have been doomed to bear,

Now and then she would close her

Now and then she would close her eyes as if to shut out memory.

And so the night deepened, and she watched with curiosity the preparations for repose; then stillness fell upon the shrouded car—she, too, had retired to one of the curtained berths, to the curvalen by the hour.

He awake by the hour, for it was long ere her eyelids began to droop from fatigue, though there was nothing to be seen in the darkness without but

the glimmer of stars frequently ob-scured by a rush of smoke from the

engine past her narrow window.

At Booneville, Ky., the first station

chamber of Death,

her black dress and widow's veil.

ation she might in the dreary house haunted by memories of its re-cent scene of horror. No mention was

levotion to sorrow which was

inces were made.

[Copyright by The Century Press Co.] CHAPTER I.

A PARTING AND A SECRET. "Train for the south." The words varied meaning upon the ears of those assembled in little groups in the ladies' waiting-room of the Central Depot at Westerly, O. To some it was the signal of departure and separation, to others a warning that their time would come next; and a momentary hush en-sued such as ever attends a similar

announcement by night where numbers are waiting in breathless expectation. To a disinterested observer it would have been amusing to note the effect of these few words and to follow it through all its stages from the subdued bustle commencing in the ladies' room, increasing in volume in the adjoining apartment, where footsteps rejoining apartment, where footsteps re-sounded on the pavement after the muffling of the carpets, on through the different divisions of the depot, till the noisy confusion culminated beyond the railing where the hissing locomotive stood ready to depart. Among the stood ready to depart. Among the crowd pressing towards the sleepers of the southern-bound train was an elderly gentleman, accompanied by a young girl, who clung to his arm, evidently bewildered by the noise, as her eyes were dazzled by the numerous lights of the depot. Her unconscious beauty, added to an air of unsophistically added to a granuage charms. cated simplicity, shed a refining charm even over her common-place guardian, as with a haughty swinging gait he as with a haughty swinging and he forced his way regardless of whom he inconvenienced. His daughter's nervous shrinking seemed a source of any noyance to the bustling gentleman, and having hurried her into the car he seemed anxious to avoid as far as possible any scene at parting. He was not a man of many words, and it was only directions about her journey that he was addressing to the girl as she sat with her hands clenched tightly together and looking up into his face with eyes that seemed to plead against the inevitable. When the last moment came and the warning cry. sounded outside, she started to her feet, the tears she had resolut ly kept back burst forth, and she threw her arms about his neck with more demonstration of affection than she had ever dared to express towards her stern father before. Mr. Norten was both surprised and touched. He sooth-



ed her with a tenderness quite foreign to his rude nature, and for one sweet

moment of mutual understanding both realized what they might have been to each other had the one been less unbending and severe, the other less timid and fearful. It was too late now, and with one fond embrace Mr. Norton hastened from the moving train.

Ten minutes later the heavy doors of the depot swung behind him and he stood once more in the street, no trace of sorrow on his broad countenance, which had regained its habitual hard expression, and he was again to outward view the cool, calculating banker, one of the richest men in West-erly. But as he settled back in the which was conveying him to his lonely mansion his forehead contracted more than once with a troubled expression, and he ran his fingers through the thin gray locks of hair that shaded his brow as if in doubt or perplexity.

Perhaps the distressing memory of the
manifold changes that had occurred in
his household during the past few months, culminating in the death of his wife and separation from his only daughter, called that look of trouble to his brow; or perhaps the thought of some disagreeable business transac-

to harassed him.

Meanwhile the train was pulling slowly out of the depot and the young girl had sunk into a despondent attitude, her head resting upon her hand, and the sweet face wore an expression of sadness, of premature thoughtfulness painful to behold. No exciting anticipations of travel or interest in the present novelty of her situation broke the still repose of What deep affliction cher so, or had she we that solemn look from infancy?

Edith Norton had been sent to boarding school at an early age, and rarely visited her home during the holidays. Her knowledge of her parents was an rather than one founded upon fact. Of her father she stood in

on fact. Of her rather she stood in awe because of the quick temper and loud voice which he had displayed oc-casionally in her presence, while the vision of her mother, a fashionable sofloated before her imagiciety woman, floated before her imaginative fancy like a fairy princess in full evening dress. Perhaps some inti-mation from an unhappy past over-shadowed the child. For often in the det of play or when engaged upon dally lessons, a dark, intangible

nearer approach that his real youth be-came apparent. He passed down the car, once more peopled with wide awake passengers, with an air of utter indifference to their existence, and on taking his place among them drew a newspaper from his pocket and glanced up and down its sheets, then threw it from him and let his eyes wander vacantly up and down the aisle. Presently they fell upon the figure of the young girl two seats in advance of himself, on the opposite side, and were arrested in involuntary admiration. Something in the pretty admiration. Something in the pretty drooping figure, the deep, sad eyes, stirred a latent chord in his heart, which vibrated responsive to the touch; the bitter expression of his countenance relaxed; he watched her with increasing interest entiting syreastically at ing interest, smiling sarcastically a himself meanwhile that he could be exceedingly earnest and studious; and her teachers, though they pronounced her a very imaginative child, were sat-isfied with her mental development. She had just passed her seventeenth birthday when her peaceful life re-ceived its first shock. The sudden himself meanwhile that he could become absorbed in any human being; yet the appearance of this girl was so unlike the ordinary finished young lady of the day that he found himself conjecturing what had been the tenor of her past life, where she was going, who were her friends, and especially why she should be thus unprotected and alone. news of her mother's dangerous illness arrived at the school together with

The rapid through route had brought them much further on their way in crossing Tennessee; and all day long the stranger kept his watch while the train was rushing at immense speed by forests of Southern trees and roaring through deep ravines, which caused the windows to clatter almost deafen ingly, emerging at intervals upon some town or village, giving the traveller a flying glimpse of order and civilization, occasionally affording him also a faroff vista of mountains as the landscape shifted its various shades of scenery. It was evening when their swift, even progress réceived a sudden check. There came a succession of jerks, as if efforts were being ineffectually made to slacken speed; the cars jarred spas-modically, then closed in a precipitate cessation of motion. No harm, however, seemed to result from this inlooked at each other in bewildered as-

ngruous course of action. People tonishment. An instant of dead silence, as if awaiting the anticipated calamity; then a general commotion en sued. The car in which Edith was seated was quickly vacated, the stranger alone maintaining an unruffled tran-quility. After casting a rather con-temptuous glance upon the prevalent excitement, he, too, rose and walked to the door, cool and collected as if by intentional contrast, to gratify his own contained curiosity.

have repelled the suggestion had it been made. All offers of friends to come to them for a short time were Meanwhile Edith had become ex tremely nervous in her isolation, timidity and her wonted self-control preventing her from seeking relief to her rejected with a pathetic dignity and pitiful People commented that the serious anxiety. She had watched the crowds mournfulness which settled down uphurrying past her window in increason her face was not natural in one ing alarm; and as the stranger re-enso young, especially for a relative whom she had scarcely known. The



"Don't go," she said. tered he accidently caught the fright ened glance she cast upon the deserted car. For a moment he hesitated, then approached and accosted her. "Excuse me," he said apologetically,

"but there is no cause for alarm now."
A freight train has been wrecked on the opposite track, and the debris are such as to prevent our progress."
Edith raised a startled glance to his picture formed by memory was a pleasing one, but the girl shrank from face, mingled surprise and gratitude at being thus addressed depicted on by which her existence would always And thus she was moving forward into the world of experience a child in

every feature.

A diffidence peculiarly characteristic of the man prompted him to bow him-self away after the bare announcement to ease her mind, though inwardly de lighted at the opportunity of speaking to her. He was moving irresolutely, when she raised a tremulous hand in protest.

"Don't go," she said; then checked herself, ashamed of her fear or the re-

"Certainly not," he returned, smiling, well pleased by the unconventional, child-like appeal to his protection.

"You are too nervous to be left alone.
We have both been entirely deserted, and might as well keep each other com pany," he continued easily, in the en-deavor to alleviate her blushing con-"But there is no danger, I assure you. The worst we have to fear is inconvenience, as the accident may necessitate our remaining here all fusion. "I don't know what is the matter

River. Every association with what had been home for the past six months was being left behind, she felt, forever, but not that awful secret of which her breast had become the repository. with me," she said, putting her hand to her head and trying to laugh at her previous alarm. child should have been doomed to bear, a tale of suffering and remorse, of which the recital would have left a fasting impression upon mature years without its inevitable consequence, that stain upon her birth which no tears could ever wash away. "A little faint perhaps," he suggest-l, reassuringly. "Very natural after ed, reassuringly. "Very natural after the shock you have sustained. Sup-pose you try the fresh air? Would you like to see the wreck?" "Have you seen it?" she asked, try-

ing to overcome her inclination to cry. "Not yet, but I am sure it must quite an interesting spectacle, an op-portunity that ought not to be missed. If you will permit me I shall be pleasto accompany you to the scene

the accident It was about dusk in the evening. dull light rested upon the environing country outside, whither Edith had followed the courteous stranger in acquiescence to his proposition. The cars were upon an elevation, whose height she did not at first appreciate to the dim trilight and her companin the dim twilight, and her compan in the dim twilight, and her compan-tion's caution upon springing down that the descent was a steep one acted con-trary to his intention, for instead of trusting herself entirely to his assist-ing hands she held on with feminine perversity to the ralling, and between the double contradictory movements. wrist underwent a severe wr

At Booneville, Ky., the first station at which the train stopped on the following morning, a solitary individual entered, a tall, handsome man, with keen dark blue eyes, a high, intelligent brow, shaded by locks of shining auburn hair, regular features and a mobile mouth expressive of tenderness, yet wearing a sarcastic curve about the upper lip, as if contact with a hard, evil world, together with a withering insight into the darker side of human nature, had embittered the confiding insight into the darker side of minan nature, had embittered the confiding trust of former days, leaving him cynical and suspicious. He was young, hardly thirty, but the thick reddish beard which covered the lower part of the face gave an appearance of age at a distance, and it was not until

ed his attention to the dark object or ruin, which, ere they had proceeded many steps, loomed up through the gloom, all the more hideous and imposing in its blackness against the wild scenery of that picturesque uninhabited spot. A collision had taken place and a long line of empty freight cars, numbering about a hundred, had telescoped on the opposite track, about fifty feet in advance of the coming engine, forming a gigantic pile, while others had been thrown completely off, some strewn in fragments near by, one having been buried ten feet in the plowed ground of an adjoining field.

The first efforts were being made to clear away encumbering debris. Men

clear away encumbering debris. Men with lanterns were passing to and fro, throwing a weird illumination upon the throwing a weird illumination upon the scene, while overhead the stars were stealing forth faintly one by one. Little groups of men were assembled in various positions discussing the late event. The engineer, so it was reported, on looking out had beheld the demolished train and put the brakes on just in time to prevent his own engine from plunging into the ruins. Had there been any dilatory conduct on his there been any dilatory conduct on his part no human power could have pre-vailed to avert a fearful catastrophe. The men wore sober faces; and, awed by the object of horror and the recent proximity of danger, Edith stood gaz-ing silently before her, while her companion regarded her observantly.

There was something so unusual, so

unceremonious about this chance acquaintance that he found himself enjoying the situation immensely, and, ere he knew it, was engaged explainting to her scientifically the cause of the accident and guiding her steps among trucks, wheels and one vast mass of confusion to obtain closer inspection of the wreck, charmed by the unstudied pleasure she evinced in his company and her intelligent appreciation of the information he co

To the girl it was so novel an experience to find any one taking special interest in her that she shared his willingness to prolong their stay together, and long after most of the passengers had retired fully satisfied with their investigations she lingered in the open air at his request, pleased by the gentle touch of protecting care

he bestowed upon her.

Perhaps a sense of the sublime, a recognition of the mutual emotion of awe and reverence in the presence of some external force, or the result of its operations stirring in the breasts of both, had joined them for the hour by

a bond of sympathy. Whatever it was actuating him, he felt as if she held some claim upon him; and after their return to the train it hardly needed her timid yet gracious reception of the refreshment he brought her to induce him to wheel over the back of the opposite seat and enter into a tete-a-tete conversation.

"This is the first time you ever trav elled alone?' he said significantly, as if to remind her he acted upon her own invitation in continuing to keep her company.

"The first time I ever travelled at all," she assented naively.
"Indeed? Then it must be quite novel and interesting affair." "I don't know," she answered wear ily, the weight which his entertaining converse had temporarily dispelled from her mind returning at this per-sonal allusion, and a shadow flitted

over her face which puzzled him.

"Let me see your wrist," he said presently, observing a movement of the left hand, accompanied by the contraction of her brow, and connecting the pain in her face with physical suffering; "I am sure you were more hurt than you let me see."
"Oh, no," she cried, drawing back from him.

"But I am a doctor," he urged, "and acknowledged as rather imperative by my own family," assuming the attitude of treating her like a wilful little

the still continued to resist his in spection of the hurt, saying defensive y, "I rather like it." He looked at her, wondering if ca price actuated this behavior; but the sincerity in the earnest eyes mystified him no less than the succeeding words: "You could remove the pain and deprive me of a pleasant diversion

fort, a great help sometimes. He regarded her now with a compassionate expression. "Child!" he said, almost unconsciously, "you are too young to have learned that truth." In speaking he had gathed possession of her hand with a persuasive authority

Physical suffering can be a great com-

she was powerless to resist after the tenderness of the last words. "Now let me make amends for my carelessness," he said cheerfully. "You have borne it heroically, but you mus not suffer longer through me."

not suffer longer through me."
She yielded passively, a convulsive sensation rising in her throat, and while she kept her eyes down watching him perform the slight operation of binding up the inflamed wrist with surgical skill, her face worked with an undefined lenging. Her payed had an undefined longing. Her nerves had been badly shattered that evening, her emotional nature deeply moved by the recent accident. She was in that un-governed mood when the heart would

speak without consulting reason.

Something there was in his winning gentleness that inspired confidence. gentleness that inspired confidence. She wanted to tell him that she was unhappy, not that she desired to reveal her past history, but to speak of grief indefinitely and elicit another compassionate glance from the expressive blue eyes. (It is a curious fact of our manifold humanity that we are often prompted to speak to an utter stranger, those intimate feelings which those who know us best could never win.) By the time he released her hand however, her good sense had conquered the unreasoning, unsolicited impulse, and she only thanked him, but

in a voice that went to his heart. They finally separated for the night more than ever pleased with each other's society, the brief study of char-acter he had pursued having made an impression upon the doctor's mind which remained with him long after which remained with the meconfortable of a railway carriage. Why si long forgotten feelings which he believed dead wake and stir w believed dead wake and stir within him with such sweet force? What charm did the face of that girl possess to kindle interest in one who had learned to ignore mankind? Pshaw! It was but the illusion of imagination, a dream of his boyhood under the lamp light which the dawn of day would

first impressions. And she was there in her old place. The dream of the night was continued, refusing to be banished.

After the morning greeting and congratulations that they were once more in motion were exchanged (the task of clearing the track having been accomplished during the night), he was conscious that there was a constraint between them that had not before existed. Perhaps the noise of the cars there was a constraint between them that had not before existed. jarred the free interchange of thought; perhaps a covert design on his part to elicit some information in relation to her family or home rendered her more

"You are a brave little girl," he pro nounced suddenly aloud, breaking a silence that might have proved awk-ward. "I watched you last night when our danger was discussed, and you

only turned a trifle paler at the thought of imminent death." "There are some things worse that



Viewing the Wreck. death," she said with a slight shuoder, little aware what a revelation her knowledge and experience in life she was betraying.
"I was thinking all night," she con-

tinued, "how soon it might all have been over. One wrench and there would have been an end of it all." "An end of what?" he querried soft-"Of all the wretchedness of life.

There is so much trouble. Do ned know I watched the people all day yesterday, wondering how many of them were concealing an aching heart, and I found that trouble was written on all their faces. Yes, every one, for I studied them all."

"So that is what you were doing?" he said, half amused, half pained at this pathetic occupation of a young girl in classifying humanity under the genus of suffering. "I should like to hear your method of analysis." "Oh, I haven't any," she interrupted

bashfully. "It was only something to keep my mind off myself." He was looking at her now with the same commiseration in his face that she had coveted so the preceding day, and like one in a reverie she continued: "I suppose there is a certain amount to be borne by us all. It might as

well be one sort as another."

"No, it need not necessarily be borne," he said between his set teeth, as though the meek patience of her tone roused him to combativeness.
"There is happiness in this world.
There is goodness if we but know how to seek it. What do you read in my face, now?" he broke off abruptly, and leaning towards her he looked earnest-She regarded him half shyly, half

"You are good," she said simply. He drew back as if she had inflicted a wound, shrinking as from unde served praise at the innocent verdice he had so unwittingly elicited.
"No, I am not good," he said. "You must not believe that. I would not

have you. But that was not the question for which I submitted my face to examination," he added more cheer-"Oh. yes." she said with sudden em

barrassment from the almost distress-ing confusion she had occasioned him; "Oh, yes; it shows trouble like all the rest. "Does it?" he responded with a bit-

ter laugh, passing his hand over his brow. "Well, I guess I have been knocked about the world a little, but I don't allow it to depress me. I throw "How can you do it? I wish you

"How can you do it? I wish you would teach me how—how to forget."

She spoke eagerly, looking up with an appealing countenance. He moved uneasily under her inquiring, earnest eyes. "You are too young to know sorrow that requires to be crushed by personal force," he said. "At all events I am not the one to guide you in anything. Perhaps you will find something there to help you," and drawing out a pocket edition of Wordsworth's boems he placed it in her worth's poems he placed it in her hands and rising abruptly, left her. The trusting look of the young face asking him for instruction smote him like a reproach; and passing out into the smoking car he lit a cigar to dis-pel disagreeable reflections and while away the time.

And the girl turned to the title page of the book and bent over the name inscribed there; "Dudley S. Egerton."
"Beautiful name," she mused, and let the book fall, recalling with pleaslet the book fall, recalling with pleasurable emotions each word, each gesture, each look of the handsome stranger whose presence had broken in upon her desolate loneliness. It was sweet to meditate upon, and the volume of poetry lay neglected while she indulged her first day dreams of romance. Time passed, and the country had changed considerably since early morning. considerably since early morning They were sweeping past endless for ests of pine trees now, impressing the mind with an infinite idea of monot ony, and in the prolonged absence of her newly found comforter the old her newly found comforter the old feelings of despondency were threat-ening to return. She dropped her head on her hand. The door slamming for the sixth time during that hour did not sound upon her ears above the din of the cars, and it was sot till a deep, clear voice spoke beside her that she started.

asked Dr. Egerton, and his eye rested at the title page at which she had held

"The next station," he assented tone, as if to himself: "I hope you are going among happier influences than your young life nas known hitherto."
"Perhaps it might not be as well for me," she answered. "Maybe trouble is good for people. I am going among strangers, and I do not see much charce of happiness."
"Study them," he suggested with a hright smile, "and my best wishes attend your metaphysics. Little one," he added abruptly, "I want to thank you for asking me to stay. You made me think to-day, and I have enjoyed

me think to-day, and I have enjoyed our conversation—our little aside on the current of human life. These moments are not frequent, and let me warn you that you will not find many who will care to indu'ge in them.

"You are young and inexperienced; you are craving sympathy and kindness. With your impulsive tempera-ment, ere you are aware you will dis close more than you desire, more than you can ever recall. Beware whom you trust. Take the advice of one who knows the world. I have found it best not to wear my heart on the outsid-

by sad experiments."

She looked down abashed, accepting his warning as reproof. "I don't talk much," she said deprecatingly. "I don't know how it was I was led to say all Ldid today." say all I did to-day."

"Don't be uneasy," he returned. "I am not of those against whom I warned you. I like to philosophize a little once in a while. God forbid," he continued with increasing fervor, "that I should betray the faith you repose in me. You don't know how you moved me, child, when you called me good. I have not heard the hint of such a thing in years, and that a pure your soul should read the possibility of goodness in this careworn, hardened face ought to be enough to make a man better the rest of his life. Don't let new surroundings spoil you," he added tremulously; "you are too lovely

just as you are."

He ceased, and both were silent with intense feeling. The shrill shriek of the engine, a hoarse voice calling in the door "Dayton," and Egerton drew to gether the courage that had been slow-

ly forming to make a request.
"Little friend," he said, "I shall retain this day long in remembrance as one bright spot in an otherwise gloomy life. Something tells me we shall meet again; but if I should be mistaken, let the memory at least have a definite association. I beg pardon for the liberty, but may I have your name?"

He drew from his pocketbook a card and presented it to her with his pen-cil. She took it nervously and wrote in trembling characters, "Edith Norton," scarce knowing what she did.

He was gone and in a dream she rose and followed the conductor from the car.

To be Continued.

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