

"Do you know Letty," she said, "poor Rupert heard all the hard things I said of him in my blind pain that night? But he has forgiven me for every one of them," she added, softly. "All our married life we had been like strangers to each other, cold and proud; but now all that is over and done with forever. We know each other, at last."

Her face brightened with its old radiant smile; and Rupert Ray, coming into the room at that moment, saw it, and smiled back, as I had used to think he never could have smiled. "No more confessions, Ruth," he said.

She blushed rosily, as any shy girl might, and half-sighed as she looked up at him.

"I have no more to make, Rupert," she replied "except that I have been very blind all these years, and very thankless."

Blind and thankless! From how many hearts among us might not the same cry arise! Blind we too often are to the great joys lying at our feet; thankless, cruelly thankless, for the love and the care and the full heart-store lavished upon us. It would be well for us if our plea were always met by the same loving-kindness and patient long-suffering, strong to endure and to forgive, that our Ruth read in her graced husband's eyes that day.

When our charge was over and done with, and Ruth was looking her bright self again, the two, husband and wife in heart as well as in nature now, left us, and went back to their city home. Then the little gray stone house fell back into its accustomed quiet.

Reading the merry, piquant letter, brimful of joy and content, that Ruth sent to us on her arrival at home, my father pushed his glasses back and looked at my Aunt Janet.

"Did I not tell you, Jenny, it would do Ruth good to have Letty with her? Something seemed urging me to let the child go, and I am thankful now, more than words could tell, that I yielded to it."

"Still John, as I said then I say now,—it was a risk."

"Letty has come back to us: our own Letty still, Janet."

"She might not have done so."

"Might not," said my father, thoughtfully. "Our lives are ever full of those mysterious 'might not's' and 'might have beens.' Let us be thankful that things are as they are. We have our own girl here—unchanged."

Was I. No: the same girl I never could be—never had been, from the time that a certain pair of blue eyes, and a tangle of fair golden hair stole my heart away during those quiet days that I kept Ruth company in her grand city home. The world called the owner of the blue eyes and the fair curls, Gordon Shaw, partner in my cousin Rupert's business; but I called him—my love. My own he was, and I knew it. I knew, too that a long letter was shortly coming to tell my father all about it. And when the letter came, and immediately after the letter, the writer of it, eager to enforce his claim, my father, as usual, looked to Aunt Janet for counsel in the emergency; and I looked, too, expecting not counsel but reproof.

We got neither; only my quiet, stately aunt seemed to lose her voice for a second, as she softly smoothed my hot cheeks, and smiled on me through a mist of tears.

"She must have left us some day, John; I think she has chosen well," she said, when the mist had cleared, and her usual calm had come back to her.