

which showed itself at times, in spite of her mocking tongue? This, I thought, will unfold as she grows to fuller womanhood, and all her lightness will be softened down by time. After all, it was better that she should be thus; with that strong consciousness of being and quick perception of what life is, than stung with finer notions that are quickly jarred and broken by experience.

This new hope in my life had already wrought some changes in my character. I was no longer locked up in one purpose—a mischief to the spirit, though that purpose were the purest and the best. I looked up, and saw that there were others in the world, besides myself, hoping, toiling, and enduring. I made good resolutions for the future, to bar out selfishness as far as in my power; and, conscious of change for the better in my nature, I felt, as it were, new life within me. What wonder, then, that I came to love her, more and more, and blessed her secretly.

Yet my pride remained. I saw her many times and walked with her; and, finding her still changeable—shifting from mockery to seriousness—from irony to tenderness, a hundred times, I kept my love still shut up in my heart. I dreaded the moment when I should open my lips and tell her, as the ending of our friendship; and I waited, waited for a change that did not come.

In the winter of that year my father died suddenly. It was a little before Christmas, and the snow was on the ground. I sat and watched, all night, and heard the carol-singers in the street, and wept. For days I walked about the darkened rooms and thought of my past life, and grieved for many things that could not then be changed. Some days after the funeral I was sitting in the shop alone, when I heard a tapping at the door, and looking up, saw Alice through the glass. I rose and opened the door, and she came in. There was a change in her manner. She shook my hand when I offered it, and sat looking at me in silence for some moments.

"I have passed here many times this week," she said; "but I did not like to knock before."

She sat and talked with me for some time, without mentioning my father; but, by her tone and manner, soothing me. She came again, some days after, and this time I did

not hear her knock, or open the door, but, looking up, I saw her standing in the doorway. It was getting dusk, and she was so still that I rose in wonder, half thinking that I saw a vision, such as sometimes have been seen of friends who in that moment died elsewhere. I took her hand, and led her through the shop to see my aunt. She took her bonnet off and sat with us that evening. The mystery that was about her when she entered lingered in my mind. As after earthquakes, for a while men lose their old conviction of the firmness of the earth, so when, for the first time, Death steals into a peaceful household and strikes mute one dear companion of our lives, our faith in the security of life and other habits of the mind are weakened, and give place to mysteries. I looked at her as she sat talking with my aunt, by firelight. Her face was paler than usual, and her long hair, turned back behind the ears, flowed down on either side. Never, in pictures or carved images of angels, or of women meant for types of Truth, or Charity, or Mercy, had I seen a head and face more perfect. It was then that I first thought to carve an angel with a face like hers.

When I saw Alice again she sat before me while I drew the outline of her face in chalk, and shortly after I began my task. The figure was almost the size of life. The feet were bare. The robe was girdled at the waist, and behind the hair hung down between half-folded wings. I cut the features from the drawing—something like her, but not wholly she, until I fetched her and begged her to stand before me while I carved from life. I covered up the wings so that she did not know that my figure was an angel. I told her that it was my whim to give to it her features. For several months I worked upon it afterwards. The folds of the full robe grew perfect to my eye—the curves and feathered plaits of the long wings—the flowing lengths of hair. Lastly, I retouched the face, and came again each day and touched it, till it brought her fully to my mind.

The summer had come round again, but I had begun my work in the house, and it remained there. One evening I put my tools aside and sat down to look at it. I rose and walked about it—brushed the dust and chips from round the feet and pedestal,