

much. For ever and ever. Amen." I got up fully expecting to see her, and sure enough there she was coming down the walk, singing as she came towards me. Opening the gate she led me in, saying to me with the patronizing air due to her two years seniority. "You dear little thing! what were you doing on your knees by the gate!"

With many blushes and much stammering I told her. She said nothing, but took me with her into a handsome parlor, and led me up to her lady mother.

"See, mamma," she said, "here is Esther Walton, that I have told you about so often. Can't she come to play with me every day?"

Mrs. Vane held out her hand, and drawing me kindly towards her, took a mental inventory of my qualifications, fitting me to become the playmate of her daughter, before she answered.

When she spoke she said, "Well Clare, love, we'll see." "Oh but, mamma, say yes; there's a dear good mamma," said Clare, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, and whispering in her ear, I suppose, an account of my proceedings by the gate, for she said, "Well, dear, yes, if it will please you," and so the matter was settled. I might come and see Clare in her own beautiful house every day.

Some people underrate children's capacities for enjoyment, but never was ardent lover more overjoyed at the knowledge that his love was returned, than was I at this unlooked-for happiness.

My mother, I found, was not averse to my visiting Clare, and our friendship grew with our growth, and strengthened with our strength.

And so the years sped on, bringing to the Vanes increased wealth and social importance, but no brothers or sisters to Clare; to the Waltons an increase of family, without a corresponding increase of means to support them, — so that economy became even more than formerly a perplexing and absorbing study.

When Clare was fourteen years of age she was sent away to complete her education at a first-class ladies' seminary. We parted with many tears, but Clare comforted me by promising to write to me often—a promise which, unschool-girl-like, she kept

But there was good fortune in store for me that I dared not hope for. About a year after Clare's departure for school, my father received a small legacy by the death of a distant relative.

Many grave discussions and deliberations took place between my father and mother as to the best use they could make of the godsend; till at length, with noble self-denial, they decided to lay aside the principal for a rainy day, and with the interest to give me an education that should fit me to earn my own living respectably. So it was decided to send me to Madame La Tour's seminary, the same that Clare Vane attended. Clare welcomed me with all the warmth of her loving heart, and by her friendship for me made my position far more pleasant than it would otherwise have been; for, even though plainly dressed, with a very scant supply of pocket money, if Clare Vane favored me with her friendship, my schoolmates concluded there must be something about me worthy of notice, and I was not slighted by either teachers or scholars.

On her eighteenth birthday, Clare graduated, and her future seemed cloudless; beautiful, good, accomplished, rich in the love of a devoted father and mother, and rich in those things which most men and women prize as highly—money and a position in society. I accompanied her home to spend my vacation. A few days after her arrival at home, she made her entrée into society at a grand party given at her father's house. How lovely she looked as she stood at her mother's side to receive the guests!—her beautiful dress of azure satin, trimmed with rich white lace, harmonized so perfectly with her fair complexion, lilies of the valley in her luxuriant blonde hair and on her white bosom, and pearls around her slender throat and rounded arms. I do not wonder that she won so many hearts; she held a sovereign right based upon the claims of her beauty and goodness. She had insisted that I should attend her party, would take no excuse, and forced upon my acceptance a pretty ruby-colored silk—just the thing to suit my dark hair and eyes; but even when thus gorgeously arrayed I was only a plain, quiet-looking girl, and I know that