

that time, and now a failure that seemed to destroy the ambition of her life, all united in greatly shaking her self-confidence.

This evening, as never before, she was conscious of weakness and dependence. With the instinct of one sinking, her spirit longed for help and support. Then the thought suddenly occurred to her, "Perhaps this young stranger who so clearly pointed out the disease, may also show the way to some remedy."

But the figure had passed on. In a moment more pride and conventionality resumed sway, and she smiled bitterly, saying to herself:

"What a weak fool I am to-night. Of all things do not become a romantic Miss again."

She went to her piano and struck into a brilliant strain. For a few moments the music was of a forced and defiant character, loud, gay, but no real or rollicking mirth in it, and it soon ceased. Then in sharp contrast came a sad, weird German ballad, and this was real. In its pathos her burdened heart found expression, and whoever listened then would not merely have admired, they would have felt. One song followed another. All the pent-up feeling of the day seemed to find natural flow in the plaintive minstrelsy of her own land.

Suddenly she ceased and went to her window. The muffled figure stood in the shadow of an angle in the attitude of a listener. A moment later it vanished in the dusk toward the business part of the city. The quick footsteps died away and only the patter of the falling rain broke the silence. Christine felt sure that it was Dennis. At first her feeling was one of pleasure. His coming and evident interest took somewhat, she scarcely knew why, from her sense of loneliness. Soon her pride awoke, however, and she said:

"He has no business here to watch and listen. I will show him, with all his taste and intelligence, we have no ground in common on which he can presume."

Her father had also listened to the music, and said to himself:

"Christine is growing a little sentimental. She takes this disappointment too much at heart. I must touch her pride with the spur a little, and that will make her ice and steel in a moment. It is no slight task to keep a girl's heart safe till you want to use it. I will wait till the practical daylight of to-morrow, and then she shall look at the world through my eyes again."

CHAPTER XXXI.

DENNIS' LOVE PUT TO PRACTICAL USE.

The day following his unlucky criticism of the pictures was one of great despondency to Dennis. He read in Christine's face that he had wounded her sorely, and though she knew it to be unintentional, would it not prejudice her mind against him, and snap the slender thread by which he hoped to draw across the gulf between them the cord, and then the cable, that might unite their lives, in time?

In the evening his restless, troubled spirit drove him, in spite of the rain, to seek to be at least nearer to her. He felt sure that in the dusk and wrapped in his great coat he would not be noticed, but was mistaken, as we have seen. He was rewarded, for he heard her sing as never before, as he did not believe she could sing. For the first time her rich, thoroughly trained voice had the sweetness and power of feeling. To Dennis her song seemed like an appeal, a cry for help, and his heart responded in the deepest sympathy. As he walked homeward he said to himself:

"She could be a true artist, perhaps a great one, for she can feel. She has a heart. She has a taste and skill in touch that few can surpass. I can scarcely believe the beautiful coloring and faultless lines of that picture are her work."

He longed for a chance to speak with her and explain. He felt that he had so much to say, and in a thousand imaginary ways introduced the subject of her painting. He hoped he might find her sketching in some of the rooms again. He thought he knew her better having heard her sing, and that he could speak to her quite frankly.

The next day she came to the store, but passed him without the slightest notice. He hoped she had not seen him, and, as she passed out, so placed himself that she must see him, and secured for his pains only a slight, cold inclination of the head.

"It is as I feared," he said bitterly. "She detests me for having spoiled her triumph. She is not just," he added angrily. "She has no sense of justice, or she would not blame me. What a mean-spirited craven I would have been had I shrunk away under her taunts yesterday. Well, I can be proud too."

When she came in again he did not raise his eyes, and when she passed out, he was in a distant part of the store. Christine saw no tall muffled figure under her window again, though she had the curiosity to look. That even this humble admirer whom she cared