

surprised to learn how keen a pang the apprehension caused him. He knew that he never could have come to this apprehension had it not been through the subtle stimulus which her own magnetic nature and character had exercised upon him,—the apprehension that she would never permit him to sacrifice himself to her. He felt that if there were anything in him that could inspire her heart with love, the measure of that love would be the measure of her determination never to bind his hands in service to one who could not help but would only hinder him.

He found himself longing, too, for sympathy. He could not unveil his heart to a man. If his mother had been alive he would have spoken all his thoughts to her and rejoiced in the privilege; but he recoiled from speaking a word, even to his friend Glezen. Glezen would only say to him: "Well, my boy, if you want her, go in and win." His friend could not possibly sympathize with his experiences and apprehensions, or comprehend the depth and delicacy of his sentiment; and it would be profanation to reveal them to one who would look upon them only with the eye of a practical, business man.

So it was with a feeling of delightful relief that he heard good Mrs. Fleming say to him one evening, while they were sitting together over their tea:

"Nicholas, thee has something on thy mind. May I share it with thee?"

Nicholas did not blush. He did not hesitate. He knew that a woman could comprehend what a man could not, and he opened his whole heart to her. He told her of a thousand things he had hidden from her sight—of Miss Larkin's helplessness, of her sweetness, of her power to move and elevate himself, and of the delightful possibilities which she had opened to his thought. He was tender and enthusiastic. A boy of fifteen would not have been more so, or more confiding and unreserved.

Mrs. Fleming listened to him with the calm and sympathetic smile of one who had had a sweet experience of her own, and who took a profound satisfaction in being so frankly trusted. If she had not loved Nicholas before, she would have loved him then. He had paid to her the most grateful tribute that man can pay to womanhood—a tribute to the wisdom of her heart.

"I thank thee, Nicholas, for this," she said, and rising she went to him, and bending over him as he sat, kissed his forehead. She had not kissed him before since he was a boy. The spirit of the boy had moved her.

Resuming her seat, she said:

"Thee must follow the inner light, Nicholas. Thee must not enter into calculations, nor weigh hinderances and advantages. The Spirit cannot speak through the lips of human wisdom, for that is full of pride