QUEENIE HETHERTON.

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CHAPTER XLIX—(CONTINUED).

Occasionally, during her stay in Jacksonville, Queenie had walked slowly past the Convent of St. Joseph, speculating upon its inmates and wondering if within its walls there was not perfect rest for a heart as sad as hers, and with as little love left in it for her any living thing or human interest. Once, too, while there, she had been present at a ceremonial where three nuns took the black veil and pledged themselves to a life of self-denial and sacrifice. This scene had greatly impressed her, especially as one of the girls was very young and pretty, too, and the sister of the presiding bishop, and for weeks she remembered the sweet face and clear, musical voice which, in perfectly steady tones, had renounced the world and all its vanities, preferring to live for God and the good of all mankind. In his remarks to the trio thus giving up everything which women hold most dear the bishop dwelt at length upon the happiness and purity of a cloistered life, free from all temptation, and had spoken of that lowly home in Nazareth as the first convent, where Mary lived her holy life, with only her baby and the saintly Joseph for companions. And just here Queenie roused from her reverie, and, with a great heart-throb for her lost Phil, said to herself:

"That was different. Mary might well be happy with her baby and her Joseph; but these girls will have neither. No, I am not good enough to be a nun. I am not good enough for anything."

But now her opportunity had come, and though she did not wear the sisters' garb, she could follow the example of those heroic women who she knew went so fearlessly to Fernandina when the scourge was there, and who were busy now in Memphis, whence a second cry had come.

"Yes, I must go," she said to Axie. "Something which I cannot resist is calling me to Memphis. What it is I cannot tell, but I must go."

And so the next night the northern train for Savannah took in it Pierre and Queenie, bound for the fever smitten city where the people were dying so fast and help was sorely needed. By some strange coincidence, while Queenie was making up her mind to go to Memphis, Christine La Rue was already there. She, too, had heard the cry for help, and it roused her from the state bordering on insanity into which she was falling.

"I am going," she said, to Margery, "for I feel that I can do some good. I am not a bad nurse, and if I can save one life or ease one dying pillow, maybe it will atone to God for some of my misdeeds. I am not afraid of the fever, and if I should take it and die, better so than end my own life, as I am often tempted to do."

Her mind was made up, and Margery did not oppose her, but promised her plenty of money in case it should be needed. And so the mother and daughter were bound for the same work—the one to have something to do, the other to atone. It was a fancy of Mrs. La Rue to assume the gray dress of a lay sister, as she felt freer and safer in this garb, and could go where she pleased. It was not her wish to be hampered by any restrictions; and when the physicians saw how efficient and fearless she was, they let her take her own course and do as she liked.

Sister Christine was the name by which she was known, and many a poor dying wretch blessed her with his last breath, and commended to her care some loved one—wife, husband or child, struggling in the next room, perhaps, with the dread destroyer. Money Christine had in plenty, for Margery kept her supplied, and it was spent like water where it was of any avail, so that Sister Christine became a power in the desolated city, and was known in every street and alley of the town. Queenie had written to Margery of her intentions, and with a cry of horror on her lips Margery read the letter, and then telegraphed to Christine:

"Queenie is or will be there. Find her at once and send her away. Queenie must not die."

There was a faint smile about Christine's lips as she read the dispatch, and then whispered to herself, "No, Queenie must not die," while her pulse quickened a little as she thought what happiness it would be to nurse the fever-tossed girl, should she be stricken down, and bring her back to life and health.

"I'll find her if she is here, and keep a watch over her," she said; and two days after they met together high up in a tenement-house, where, in a dark, close room, two negro children lay dead, and the mother was dying.

Queenie was doing her work bravely and well, seeking out the worst cases, and by her sweetness and tenderness almost bringing back the life after it had gone out. Always attended by Pierre, who carried with him every disinfectant of which he had ever heard, she went fearlessly from place to place where she was needed most, but found frequently that Sister Christine had been there before her. Naturally she felt some curiosity with regard to this mysterious person, whose praises were on every lip, and also a great desire to see her.

"If she could impart to me some of her skill, I might do more good and save more lives," she said to Pierre, and there was a thought of the woman in her heart as she bent over the dying negress, wiping the black vomit from her lips and the sweat drops from her brow. "She might have saved her, perhaps," she said, just as the door opened and the gray sister came in.

Far gone as was the poor colored woman, she still had enough of sight and sense to recognize the new comer, and something like a cry of joy escaped her as she managed to say:

"Sister Christine!"

In an instant Queenie sprang to her feet, and mother and daughter stood confronting each other for a moment, neither speaking, but each looking into the other's eyes with an eager questioning look. In Christine's there was love, and tenderness, and anxiety, and fear, all blended together, while in Queenie's there was great surprise, and something like gladness, too, but with it the same old look of pride and repulsion, which Christine knew so well. Queenie, however, was the first to speak.

"Christine," she said, "Sister Christine they call you, though I never dreamed it was you, how came you here, and when?"

Christine told her how and when, and then repeated Margery's message—to find her and send her away.

"She says Queenie must not die, and I say so, too. Will you go before it is too late?" she asked, and Queenie answered her:

"No, my place is here, and I am glad you are here, too. It makes me feel more kindly toward you."

"Oh, Queenie, Queenie, God bless you for saying even so much," and the woman who had stood undaunted by many a death-bed trembled like a leaf as she snatched Queenie's hand to her lips, and then went swiftly from the room, where her services were no longer needed, for while she was speaking the negress was dead.

That night a telegram went to Margery: "She will not go away and she shall not die." So there was nothing for Margery to do but pray earnestly and unceasingly for the young girl who seemed to bear a charmed life, so fearlessly did she meet every peril and overcome every difficulty. Almost as popular as Sister Christine, she was hailed with delight everywhere, and more than one owed his recovery to her timely aid. At last, however, she began to flag a little, and was not quite as strong to endure as she had been. There were about her no symptoms of the fever; she was only tired and worn, she said to Pierre, as she sat in her room one evening. The day had been damp and sultry, and the night had closed in with rain and fog, and a darkness which could almost be felt, while the air was heavy as if laden with noxious vapors. Queenie had thrown off her street dress and put on a comfortable wrapper, when there came a quick, sharp ring, and Pierre brought her a note, or rather a bit of paper torn from a pocket tablet, and on which was written in French:

"Come immediately to No. 40——street. You are needed there." "CHRISTINE."

The handwriting was very uneven, as if penned in great excitement, and as Queenie looked wonderingly at it there swept over her an undefinable apprehension of something, she could not tell what—a feeling that this call from Christine on such a night was no ordinary call, and the need no ordinary one.

"I believe I am growing nervous myself, and that will never do," she thought, as she felt a faintness stealing over her and a kind of chill creeping through her viens, communicated, she believed, by the message she had received.

Never before had Christine sent for her, but, on the contrary, always tried to shield and spare her as much as possible from fatigue or exposure, but this "Come, you are needed," was imperative, and, with trembling hands and a strange thinking of what she was to do, she donned her usual every-day attire, and, with Pierre, started for No. 40. It was a kind of private hotel which had remained free from infection until within a day or two when the fever had suddenly broken out in its most malignant form. Two of the inmates had already died, one the wife of the proprietor, who, with his guests, had fled in dismay, leaving behind a young man who had come to the city the previous day, and who was now lying senseless in an upper chamber, where Christine had found him, burning with fever and raving with delirium. It was a very bad case, aggravated by nervous excitement and fatigue, but she had done for him what she could, and then had sent for Queenie, whom she met on the landing outside the sick-room, and to whom she explained why she had sent for her.

"He is very sick," she said, "and needs the closest watching, and I knew of no one who would be as faithful as you, for I must be elsewhere to-night. This kind of weather has increased the danger tenfold, and there is no telling where it will end."

Then she gave some minute directions with regard to the treatment of the patient who, she said, was sleeping, and must be allowed to sleep as long as possible. She seemed greatly excited as she talked, and there was a strange glitter in her eyes, and occasionally an incoherency in her manner of expressing herself, especially with regard to the sick man, which made Queenie look curiously at her, wondering if she were altogether in her right mind. When all had been said which was necessary to say, Christine still stood irresolute, as it were, looking fixedly at Queenie; then, with a sudden upward movement of her arms, she wound an arm around the young girl's neck, and kissing her forehead, said:

"God bless you, my child, and keep you, and all those whom you love, from harm."

There were bright red spots upon her cheeks, but the lips which touched Queenie were cold as ice, as was the hand which accidentally brushed Queenie's cheek. Ordinarily Queenie would have resented this liberty, but she did not now. She was too much excited to resent anything, and she was so glad afterward that it was so—glad that she had some thought and care for Christine, to whom she said, as she felt her lips and hand:

"How cold you are, and why do you tremble so? You surely must be ill. Don't go out to-night; there must be plenty of vacant rooms here. Stay and rest yourself. We cannot let you die."

She had one of Christine's cold hands in her own, chafing and rubbing it as she spoke, but when she said, so kindly, "We cannot let you die," the woman drew it away suddenly, and bursting into a proxysm of tears, exclaimed:

"Better so; better so, better for me to die; but for you, oh! Queenie, you must live—you and— Oh, my child, summon all your strength and courage; you will need it all. There is hard work ahead for you. Do you think you can meet it?"

Queenie did not know what the woman meant, but she was greatly moved and agitated, and shook from head to foot with a nameless terror.

"You, too, are cold and trembling, and that will never do. Drink—drink this," Christine said, pouring from a flask which she always carried with her a quantity of brandy, and offering it to Queenie, who swallowed it in one draught.

The brandy steadied her nerves, and after standing a moment watching Christine as she went slowly down the stairs, holding to the banisters, like one suffering from great physical weakness, she turned toward the door of the sick-room and opening it softly, went in.

CHAPTER L.

THE OCCUPANT OF NO. 40.

It was a large, handsome room—one of the best, it would seem, in the hotel—but it seemed gloomy and cheerless now, with only a night-lamp burning on the table, casting weird shadows here and there, and only partially revealing the form upon the bed—the form of a tall young man, buried in the pillow. Outside the counterpane one arm and hand was lying, and Queenie noticed that the latter was white and shapely as a woman's, and noticed, too, the mass of light brown, slightly curling hair, which clustered around the sick man's head and sent an indescribable thrill through her veins, as if something familiar—something seen before. The man was young, she knew, though she had not seen his face, and dared not see it lest she should disturb him.

"Let him sleep; it will do him good and keep back the dreadful vomit," Christine had said, and not for worlds would Queenie disobey her. She held a human life in her keeping, and with her finger on her lip to Pierre, who crouched almost at her feet, she seated herself in an arm-chair just where she could see the outline of the figure upon the bed, and there for hours she sat and watched that figure, and listened to the irregular breathing, while every kind of wild fancy danced through her brain, and her limbs began at last to feel prickly and numb, and a sense of cold and faintness to steal over her.

The air in the room was hot and oppressive, though the windows were opened wide. Outside the rain was falling heavily, and the sky as black as ink; there was no sound to break the awful stillness, except the occasional tread of some physician or nurse on duty, or the crash of distant wheels, whose meaning Queenie understood full well, shuddering as she thought of the rapid burials which the peril made necessary, and remembering what she had read of the great plague in London, where the death cart rolled nightly through the street, while the dreadful cry was heard:

"Bring out your dead; bring out your dead."

The words kept repeating themselves over and over in Queenie's mind until her brain became confused; the present faded away into the far off past, and she was one of those weary watchers in London, listening to the cry:

"Bring out your dead."

And she was bringing hers—was carrying the young man whose long limbs dragged upon the floor, and whose head drooped upon her shoulder, while his dead face, not yet cold, touched hers with a caressing motion which brought with it a thought of poor Phil, lying beneath the Indian waters.

It was a horrid nightmare, and Queenie struggled with it a moment, and then awoke with a cry of Phil upon her lips—a cry so loud that the sleeper upon the bed started a little, and moaned, and said something indistinctly, and moved uneasily, then settled again into slumber, and all was quiet as ever.

But Queenie stood erect upon her feet, rigid as a piece of marble, and almost as white, while her eyes, which seemed to Pierre to shoot out gleams of fire, were turned wildly toward the form lying so motionless across the room, with the white, shapely hand still outside the counterpane, and the light brown wavy hair upon the pillow. He had spoken—had called a name, which the excited girl had recognized as her own. She could not be mistaken. In answer to her cry for Phil the fever patient had aroused a little and responded:

"Queenie."

She was sure of it. He might not have meant her, it is true. There were other Queenies in the world, no doubt, but he had called her name—this man, who in her dream she was carrying to the death-cart, and who might, perhaps, go there when the morning dawned.

There was a clock upon the mantel, and Queenie saw that it was half-past two. The early summer morning would soon break, and then she would see the face of this stranger who had called for Queenie, and whose head and hair were so like her lost Phil's that, as she looked, with straining, eager eyes, and whirling brain, it seemed to her at last that it was Phil himself—Phil, drowned and dead, perhaps, but still Phil, come back to her in some incomprehensible manner, just to mock her a moment, and then to be snatched away again forever. But she would see him first distinctly, would know if it were a phantom or a reality lying there upon the bed within her reach, for she had advanced a few steps forward, and could have touched the head upon the pillow.

"Pierre," she said, at last, when she could endure the suspense no longer—"Pierre," and her voice sounded to herself like the echo of something a thousand miles away, "am I going mad, or is that—is that——" and she pointed to the tall figure on the bed.

Not comprehending her in the least, Pierre stared at her wonderingly, with a great fear that her mind was really unsettled by all the terrible scenes through which she had passed.

"Is it what?" he asked, coming to her side, and she replied:

"Bring the light. I must see the face of this young man. I cannot wait till morning."

"But, mademoiselle," Pierre remonstrated, "Think of the harm, the danger to him. Christine's orders were to let him sleep; he was not to be disturbed."

"Nor shall I disturb him; but I shall see him. Bring the light!" Queenie said, peremptorily, as she moved to the other side of the bed, toward which the sick man's face was turned.

Carefully pushing down the pillow, so as to bring the features more distinctly to view, Queenie stood for one brief instant gazing upon them; then, turning to Pierre, she whispered:

"Nearer, Pierre; hold the lamp a little nearer, please."

He obeyed her, and as the full rays of the light fell upon the white, pinched face of the sleeper, Queenie threw her arms high in the air, and, in a voice Pierre would never have recognized as hers, cried out:

"Oh, Pierre, Pierre! it is—it is—my Phil—come back to me again! Christine! Christine! come, and help!"

It was a loud, wailing cry, that call for Christine, and the next moment Queenie lay across the foot of the bed, where she had fallen in a death-like swoon, while over her bent Christine. She had not left the house at all, but had sat below, waiting for some such denouement when the truth should become known to Queenie.

Christine had found the young man late the previous afternoon and recognized him at once, experienced such a shock as had set every nerve to quivering, and made her feel that at last her own strength was giving way. To save him for Queenie was her great desire and, with a prayer on her lips, and a prayer in her heart, she worked as she had never worked before to allay the burning fever and quiet his disordered mind.

Once, during a lucid interval, he looked into her face, and knew her.

"Christine," he said, faintly, "where is Queenie? I came to find her. Don't let me die till I have seen her."

"Queenie is here! will send for her at once. Do not be afraid I will not let you die. Your case is not very bad," Christine replied, speaking them emphatically and against her own convictions, because she saw how frightened he was himself, and knew that this would only augment the disease and lessen his chances for recovery.

She saw that he was very sick, but would not let him know it, and by her hopeful, reassuring manner did as much toward saving his life as her skilful nursing.

"Keep very quiet, and I'll soon have you well," she said, and Phil did whatever she bade him do, though his mind began to wander again, and he talked constantly of Queenie, whom he had come to find. At last, however, he fell away to sleep, and then it was that Christine sent for Queenie, and establishing her in the room, went out into the adjoining chamber and waited, knowing that sooner or later she would be needed. All through the weary hours which preceded Queenie's cry for help she sat alone in the darkness, alternately shaking with cold and burning with fever, while in her heart was a feeling amounting to certainty that her work was done, that the deadly faintness stealing over her at intervals, and making her so sick and weak, was a precursor of the end. But she must live long enough to save Phil Rossiter, and give him back to Queenie who might feel some little gratitude toward her, and think more kindly of her when she was gone. So she fought back her symptoms bravely, and rubbed her cold, damp face when it was at its coldest, and then leaned far out of the open window into the falling rain when it was at its hottest.

And thus the time passed on until her quick ear caught the sound of voices and footsteps in the sick-room, and she heard Queenie's wild cry for her as if in that hour of peril she was the one person in all the world of whom there was need. Queenie had turned to her at last as the child turns to its mother in peril, and with swift feet Christine went to the rescue, and almost before Pierre knew she was there, she had the unconscious girl in her arms and was bearing her into the room, where for hours she had waited so patiently. Fitting her in a safe and upright position upon a cushion, she ran back to Phil, who, she knew, must be her first and principal care.

When Queenie's shriek echoed through the room so near to him, he had aroused from his sleep, and was moaning and talking to himself, with at apparently any real consciousness as to where he was. But Christine's soothing hands, and the medicine she administered, quieted him at once, and leaving him in Pierre's care, she went back to Queenie, who was recovering from her swoon.

"Tell me," she gasped, when she was able to speak. "Was it a dream, or was it Phil, whom I thought dead beneath the sea? Tell me, Christine, is it Phil, and will he die?"

"It is Phil," Christine replied, "saved from the sea, I know not how, only that he is here, that he came seeking for you, and I found him with the fever, late yesterday afternoon, and did for him what I could. Then I sent for you, and the rest you know. Only be quiet now. I do not think he will die."

"Oh, save him, save him, and you shall have my gratitude forever. I have been cold and proud, but I will be so no longer, if you give me back my Phil," Queenie said, with choking sobs, as she knelt at Christine's feet, and clasped the hem of her dress.

"I will do what I can," Christine replied, while again through every nerve throbbed the old sick feeling which she could not put aside, even in her exquisite joy that Queenie might at last be won.

"Too late; it has come too late," she thought to herself, while to Queenie she said: "I must go to him now, for what I do must be done quickly. A few hours longer and it will be too late."

So they went together to the sick room, where Phil lay with his face turned more fully to the light and showing distinctly how pinched and pallid it was. Had Queenie's own life depended upon it, she could not have forborne going swiftly up to him and softly kissing his pale forehead; then she knelt down beside him, and so close to him that her dark hair touched the curls of light brown as she buried her face in her hands, and Christine knew that she was praying earnestly that he might be spared to her. At last, just as the dawn was breaking and the first grey of the morning was stealing into the room, he moved as if about to waken, and with a quick, imperative movement of her hand Christine put Queenie behind her, saying as she did so: "He must not see you yet. Keep out of his sight till I tell you to come."

Fearful least she should attract his attention if she left the room, Queenie crouched upon the floor, close beside the bed, and waited with a throbbing heart for the moment when she might speak and claim her love. Phil was better; the long sleep had done him good, but there was a drowsiness over him still, and he only opened his eyes a moment, and, seeing Christine bending over him, smiled gratefully upon her, and said:

"You are so good to me."

Then he took the draught she gave him and slept again, this time quietly and sweetly as a child, while Queenie sat upon the floor fearing to move or stir lest she should disturb him. Slowly the minutes dragged on until at last it was quite light in the room The heavy rain had ceased; the dense fog had lifted and the air which came in at the window was cool and pure, and seemed to have in it something of life and invigoration.

"The weather has changed, thank God," Christine murmured, while Queenie, too, whispered, "Thank God! thank God!"

Phil must have felt the revivifying influence of the change, for he breathed more naturally and there came a faint color to his lips, and at last, just as a ray of sunlight stole into the room and danced upon the wall above his head, he awoke to perfect consciousness, and, stretching his hand toward Christine, said:

"You have saved my life and I thank you; but for you I should have died when that dreadful sickness come. How long have I been here, and where is Queenie? I dreamed she was here."

As the tones of the voice she had never expected to hear again fell upon her ear Queenie could no longer restrain herself, but springing up, she bent over Phil and said:

"I am here—here, Phil, my love, my darling, and nothing shall part us again. I am not your cousin, and I can love you now."

She was kneeling beside him one arm under his neck, while with the other she caressed his face, and kissing him passionately continued:

"Oh, Phil, I thought you were dead, and it broke my heart, for I did love you all the time, and I found it out when it was too late and you were gone, and I mourned for you so much, and all the brightness went out from my life; but it will come back again with you, my darling! my darling!"

Her tears were falling like rain upon his face, and her voice was choked with sobs, as she made this avowal of her love, without a shadow of shame or feeling that she was doing anything unmaidenly. Phil was hers. Nothing could change that, or his love for her. She was as sure of him as she was that she breathed, and she had no hesitancy in pouring out the full measure of her affection for him. Both Christine and Pierre had stolen from the room, leaving the lovers alone in that first blissful moment of their reunion. For a time Phil lay perfectly still and took her caresses and kisses in silence. Then summoning all his strength, he wound his arms around the little girl, and hugging her close to him whispered:

"Heaven can scarcely be better than this, Oh, Queenie! my darling! my pet!"

He was very weak, and Queenie saw it, and drawing herself from him said:

"You must not talk any more now. You must get well, and then I can hear it all—where you have been and why you are not dead. Oh, Phil, it was so horrible—everything which has happened to me since you went away. I am nobody—Nobody, Phil; no name, no right to be born, and I was once so proud. Did they tell you, Phil? Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, they told me; I know, poor little Queenie," Phil replied, with a tighter clasp of the hand which lay in his.

She did not ask him if it would make any difference with his love. She knew it would not. She had always felt sure of Phil; he was hers forever, and the old joy began to come back, and the old light sparkled in her eyes, which shone like stars as she went on:

"It was so dreadful when I found it out, and I wanted to die, because you, too, were dead, or I thought you were, and I used to whisper to you in the dark night, when I could not sleep, and I thought maybe you would come and let me know in some way that you were sorry for me. Where were Phil, when I was wanting you so much?"

"Very, very far away, but I cannot tell you now," said Phil, knowing himself that he must not talk longer then; but he would not let her leave him; he wanted her there beside him, where he could touch her hand, and look into her face and beaming eyes, which dazzled and bewildered him with their brightness.

So Queenie sat by him all that morning seldom speaking to him, but often bending over him to kiss his forehead or hands, and occasionally murmuring:

"Dear Phil, and I am so glad—so happy. Nothing will ever trouble me again."

"Not even the Fergusons?" Phil answered her once, with his old, teasing smile, which made him so like the Phil of other days that Queenie laughed aloud, and, shaking her head gayly, said:

"No, not even grandma's purple gloves can ever worry me again. Oh, Phil, I have repented so bitterly of all my pride, and I shall never, never be so any more—shall never be angry with you, or any one, or indulge in one of my moods! I wish I could make you understand how changed I am, for I see you do not quite believe me."

Nor did he, though he smiled lovingly upon her, and lifting his head feebly, smoothed her fair round cheek, where her blushes were burning so brightly. He knew that Queenie could not change her nature any more than the leopard can change his spots—knew that at times she would be the same little willful, imperious girl she had always been, defying his authority and setting at naught his wishes. And he would not have her otherwise if he could; he should not know her if the claws were always sheathed and she was gentle and sweet as she was now. Loving and true she would always be, and so repentant when her moods were over that it would be well worth his while to bear with them occasionally, as he was sure to have to do. But he did not tell her so; he did not tell her anything, for he was too weak to talk, so he only looked his love and happiness through his eyes, which rested constantly upon her face, until at last even that became to him as something seen through a mist, not altogether real, and he again fell into a quiet sleep, with his hand resting in Queenie's.

CHAPTER LI.

SISTER CHRISTINE.

So absorbed had Queenie been with Phil that she had failed to notice anything which was passing around her, or to think of anything except her great happiness. She knew that sometime during the morning Pierre had brought her coffee and rolls, which he had managed to find somewhere near, he said, and which he made her eat. He had also given her some orders with regard to Phil's medicines, saying that Madame La Rue bade him do so, and to say that Miss Hetherton must be very particular not to forget. And Queenie had not forgotten that, though all else was a blank to her until Phil went to sleep, and she sat watching him and wondering by what strange chance the sea had given up its dead and restored him to her. Then, as she heard a city clock strike eleven, she began to think how fast the hours had sped, and to wonder a little at Christine's prolonged absence from the room. And still that did not surprise her much, for she naturally supposed she had gone to some other sick-bed, where she was needed more than there with Phil.

"There is a great deal of good in her, and I must always be kind to her because of what she has done for Phil," she thought, and she felt glad that all the old bitterness and resentment were gone, and that although she could not think of Christine as her mother, she could think of her quietly and calmly as of one who, if she had greatly sinned, had also greatly suffered for the sin and was trying to atone. "Phil and I will take care of her, though she cannot, of course, live with us. She will not expect that;" she thought, and her mind was busy with castles of the future, when Pierre looked in again just for an instant, and seeing Phil asleep, shut the door at once and went out again before she could ask him a question.

But in the glimpse she got of him, it seemed to her that there was an unusual look of concern upon his face, while through the open door she caught a faint sound of voices in the distance and footsteps hurrying here and there. What was it? she asked herself, and felt tempted to go out and see for herself, but Phil's hand was clasping hers and she would not free herself from it lest she should awaken him. So she still sat on till the clock struck twelve and the hum of voices was occasionally borne to her ears by the opening of some door further up the hall. There was somebody in the other part of the house besides Pierre—somebody sick, judging from the sounds, and she grew nervous at last and curious upon the subject, that she gradually withdrew her hand from Phil's, and rising softly was about to leave the room when Pierre looked in again, and this time she could not be mistaken with regard to the expression on his face, which was very pale and troubled as it look wistfully at her.

"What is it, Pierre?" she asked in a whisper, going close to him and observing that he stood against the door as if to keep her from passing. "Whose voices do I hear and is any one sick? I was just coming to ascertain. Let me pass, please."

"No, no, mademoiselle. Don't come. She said you were not to know. We are doing all we can for her," Pierre cried, in great alarm, thus letting out the secret he had been told to keep.

"Do all you can for her? For whom? Who is it that is sick, and said I must not know?" Queenie asked, imperiously, as she put the trembling old man aside, and opening the door, drew him with her into the hall. "Now tell me the truth," she continued. "Is some one sick whom I ought to see? Is it—is it—Christine?"

"Yes," he answered, "It is Madame Christine, and she is very bad. She will die, the doctor fears, but she said you must not know. You must not leave Mr. Rossiter for her and she sent me many times to see how he was."

Pierre was right, for in a small room at the end of the hall Christine La Rue was dying. She who had braved so much and borne so much and passed through so many dangers unscathed, had at last succumbed to the terrible disease which she knew was creeping upon her, when she sent for Queenie to share her vigils by Phil's bedside.

"I must not give up yet; I must endure and bear until he is out of danger. I must save him for her sake," she thought, and fought down with a desperate courage and iron will the horrid sensations stealing over her so fast and making her sometimes almost beside herself with dizziness and languor.

But when the crisis was past and she felt sure Phil was safe, she could endure it no longer, and one long lingering look at Queenie, whom she felt she should never see again, she started for her own lodging.

"I can die there alone and so trouble no one," she thought, as she made her way to the staircase.

But on the first landing her strength failed her and she fell upon the floor, where she lay, or rather sat in a half upright position, leaning against the wall with her face in her hands, until a voice roused her and she looked up to see a man standing before her and asking who she was and why she was there. It was the proprietor of the house, who, ashamed of his cowardice, had returned and going first through the rooms below where everything was as he left it, he started to ascend the stair to the chambers above, when he came upon Christine, whom he had often seen on her errands of mercy, but whom he did not recognize until she looked up and spoke to him. Then he knew her and exclaimed:

"Sister Christine! What are you doing here, and what is the matter with you?"

"I am sick—I have the fever," she replied; "and if you are afraid, leave me at once."

He was mortally afraid, but he was not so unmanly as to leave a woman like Christine to die uncared for at the head of his own staircase, and helping her to the nearest room where there was a bed, he started for a physician. Meeting in the lower hall with Pierre, who had been out for Queenie's coffee, and who explained to him that his house held another patient, he told him of Christine and where she was, bidding him to look after her until help came from some other quarter.

But Christine was past all human aid. The disease had attacked her in its worst form, and she knew she could not live to see another sun setting. She was very calm, however, and only anxious for Queenie and Phil.

"They must not be disturbed—they must not know," she said to Pierre, to whom she gave some orders concerning Phil's medicines, which Pierre took to his mistress.

"Don't tell her I am sick; don't let her know until I am dead. Then tell her I was so glad to die and leave her free, and that I loved her so much, and am so sorry for the past," she said to Pierre, who, half distracted with all he was passing through, wrung his hands nervously, and promised all she required.

But when Queenie began to suspect, and insisted upon knowing the truth, he told it to her, adding, as he saw her about to dart away from him toward's Christine's room:

"You better not go there; she does not need you. One of the sisters is with her, and she said you must stay with monsieur. All her anxiety is for him and you—none for herself. She seems so glad to die!"

He might as well have talked to the wind for all the heed Queenie gave him. Bidding him sit by Phil until he awoke, and then come for her if she was needed, she went swiftly to the room where Christine lay, with death stamped on every lineament of her face, but with a calm, peaceful expression upon it, which told that she was glad for the end so fast approaching.

When Queenie entered, her eyes were closed but they opened quickly, and a smile of joy and surprise broke over her face, when Queenie exclaimed:

"Oh, Christine, you are sick and you did not let me know it, or I should have come before!"

For an instant Christine's lips quivered in a pitiful kind of way; then the great tears rolled down her cheeks, as she whispered faintly:

"I am sick—I am dying; but I did not want you to know. I wished to spare you and him. How is he now?"

Queenie explained that he was sleeping quietly, and that she believed all danger passed. Then, sitting down by the bedside, she took the hot burning hands in hers, and rubbed and bathed them as carefully and gently as if they had been Phil's, instead of this woman's, toward whom she had felt so bitter and resentful. All that was gone now, and she was conscious of a strange feeling fixed upon her with so much yearning tenderness and love. This woman was her mother. Nothing could change that; whatever her faults had been, she was a good woman now, Queenie believed; and at last, as the dim eyes met her constantly and appealingly, she bent close to the pillow, and said:

"Mother, I am sorry I was so unforgiving and bad. It came so suddenly, and was so hard to bear. Forgive me if you can."

A low, pitiful cry was Christine's only answer for a moment, and then she said:

"I have nothing to forgive; the wrong was all my own, and I deserved your scorn. But oh, Queenie, my child, you can never know how I was tempted—was lead on, step by step, to my downfall; and after I had kept Margery's birth a secret, I must go on concealing. There was no other way. He would have murdered me, or left me to starve with you. Oh, Margery, Margery, my other dearest child, for she has been all the world to me, and I loved her so much. Tell her so, Queenie; tell her I blessed her with my last breath, and loved her with all my strength, and soul, and might. Margery, Margery! She is so sweet, so good, so true! God bless her, and make her perfectly happy!"

During this conversation, which was carried on in French, the sister whom the physician had sent to attend Christine stood looking on wonderingly, and never dreaming of the relationship between the two. She was, however, anxious lest so much talking and excitement should be injurious to her patient, and she said so to Queenie, who replied:

"Yes, you are right. I should try to quiet her now. If you will be kind enough to look after the young man in No. 40, I will stay with Sister Christine. She wishes it to be so. She was my nurse in France. I knew her—her—"

Queenie hesitated a moment, and then added:

"Knew her daughter. She was talking of her to me."

This satisfied the woman, who, bowing assent, went from the room, leaving the two alone.

For a time Christine lay perfectly still, with her eyes closed, but her lips were constantly moving, and Queenie knew that she was praying, for she caught the words:

"Forgive for Christ's sake, who forgave the thief at the very last hour!"

And all the while Queenie held the hot hands in hers, and occasionally smoothed the gray hair back from the pale brow where the sweat of death was gathering so fast. At last Christine opened her eyes and looked fixedly at Queenie, who said to her very gently:

"What is it? Do you wish to tell me something?"

"Yes," the dying woman answered, faintly. "I hope I am forgiven, and that I shall find rest beyond the grave. I used to pray so much in the cottage when I was alone—pray sometimes all night with my face on the cold floor. But the peace I asked for would not come. There was always a horror of blackness before me until since I came here, when the darkness has been clearing, and now there is peace and joy, for I feel that God forgives me all my sin, and you, my child, have forgiven me too, and called me mother, and Phil is alive and safe. I've nothing more to live for, and I am so glad to die."

She talked but little after that, and when she did speak her mind was wandering in the past, now at Chateau des Fleurs, when she was a young girl and good, she said, now in Rome, where she watched by her mistress' bedside, but mostly in Marseilles, where her baby was born, "her darling little girl baby," whom she bade Queenie be kind to when she was gone. Then she talked of Margery and Paris, and the apartments in the Rue St. Honore, until her voice was only a whisper, and Queenie could not distinguish a word. She was dying very fast, and just at the last, before her life went out forever, Queenie bent over her, and kissing her softly, whispered:

"Mother, do you know that I am here—Queenie—your little girl?"

"Yes, yes," she gasped, and a look of unutterable love and satisfaction shone in the eyes which looked up at Queenie. "I know—I know you are Queenie the baby born at Marseilles—my own—and you kiss me and call me mother. God bless you, my child, and make you very happy. I am glad for your sake that I am going away. Good-by, my darling, good-by!"

She never spoke again, though it was an hour or more before Queenie loosed her hold on the hand which clung so tightly to hers, and closing the eyes which looked at her to the last, smoothed the bed-clothes decently, and then going out to Pierre, who was waiting in the hall, and told him all was over.

Sister Christine was dead, and there was mourning for her in the city where she was so well known, and where her kindness and gentleness and courage had won her so many friends, some of whom followed her remains to their last resting-place. Every respect which it was possible under the circumstances to pay her was paid to her. Many gathered about the grave where they buried her, just after the sun setting on the same day of her death. It was Queenie who prepared her for the coffin, suffering no other hands to touch her but her own.

"She nursed me when I was a baby, and I must care for her now," she said to Sister Agatha, when she remonstrated with her and offered to take the task from her hands.

And to Queenie it was a mournful pleasure thus to care for the woman who had been her mother, and who, she felt, was truly good and repentant at the last.

"I am glad I feel so kindly toward her—glad I called her mother," she thought, and was conscious of a keen pain in her heart as she looked upon the white dead face on which suffering and remorse had left their marks.

Notwithstanding the hour and her own fatigue, Queenie was among the number who stood by the open grave where all that was mortal of Christine was buried, and she would not leave until the grave was filled and all the work was done. Then, taking Pierre's arm, she went back to the hotel, and, going to Phil's room, laid her tired head upon the hands he stretched toward her, and cried bitterly, while Phil soothed and caressed her until she grew quiet and could tell him all the particulars of Christine's death.

"There was much that was noble and good in her," she said, "and I am glad I feel as I do. Had she lived I would have tried so hard to do right, and with you to help and encourage me I might have succeeded."

"Yes," Phil answered her, "I am sure you would have tried; but it is better as it is—better for her to be at rest."

And Phil was right; it was far better, for, had she lived, she could only have been a source of unhappiness to Queenie, who, with the best of intentions, could not always have concealed her humiliation and pain, and could never fully have received her as a mother. God knew best, and took to himself the weary woman, who had been more sinned against than sinning, and whose memory was held in the hearts of those whose lives she had been instrumental in saving as the memory of a saint.

SLAVERY IN BRAZIL.

Prospects of Complete Emancipation Within Ten Years.

RIO JANEIRO, Dec. 7, 1880.—The interpellation of the Premier in the Chamber of Deputies on the 25th ult. was a dull affair. The interpellator contented himself with a little buncombe about the sovereign rights of Brazil to regulate her social questions without the interference of foreigners, and commenting a little on Mr. Hilliard's anti-slavery letter and attendance at the anti slavery banquet as official acts. The Premier, however, promptly threw cold water on the question by declaring that in the acts complained of Mr. Hilliard presented himself only in his individual capacity, and as such the government had no concern with them; that it had no concern also with the emancipatory propaganda as long as it kept to legal ground, but that the government continued steadfast in the previously declared resolve to leave slavery to die out gradually under the provisions of the law of September 28th, 1871. This declaration has given the planters much satisfaction, although they keep up a little newspaper skirmishing with the abolitionists. Notwithstanding the government declarations the abolition movement has spread distrust, and judicial sales are failing from the absence of tenders, and except among the slaveowness the general feeling is that slavery will be abolished within ten years, either by legislative enaction or by a general refusal of the slaves to remain in bondage. Notwithstanding, however, the unwillingness to hasten the term of emancipation, the great slave holding provinces are alarmed at the probability of the other provinces shooting their slaves upon them, and are aiming by legislation to prevent further accumulation. For this purpose the Legislature of the Province of Rio Janeiro has just passed a law putting a tax of 1,000 milreis on slaves hereafter introduced from other provinces, unless when brought from an outside plantation to another inside belonging to the same planter and same master, and that they were owned by him at the date of the law. Even the transfer from one county to another in the Province is taxed fifty milreis. The province of St. Paulo is expected to pass a similar law next session, and there is no doubt but it will be followed by Minas Geraes, Bahia and others within a short time. The Senate will probably get through the second reading of the Electoral bill early next week, and the Deputies have at last sent up the bill on patents to the Senate. Two deputies, cousins, had a dispute last week in the chamber, and entertained the grinning listeners wieh a close personal scrutiny into their respective histories, and the exchange of such flowers of speech as "scoundrel" and "liar," and the customary invitations to settle their differences in "another place." The Minister of Agriculture has sent up instructions to the Para authorities to assist Edison's agent in every way in his examination of the bamboos and fibres of the Amazon, and expresses great interest in the matter.

SOME NEW ANECDOTES.

It is related that on one occasion the late Mr. Thackeray was out walking with his friend "Jacob Omnium," a still taller man than he was. They came to a little local fair with its shops and shows. Pausing before the tent of the giant, the dwarf, and the fat woman, to tell his companion to straighten up, the novelist gravely passed into the tent, dropping on the head of the woman who took toll, the perfidious phrase,—"We're in the profession!" We are reminded of this jest of the great Englishman by reading in M. Alphonse Karr's "Livre de Bord," of a somewhat similar scene in France. It happened that Lablache, the singer, who was a tall, robust man, had an appartment in the house in which rooms were taken for Tom Thumb when he came to Paris. A ring at the singer's bell one morning brought him to the door, where a family of English visitors asked for the dwarf. Without hesitating, Lablache said, "I am Tom Thumb!" The English party started in astonishment. Drawing himself up to his full height, Lablache continued, "You seem surprised; perhaps you have