

Margaret pulled the scattered remnants of her courage together, and moved to ascend the stairs. She must assure herself, at least, that that peace they spoke of was, in truth, there. Nothing less could reconcile her to her desolation.

As she started painfully to mount the steps—those steps she had trod so willingly and so often in recent months—her heart cried out in rebellion. She saw again the tossing limbs, the fevered body, the face twisted beyond all recognition with pain. She heard again the pleading voice, "Sing me something to woo me to sleep"—that sleep which never would come. She saw again the dear face as she had known it all her life, the smile the Fates had too often checked, the pure clear complexion, the soft white hair, the creamy lace cap that nestled in it so comfortably; the little body, active in all household matters, never old, so busy, busy, capable, alert; the prudent, careful mind, planning for others, thinking of her own comfort always last; anxious at all times that her family should be honourable and conscientious; fearing ever to give them praise lest they should too easily content themselves with their own achievements; the indomitable courage, surmounting disaster after disaster, grief upon grief. Pain and toil, toil and pain for Grannie all through! and now this hard, humiliating end. Why could not God have spared her a little longer to enjoy? Oh, if only she had spared herself more, and toiled for others less!

Margaret paused, recoiling, at the door, dreading to open it, dreading to look upon her own in the chill, relentless grasp of Death. But—almost untouched—the handle yielded. The door swung gently, noiselessly, on its hinges, as if opened by some attendant unseen. Margaret stood within, transfixed!.....God in heaven—what a radiance!!.....

Slowly, as she crossed the room, her wondering eyes grew round. All rebellion, all gloom, all grief completely vanished. Her stooping figure straightened. Her head rose high as with a dignity new-born. And on her face there reigned in unmistakable possession, a great consenting joy.

For the radiance that penetrated every corner of that humanly darkened room, undoubtedly centred in Grannie. Did it emanate from her?—or stream upon her? Margaret could not tell. But it filled the room with a light and glory hitherto undreamed of, and admitted her to a world so living and so real that her normal world became the counterfeit.

And there lay shining, radiant in its new inheritance, the dear sweet face. Margaret dropped upon her knees beside the bed, and stretched her hands towards it. "I long to kiss you, dear, in all your beauty," she whispered. "Oh, the good God! to show me all this!" Where were the suffering, the care, the tire? Every wrinkle gone, every vestige of suffering, every trace of tire! But more. He had transformed the older Margaret from a weary, careworn woman, into a happy triumphant one. A beautiful bloom of life and health suffused the face; all the courage and strength of her character standing out so plainly, just regulating and holding a little in restraint, that radiant, happy smile. "Who would have dreamed," thought Margaret, "that my mother's life, which for years has been crammed full of griefs, disappointments and all the nasty knocks of fate, would one day go out into so much radiant joy?" "Tribulation? Chamber of Death? Nay," she smiled to herself, "Womb of a Heavenly Birth!"

She looked around the room again, consciously and deliberately, to make certain she wasn't dreaming. "Why did Auntie make us draw the blinds?" she asked. "There's no gloom here! Was it that no strange eye should penetrate to so much glory?"