

ELLIE'S DESIRE.

BY FLORENCE GREY.

High up on the mountain-side, where the mountain was steep and rugged, and bristled with many fir trees, there had been built, at the end of the rocky path, an odd little house, half mountain chalet, half fairy castle. Ellie, looking up, could see turrets and balconies, and a bay window, and that it was sending forth from the chimney friendly blue smoke. Up the steep path she climbed. Behind her lay a great town ; to eastward a valley of farms ; to westward, a silver green river ; and darkness fell behind her and around, and nothing remained of all the world but mountain and fairy castle. These she could still see ; for in the strip of sky overhead was a glowing light, mellow and serene, shining over her path. Her heart was beating with a tremulous joy, and she went onward as if she were going home ; for, yonder where the smoke-wreaths curled, was to be at last revealed to her that which she was to have and to be in the world, her destiny, her life-work, the fulfilment of all her vague wishes and longings, the realization of her fairest and sweetest dreams. "Ah, there lies my desire," she heard herself saying, and pressed eagerly forward to reach the door. Then suddenly the mountain bent over to her, high and dark, but like a friend. It came so near, and seemed so dear, that she would have clasped it in her embrace, and stretching her arms out over the bristling fir-branches, she sought to press them to her. But they began, thereupon, to prick her so sorely on fingers and face, with their sharp, green needles, that she uttered a cry and started back. She started back, and sprang upright, and opened her eyes, and discovered that she had been asleep and dreaming on the lounge in her own room, at the top of the house, in the middle of the afternoon.

Christmas day was waning. Already, at four o'clock, the sun was nearing the level snowfields, behind which he was soon to set, and Ellie, rubbing her eyes, went over to look out of the window. The country stretched away before her into the north, to where a dark forest of pines and firs touched the sky. In this forest rose the spire of a certain church, whose gleaming Ellie had sometimes tried wistfully to see from her window ; but to-day she resolutely turned her thoughts away from that distracting subject, and back to her quaint dream, which she thought was like her life. Had she not always been looking up, longing, pressing forward, wanting something that had never been revealed to her, and that she could not even define ? She believed sometimes that a great and wonderful destiny awaited her, and that, for that matter, she could accept no other ; and now it almost seemed as if the promise of some such wonderful coming had been given her. More than ever she felt that it *must* come, and that she was waiting for it. If she might but have peeped beyond that prophetic threshold ! What would she have discovered ? A magic word spoken ? A mystic presence ? A definite person ? At this thought the blood came faintly up into her clear cheeks, and she suddenly felt how quiet the house was. The household, according to country custom, was out sleigh-driving in the