

## NATURAL RESULTS.

also gave her a few hints as to Lawrence's personal appearance, taking care, of course, that she should not know who we were. Then I suggested to Lillian that we would consult Mrs. Blank, who, receiving us both as strangers, imposed upon her credulous nature the story I had prepared. This is why Lillian became so quiet, for, placing implicit faith in the woman, she believed all would yet end well."

"You are one of the devil's unaccountables," exclaimed the Judge, and grasping her arm, he shook her again, but Geraldine did not heed it.

The confession she had made exhausted her strength, and laying her head again upon the table, she fainted. Mr. Howell and her uncle carried her to her room, but it was Mildred's hand which had bathed her head and spoke to her kindly when she came back to consciousness. Mildred, too, broke the news to the awakened Lillian, who would not believe the story until confirmed by Geraldine; then she wept bitterly and upbraided her sister for her perfidy until the wretched woman refused to listen longer, and covering her head with the bedclothes, wished that she could die. She felt that she was everlastingly disgraced, for she knew no power on earth could keep the Judge from telling the shameful story to her Boston friends, who would thenceforth despise and shun her just as she deserved. Her humiliation seemed complete, and it was not strange that the lapse of two days found her in a raging fever, far exceeding in violence the one from which Lawrence was rapidly recovering.

"I hope the Lord," growled the Judge, "that the jade will get well pretty quick, or—"

He did not say "or what," for Edith, who was in his lap, laid her soft hand on his mouth, and looking mournfully in his face said:

"You'll never see my mamma and the baby."

"Why not?" he asked.

And Edith answered: "You swore, you did, and such naughty folks can't go to heaven."

It was a childish rebuke, but it had an effect, causing the Judge to measure his words, particularly in her presence; but it did not change his feelings toward Geraldine; and as the days went on and she still grew worse, scolded and fretted, wishing her in Guinea, in Halifax, in Tophet, in short anywhere but at Beechwood.

Owing to Mildred's interference, his manner changed somewhat toward Lillian. She was not to blame, she said, for knowing as little as she did, and when he saw how really anxious she was to atone for all she had

made Mildred suffer he forgave her in a measure, and took her into favour just as Lawrence had done before him. It took but a week or so to restore the brightness to her face and the lightness to her step, for hers was not a mind to dwell long on anything, and when at last Geraldine was able to be moved, and she went with her to Boston, she bade both Lawrence and Mildred good-bye as naturally as if nothing had ever happened. Geraldine, on the contrary, shrank from their pleasant words, and without even thanking Mildred for her many friendly offices in the sick-room left a house which had been too long troubled with her presence, and which the moment she was gone assumed a more cheery aspect. Even little Edith noticed the difference, and frisking around her grand father, with whom she was on the best of terms, she said:

"You won't swear any more, now that woman with the black eyes has gone?"

"No, Beauty, no," he answered; "I'll never swear again, if I think in time,"—a resolution to which, as far as possible, he adhered, and thus was little Edith the source of good to him, inasmuch as she helped to cure him of a habit which was increasing with his years, and was a mar to his many admirable traits of character.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### NATURAL RESULTS.

On a bright September morning, just eighteen years after Mildred was left at Judge Howell's door, there was a quiet wedding at Beechwood, but Oliver was not there. Since his return from Dresden he had never left his room, and on the day of the wedding he lay with his face buried in the pillows, praying for strength to bear this as he had borne all the rest. He would rather not see Mildred until he had become accustomed to thinking of her as another's. So on the occasion of her last visit to him he told her not to come to him on her bridal day, and then laying his hand upon her hair, prayed: "Will the Good Father go with Mildred wherever she goes. Will He grant her every possible good, and make her to her husband what she has been to me, my light, my life, my all."

Then kissing her forehead, he bade her go, and not come to him again until she had been some weeks a happy wife. Often during her bridal tour did Mildred's thoughts turn back to that sick-room, and after her return, her first question was for Oliver.

"Clubs is on his last legs," was the characteristic answer of the Judge, while Richard added: "He has asked for you