

lying on the bed, ma'am, in a dead faint. After a short time you began to come to, and he said, hurried like, I'm going away for a long time, Dorothy. When your mistress is stronger, give her the letter on the dressing-table, and never leave her. Good-bye!"

"And that was all?" I asked, in a still lower tone.

In a husky voice she replied:

"He just took one long look at you, as you lay there, life struggling back to your white face, and left the room. He went down to his study and shortly after left the house, taking nothing with him but a travelling valise which he carried himself. You were a long time, ma'am, coming to. Just as you'd begin to get better, you'd go off into another faint, but, at last, you got a little round, and I think you are better now!"

"Yes, much better, thank you!" I replied, with a calmness more dreadful under the circumstances than the wildest agitation would have been. "Give me the letter, please, Dorothy."

She hesitated.

"What do you fear?" I quietly asked. "It contains needful explanations from Mr. Ellerslie. Draw the curtains back and leave me for a little while. I will ring if I want anything."

Only half deceived by my forced tranquillity, but fearing to agitate me by opposition, she did as I desired, and then reluctantly withdrew.

I took the letter—kissed it first, for no matter how harsh or cruel might be the denunciations it contained, the writer would be supremely dear to me whilst life should pulsate in my veins, broke the seals and read my doom. It ran thus:

"Ada, when I first sat down to write this letter, the last communication that shall ever pass between us, angry denunciations, cruel bitter reproaches thronged on my thoughts, but a moment's reflection convinced me that it would be better otherwise. Your own heart will hereafter prove my best avenger, and I leave you to its upbraidings and remorse. I will endeavour to speak calmly, dispassionately, and to keep down the lava-tide of wrath and despair, surging up from the depths of my being!

Fondly flattering myself that you were pining for my presence as I was for yours, I made unheard of efforts to get away from Elmsford a day earlier than had at first seemed possible. I succeeded and left immediately after my poor sister's funeral, yearning in my sorrow for the sympathy of her who was to inflict on me the deepest and deadliest anguish my life had ever known. Travelling night and day with all possible speed, I reached home after eleven at night, and seeing the house in darkness, save one faint light burning in your room, let myself softly in with my latch-key and noiselessly mounted the stairs, thinking all the while, poor fool that I was! how joyful a surprise I was preparing for my worshipped wife. I entered your apartment, it was empty. So also was your dressing-room. Vaguely perplexed and anxious, I looked around me, when a small scrap of paper lying upon the carpet, beside the chair that you had evidently lately occupied, for your handkerchief and smelling bottle still rested upon it, attracted my notice. I picked it up and read the appointment it solicited from my wife—for the love of olden times. Your rooms were vacant—you had gone, then! Well, the bitterest curse I can call down on the betrayer of my happiness and honour, is that he may yet know what I endured at the moment. Still, I would not be rash. I would not condemn—like one under the influence of some awful dream, I went out to the place of meeting. I had not long to wait, for even whilst I was glancing along the belt of wood, you emerged into the moon-light, and I saw you—oh! the agony of that moment! fling yourself on his breast—twine your soft deceitful arms round his neck even as you had countless times done round mine, whilst he bent over you, alternately kissing your upturned face and pressing you to his heart. If anything could have added to the mortal suffering of that moment, it was the fact that my rival could not even afford me the poor satisfaction that one gentleman owes another, for, as he stood there in the moon-light, too distant for me to clearly note his features, I could see that his garb was that of a common sailor. 'Tis wonderful that spectacle did not blast my sight forever. It did my moral sense a moment, for, listening to the promptings of evil, I turned back to my study, took out of its closet the loaded pistol that always hung there, and again approached the outer door with the intention of taking sure and deadly vengeance. As I stood covering him from my unsuspected nook, conscience whispered: Why should I do this thing? What will it avail to shoot down the wretch in cold blood, but to make myself as culpable in the sight of my Creator as he is? His murder will not restore my blasted happiness—will not make my wife other than the guilty fallen-creature she is. Grace was given me to resist the sinful impulse, and shortly after I had re-entered my study, the soft rustling of your dress sounded in the corridor as you stole up stairs to your room. A short half-hour of reflection and my decision was taken—the plans for my future barren, miserable life laid. Listen to them now. When your eye shall peruse this, I will be on my way to leave Canada—mark me, Ada Ellerslie, never to return to it. To no earthly being shall I reveal the cause of my departure—of my life-long exile. You may give what reason you like—say that I have gone on a long journey—that I have deserted you without the shadow of a cause—no word or writing of mine shall ever contradict your tale. You shall remain mistress of Ellerslie—its revenues shall be yours, to revert, only after your death, to my niece, Helena Sherwin, alas! my nearest now of kin. Perhaps you may wonder why I am thus lenient. I will tell you in this solemn hour of deepest suffering and humiliation, when I sit with convulsed heart and aching brain, looking back on our past happy married life, recalling your winning, endearing ways, your rare graces and beauty. It is that I also am in part to blame. I should not have profited of your hour of trial and desolation to tempt you to barter your freedom for a home. I, an experienced man of the world, should have known that, be it even as there could be no real, lasting, affinity or sympathy, and that young, beautiful, gifted as you were, a time would come when you would feel your position and home—had been purchased far too dearly! Alas, the deep love and admiration with which you had inspired me, blinded, warped my judgment. It seemed to me that your rare intellectual powers elevated you alike above the weakness and sympathies of your sex. God help us both—it has not been so! And now, one parting word. Writing to—enquiring for me, if such should be your future pleasure, will be utterly unavailing, for I shall depart from Canada and leave no clue behind. A couple of letters of business to my lawyer, making provision for the present—the future, and then my correspondence shall utterly drop. If I

were on my death-bed and you in the room adjoining, pleading for admittance, I should refuse your petition; if you summoned me to your own final moments, my answer would still be No. In life or death we shall never meet again.

RUPERT ELLERSLIE."

I read this letter over and over again, feeling it but made the writer more immeasurably dear to my heart, and my loss more overwhelmingly great—then I rang for Dorothy, wishing to put away this precious letter, whilst I had strength or reason to do so, for I felt both were rapidly giving way. I asked for my jewel-casket. She brought it wonderingly, and whilst she busied herself in the room, I put it into a secret drawer. Then, I locked the box, gave it into her hands, and lay back on my pillow with a wild happy hope that the feeling of strange sickness I felt creeping over me, was the precursor of Death. It did not prove so, for though I lay struggling for weeks in the grasp of dangerous illness, youth and a sound constitution triumphed. I recovered. Then came fresh troubles. Visitors pertinaciously called—gossips pitted that poor young Mrs. Ellerslie, abandoned at so critical a time by her heartless husband. Then again, others wondered what had I done to drive him away from me.

The firmness with which I persisted in refusing all social overtures added perhaps fresh fuel to curiosity, but after a time, calls became fewer and fewer, till at length they ceased entirely. Dorothy once remonstrated, but, looking in her face, I mournfully said:

"Dorothy, my old, well-trying friend, you do not, you cannot ever know all, but you know at least that I am very wretched. Leave me, then, all I ask or hope for—the refuge of solitude!"

She sighed a long heavy sigh, but after that she renewed her solicitations, and I was left in peace. In peace did I say? Yes, such peace as the criminal condemned to perpetual imprisonment knows in his dark, sunless cell. No alternations had I of hope and despair—no illusory dreams—nought but the stagnation of utter misery.

Ah! my stubborn heart would not, could not bring itself to say 'Thy will be done,' and thus the only source from which I could have derived one gleam of consolation was, through my own wilfulness, closed upon me.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER a few additional months of wretched health, the child, once so eagerly coveted—so ardently longed for, was born. Poor Dorothy, who had lately dropped the more ceremonious style she had adopted towards me after my marriage, and resumed the motherly, half authoritative way of olden days, had anxiously looked forward to this event, hoping that the advent of my baby, if its little life were only spared, might rouse me from the state of dull, apathetic misery into which I had fallen. But it was not so. I did my duty towards my infant son as well as my feeble health allowed—nursed, tended him, but of a mother's rapturous feelings I knew nothing. If I pressed a kiss on his waxen face, a burning tear fell on it too—if Dorothy hinted at his delicate health and fragility of frame, I rather secretly rejoiced, for I felt I was not long for earth myself, and I did not wish to leave my boy—a poor, little, desolate waif—behind me. At times if I caught him to my breast, remembering he was the child of the husband I so passionately loved, and rained fervent kisses on his unconscious brow, the remembrance flashed across me that my little Rupert had never seen, and never would see his father; that that father had disinherited him before his birth, and would probably refuse to even acknowledge his son if he were presented to him, and then I would bury my head in his tiny, white robes, and sob and cry till fairly worn out, when I would wearily put him from me.

Partly from inclination, partly from a wish to lay aside as much as possible of my yearly income to make a provision for my child in case he should survive me, as the property would go, after my death, to Helena Sherwin, I determined to retrench my expenses without delay. Dorothy readily coincided in my views, and when I began to rally after baby's birth, and saw that both of us were likely to live, my intentions were at once carried out. The large, productive farm was leased on good terms to the man who had previously managed it, and our household reduced to one man-servant, who kept the grounds in good order, and a young female servant to assist Dorothy. In vain I reminded the latter that she was getting aged, and would require more help than that, she tartly rejoined that none but herself should wait either on mother or child, the other one could look to the kitchen. Our stables were closed, and we kept but one pretty, gentle pony, which Rupert had trained himself for my special use. This latter I determined to retain for the dear giver's sake; and occasionally it would draw Dorothy, baby, and myself in my low pony carriage through some lonely country road, where we were sure of meeting but few people. My only other consolation was to go down to my husband's study, and after fastening the door, carefully arrange his books and papers, dust the desk and furniture, then burying my head in the arm chair in which he had so often rested, cry till the choking feeling at my heart was in some degree relieved.

About a year had elapsed since Rupert's departure, and during that time I had never heard either directly or indirectly from him. I had had no tidings from George, either, but that did not greatly surprise me, for I knew how much he would dread the thought of committing either of us by any attempt at correspondence.

I was sitting sadly thinking of both one pleasant September afternoon in the sitting-room opening on the garden, in which I had been gathering a few blossoms—my love for flowers being almost the only one of all my former tastes that still survived—when I was startled by the voice of Dorothy exclaiming somewhat impatiently:

"I tell you, Sir, she sees no one, and 'tis unmanly of you to wish to force yourself on her in this way."

"Nonsense, my good woman. Out of the way! I tell you she will see me. I am a very old friend."

I could not remember at the moment to whom the voice belonged, but it was certainly familiar to me, and springing to my feet—for so unusual a circumstance troubled me—the door opened, and I stood confronted with Mr. Sherwin. He hastily seized my hands, and grasping them in a friendly pressure, warmly exclaimed:

"Dear Miss Dunmore, how glad I am to see you."

"Mrs. Ellerslie now," I coldly replied, as I disengaged my hands from his grasp.

"Yea, so I should have said. Forgive me, but my using your old name arose from no puppyish impertinence. I trust

I am pretty well cured of that sort of folly now, but from genuine pleasure at seeing you again."

Somewhat relenting, for his tone was feeling and respectful, and farther, touched by the mourning he still wore for his young wife, I enquired in a gentler tone about my former pupil, Fairy.

"She is well, and at a boarding-school. After Mrs. Sherwin's death I broke up house-keeping immediately, and following the advice of some sincere friends, placed my daughter in a superior educational establishment, where she would be treated with that mingled firmness and judgment which neither my poor wife nor myself had ever been able to show her. Her undisciplined character rendered such a course absolutely necessary. Leaving Elmsford in charge of a couple of trusty old servants, I went abroad for many months, and have only returned lately. Having first seen Fairy, who is wonderfully improved in everything, especially in disposition, I then naturally thought of paying yourself and Rupert a visit. Imagine my grieved astonishment when I learned what has become so old and well-known a story here that you will pardon my alluding to it. Reasons were not wanting to account for Ellerslie's long disappearance, and your own sad isolation. They poured in upon me, and I was left to choose between a dozen equally absurd and improbable. One of those most generally received is that my poor wife, on her death-bed, made some important revelation to him, exacting at the same time, a solemn promise that he should leave you for ever. Others say that doing as men have done before him, he simply grew weary of you and home—in short, left both—but that is the most absurd supposition of all. Rupert Ellerslie is not a man to commit such an act, nor are you, Mrs. Ellerslie," and his earnest gaze became rivetted on my face, whilst his voice involuntarily softened, "nor are you a woman to be lightly left! Surprised, grieved by all I heard, I hurried down here, trusting that in my near relationship to your husband, you would find a plea for the apparent indiscretion that leads me to ask where is Rupert Ellerslie, and why are you and he thus living apart?"

For a moment I paused. Under the circumstances I really had no right to feel annoyed or wounded by his enquiries. At length, I rejoined:

"I know not where Mr. Ellerslie now is, but the circumstances that led to our separation are known but to him and myself. No other shall hear them, at least from my lips; and little as I have told you, it is more than I have yet said to mortal. Now, let us change the subject—it is one inexpressibly painful to me! You have known sorrow also, you have looked on a vacant chair by your hearth-stone."

He sighed.

"Yes, and a great part of my sorrow arises from self-reproach—remorse. When I wooed and married my poor young wife, I saw, asked for no more than a very lovely face. I never enquired as to qualities of heart or brain, for, as I once before told you, I had a sort of idiotic dread of clever women. Well, I met my reward. My wife was a spoiled child—a beautiful drawing-room ornament—a being with thoughts and anxieties all centered in herself and her personal charms, whilst I was a frivolous, conceited, egotistical coxcomb, with no higher aims or aspirations than her own. You were a witness to the unhappiness of our union—of our ill-assorted marriage, surrounded, as it was, by an atmosphere of egotism that stifled every better, nobler feeling in the hearts of both parties. All this you saw, Mrs. Ellerslie, but you did not penetrate the feelings of bitter disappointment, regret and self-reproach that lurked beneath my topical absurdities of language and manner. The very first year of my wedded life I found out the grievous error I had committed, and formed a pretty correct opinion of the degree of happiness that was destined to embellish life's course, but I resigned myself to my fate, supposing our felicity was a fair specimen of connubial bliss in general, and that all women strongly resembled my poor Helen, only being perhaps less beautiful than she was. You, Ada Ellerslie, taught me otherwise—taught me how happy a gifted, amiable woman can make a home—how she can turn it into a paradise. Do not flush up and look so angrily at me! What harm can there be in my speaking, you listening to the truth? Have patience with me a few moments longer? The very day you left Elmsford, I left also for the States where I remained some weeks. When I returned, poor Helen received me coldly, and I, listening to the dictates of my own evil nature, retorted and taunted, where I was bound to show patience and forbearance. Then, her health, always fragile, began to give way, and roused, though late, to a sense of her danger and of my own duty, I tended her more carefully than heretofore, and for the last few months of our existence we lived on kindlier and more affectionate terms than we had yet done. Such is the history of my misspent life—of time, talents wasted and happiness shipwrecked!"

To be continued.

LONG INTERMISSIONS.—There is a well-known anecdote of a silent man, who, riding over a bridge, turned and asked his servant if he liked eggs, to which the servant answered, "Yes," whereupon nothing more passed till next year, when, riding over the same bridge, he turned about to the servant once more, and said, "How?" to which the instant reply was, "Poached, sir." Even this sinks, as an example of long intermission of discourse, beside an anecdote of a minister of Campsie, near Glasgow. It is stated that the worthy pastor, whose name was Archibald Denniston, was put out of his charge in 1655, and not replaced until after the Restoration. He had, before leaving his charge, begun a discourse, and finished the first head. At his return in 1661, he took up the second, calmly introducing it with the remark that "the times were altered, but the doctrines of the Gospel were always the same." In the newspapers of July 1862, there appeared a paragraph which throws even the minister of Campsie's interrupted sermon into the shade. It is as follows:—"At the moment of the destruction of Pompeii by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, A. D. 79, a theatrical representation was being given in the amphitheatre. A spectator named Laugini, taking advantage of that historical reminiscence, has just constructed a theatre on the ruins of Pompeii, and the opening of which new theatre he announces in the following terms:—After a lapse of eighteen hundred years, the theatre of the city will be opened with La Figlia del Reggimento. I solicit from the nobility and gentry continuance of the favour constantly bestowed on my predecessor, Marcus Quintus Martius, and beg to assure them that I shall make every effort to equal the rare qualities he displayed during his management."