

one which will have a very great influence on both our future lives."

"Oh, don't, Charlie, please don't," she said, sinking back in her chair, and looking at him half in wonder, half in sorrow.

She knew he was going to propose to her, he could tell that; but it seemed so strange that he could sit there so calmly with his elbows resting on his knees and the tips of his fingers joined together, and make a formal proposal for her hand. A few days ago she would have laughed at him, but now she wanted his help and assistance, and she grew half-frightened as she thought that if she rejected him—as, of course, she must—he might use his influence with her father against her, and so increase the difficulty of gaining his consent to her engagement.

"It is a question," continued Mr. Morton calmly, although his voice quivered a little with suppressed emotion, "which I have for some time thought of putting to you, only I had not quite made up my mind whether it was best to do it or not; now I have made up my mind; Annie, the question is—will you be my wife?"

She buried her face in her hands, which were clasped on the back of the chair, and half moaned, "Oh, Charlie, please don't." He rose and crossed over to her, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"I know I am considerably older than you are, Annie; indeed I feel almost like an old man when I remember that I used to know you when you were in short frocks, it seems so long ago, but you know the old adage, 'better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave.' I love you, Annie, as truly as man can love woman; I learned to love you when you were a little girl at school, and my love has gone on growing without my knowing it, until I feel as if it would be impossible for me to live without you. You used to love me when you were a little girl, Annie; tell me, has all that love departed with the short frocks, or is there a little bit left yet? Look up at me," he continued, placing his hand on her head and smoothing her hair, "look up at me and tell me if you still love me as you used to."

"I still love you, Charlie, as I used to when I was a little girl, as if you were my big brother; nothing more."

"And that is enough for the present; give me leave to try to teach you to love me better; I think I can succeed."

"No, no, Charlie, it can never be. I cannot be your wife?"

"Why?"

"Because—because I have promised to marry some one else."

"Engaged?"

He removed his hand from her head and returned to his seat, where he sat with his head leaning on one hand, thoroughly overcome by the suddenness of the blow. He knew Annie had been flirting with Johnson and Dr. Griffith both, as she had done with half-a-dozen others, but he did not think matters had gone so far as this. And with the knowledge that she was pledged to another, came also the knowledge that he loved her more truly, more deeply, and more devotedly than he had ever dreamed of. He sat stunned, and the hot tears almost started to his eyes.

"Oh, Charlie, I'm so sorry," said a soft voice beside him, half broken by a sob, and a little hand, white and plump, was laid on his shoulder, "I'm so sorry you should have taken it in your head to want to marry me, at least just at this time when I am in such trouble, and want your help so much, and now I can't ask it."

"In trouble, Annie; trouble that I can help you out of? Tell me what it is, child; you know I never refused you anything you asked me."

She pushed a low stool towards him and sat on it, resting her arm on his knee and looking up at him.

"You're so good, Charlie, and I'm so sorry for your disappointment, but I couldn't help it, you know, could I?"

"I suppose not, child; I've been a fool, that's all; but what is it you want me to do?"

"I want you to tell papa, and make him give his consent to my engagement."

It was very hard for him to promise that; it was hard enough to know that the girl he loved was engaged to another, but it was harder still to think that he should have to lend his assistance to enable that other to win her. Still he loved her so well that he cared only for her happiness, and as she sat at his feet time seemed to roll back, and she was again a little girl pleading to him to intercede with her father for some favor she wished to have granted. It was hard to see her another's, but if it was for her happiness, he was content.

"Are you sure you love this man, Annie?" he asked after a pause; "are you sure that you will be happy with him?"

"I never could be happy without him."

"Who is he?"

"Dr. Griffith."

Somehow he had felt from the moment she told him of her engagement that Griffith was the man, yet, now that she called him by name, he felt a strong and sudden aversion to the man, and he could not promise to use his influence with her father to gain his consent.

"I'm afraid papa don't like Harry," she continued, "but you were at school with him, and have known him all his life nearly; you can tell papa how good he is, won't you, Charlie?"

He paused for a few seconds, unwilling to refuse, and still more unwilling to consent. At last he said:

"I cannot promise to-night, Annie; you are

mistaken as to my knowing all about Harry Griffith's life; the ten most important years of his life are almost a blank to me. I will find out all I can about them, and then—perhaps—I—Oh, Annie," he exclaimed passionately, his love and grief breaking down his usually calm, quiet manner, "you don't know what you ask me to do when you ask me to help your marriage with another man. I never felt until this moment how much I love you and how hard and bitter it is to give you up; but I love you too well, child, to let my happiness stand in the way of yours; if you think you can be happier with this man than with me, I can only say, 'God grant it may be so,' but don't ask me to assist in accomplishing your marriage, at least not yet; give me a few days to think about it, then I will see you again; and now, good-night."

He raised her head from his knee, where she was rapidly changing the pattern of his pantaloons with her tears, and, drawing her to him, pressed his lips lightly on her forehead, and before she had time to say anything he had left the room.

SCENE III.

DR. GRIFFITH FINDS HIMSELF FREE.

Time, September seventh, eighteen hundred and seventy; place, Griffith's residence in Longueuil.

Mrs. Griffith did not carry out her determination to remove to Montreal, for the reason that on the day after her interview with her husband, she found herself so ill as to be scarcely able to leave her room, and for over a week she was compelled to keep in the house.

Dr. Griffith was very attentive to her during this time, visiting her almost daily and striving hard to show a love for her which he did not feel. He did not attend her professionally himself, he called himself "Mr." Griffith in Longueuil and dropped the "Doctor"—but called in the aid of a village practitioner who pronounced Mrs. Griffith very weak, and advised her to keep very quiet for a few days.

On the sixth the baby was born; a poor weak little girl with scarce strength enough in it to breathe the fresh air of heaven. Dr. Griffith was with Mamie at the time and remained with her that night and the following day and night. She was very ill; the village doctor gave but little hope of her recovery, and the disconsolate husband appeared greatly afflicted; but there was a demon of joy dancing in his heart, and he could have thanked God for saving him from a crime, only he had forgotten how to thank God years ago.

All that day of the seventh he watched by her, apparently with the deepest solicitude, but really he was watching her with a cat-like stealthiness dreading to see any signs of improvement. She was very feeble and could scarcely speak, but it seemed to give her great pleasure to have her husband with her; she expected to die, and told him so, committing her two children to his care and praying him to fill as nearly as possible her place to them; he tried to comfort her, and even attempted to laugh away her fears, but there was no heartiness in his voice and only the blindest love could have thought that he meant the words he said.

But Mamie's love was blind now; in the hour which drew her close to the grave, as she thought, she forgave and forgot all his past neglect, all his coldness, all his unkindness; she could only remember that he was her husband, the father of her children, and that he had loved her once; and, when he whispered "Try to live for me, darling," she believed the felt words he uttered, that his old love was returning, and she humbly prayed that her life may be spared, and that she may prove a source of joy and comfort to him in the future.

The day of the seventh was murky and overcast, the sun seemed ashamed to shine out boldly and only showed his face occasionally for a few minutes; it rained fitfully and the wind sighed mournfully through the trees surrounding the cottage; altogether it was a very disagreeable day and one calculated to depress the spirits. Dr. Griffith was fully conscious of its eversuering influence, and after supper he went for a short walk to try and drive away the feeling of depression which was fast stealing over him. He fell "out of sorts" and tried air and exercise to invigorate him.

Mamie was asleep when he returned, but the nurse told him that the village doctor had called during his absence and given her a sleeping draught.

"And he says, sir, that she looks a little better, and if she passes a good night there will be no danger," she added as he turned towards his wife's room.

He stood by the bedside for some minutes gazing intently at her, but he did not seem to see her, his gaze was fixed far, far beyond in that dim and distant future which we are all trying to read, but whose mysteries we cannot pierce. At last he aroused himself with a start and watched her attentively as she slept, calm and peaceful as a little child. Her breathing was soft and regular and the faintest tinge of color was returning to her cheeks; he carefully took her wrist in his hand and counted the pulse; it was very weak, but it was regular and fast assuming a healthy tone, it was clear that the fever was abating and Mamie's chances of life were largely increasing.

"Curse her," he muttered, "the doctor is right, she will live, and if she lives what am I to do?"

He returned to the parlor and sat for a while thinking deeply; a basket containing some

knitting was lying on the table where Mamie had left it when she was taken ill; mechanically he began playing with its contents, pulling over the work without noticing what he was doing. It was a little jacket she had been knitting for the baby she expected, and the pins had been left sticking in the large ball of scarlet worsted; he pulled one of the pins out and began idly pushing it in and pulling it out of the ball; again and again he stuck it, sometimes with a fierce stab as if he was driving it into the heart of an enemy, sometimes with gentle carelessness as if testing the amount of resistance the fluff substance offered to the blunt point of the instrument; that bright little rod of glittering steel seemed to possess a curious fascination for him, and he sat playing with it until the clock tolled out the hour of midnight. He rose feeling hot and feverish and opened the window to let in the cooling air, but still he held the little piece of steel in his hand, and still the thought was ringing in his ears, "if she lives what am I to do?" He turned from the window and approached his wife's room.

"Half-an-hour will tell now," he said, "if she awakes from this sleep with the fever gone, the doctor will be right and she will live; and if she lives what am I to do?"

"It is a terrible blow, my dear sir, a very terrible blow, but not quite unexpected; you must endeavor to bear it with fortitude and not give way to your feelings too freely. We must all die, it is natural to die, sir, and we all have to do it at some time or other. The case was a bad one from the commencement, great prostration, never saw a person more thoroughly prostrated in my life, to be sure I did have some hope last night, she seemed to be rallying a little, but it was only momentary, the last struggle, the final flickering up of life before it went out forever. It is sad, sir, very sad to lose so estimable a lady, but we must all die."

It was the village doctor who spoke, and the scene was Mamie's bed-room. How still and solemn it seemed in the early morning light, and how awful in its terrible quiet seemed that rigid figure lying on the bed. So cold, so calm, so still; a slight smile still hung around the lips where it had been frozen by the icy hand of death; the eyes were closed, and the face was calm and peaceful; death must have come without a struggle, and the spirit have winged its way to its Creator without pain. Very peaceful and placid it looked in the grey tints of morning, very happy and contented to die; but terrible, oh, fearfully terrible to the one who knelt cowering by the bedside, his face hidden in his hands and convulsive sobs shaking his whole frame; he was free, he had attained the end for which he had hoped and plotted; the one barrier to his union with Annie Howson was removed; but as Harry Griffith knelt by that still, placid figure he would have given up all his schemes, forfeited all his hopes, abandoned all his plans if he could only have put the life back into that inanimate clay.

It was the reaction after the long strain on his nerves which caused the sudden outburst of feeling, the village doctor had witnessed, more than any strong returning passion for the dead; for a few minutes he really did feel that he could give up all to restore her to life once more, but it soon passed, and the cold, hard feeling of joy that the one obstacle in his way had been removed, returned, and he rose from his knees without one feeling of pity or sorrow in his heart for the one who had been cut off in the pride of her womanhood.

The baby did not long survive its mother, and on the day following mother and child were buried in one grave in the village churchyard. Dr. Griffith attended the funeral and mourned as became a bereaved husband and father, and a few of the villagers with whom Mamie had become acquainted during her brief sojourn amongst them also attended out of respect, and were not surprised at the depth of emotion shown by the new made widower. Harry Griffith was a good actor, and few could have imagined that his grief was not real and that under the outward garb of sorrow there was a devilish joy filling his heart; all danger was passed now, and he would win "Annie Howson and one hundred thousand dollars."

After the funeral Dr. Griffith had the cottage closed up, discharged the servants with handsome presents for their care of their dead mistress, and took his little girl over to Montreal with him. That afternoon Fan was placed in the Hochelaga Convent, where he had determined to leave her until he made up his mind as to what her future life was to be, and he returned to his office on Beaver Hall Hill for the first time in four days.

He found two notes awaiting him; one was from Annie reproaching him for his neglect in not calling on her, and asking him to see her immediately as she had something important to communicate; the other ran as follows:

MONTREAL, September 9th, 1870.

DEAR DOC.—Having been out of the city on business for the past ten days has prevented my calling on you sooner. You will be glad to hear that I have found the gal—of course you'll be glad, you said so, and as I'm a perfect gentleman myself I always believe what another gentleman says. I've found her for certain—how is that for high, Doc? She's living over in Longueuil—how is that for low, Doc? She is visited constantly by a Mr. Griffith—how is that for Jack, Doc? and I'm coming to see you to-morrow evening to get my five hundred dollars—how is that for game, Doc? Five hundred dol-

lars aint much considering the stakes you're playing for; but, I am a perfect gentleman and as that was the sum agreed on, it will do for the present. Eight o'clock sharp I'll be with you, until then

I remain,
Yours to command,
JAMES HARWAY.

The letter was written in a sprawling, irregular shaky hand, as if the writer was not very much given to correspondence, and his nerves were rather unsteady; the odor of stale tobacco hung palpably about it, and on one corner was the unmistakable impress of a wet glass, which had probably been placed there to hold the paper steady.

Dr. Griffith smiled in a quiet, satisfied way as he read the note, and then tore it into small pieces and threw them into the empty grate.

"All right, my delapidated friend," thought he, "you can come as soon as you please now, you are too late, for I am free now and by to-morrow night, if I mistake not, I shall have no cause to care how soon it is known that Mamie Morton who not drowned six years ago, but was buried to-day in Longueuil cemetery."

He ate his supper with a good appetite, smoked a cigar with apparent relish and started about half-past seven to pay a visit to Miss Howson.

(To be continued.)

THE CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

The chimney swallow is easily known by its deeply forked tail, the ruddy hue on its throat, and its lightish tinted breast. The rapid movements of the bird—its sudden darts and turnings now up, now down, over the observer's head, and then skimming the ground in long, arrow-like flights—present a specimen of a living machine in beautiful and perfect action. But, notwithstanding this power of flight, the birds are sometimes completely exhausted by their journeys across the sea. They can battle for a long time with the mere force of a tempest, but when the blast is both cold and strong, the winged voyagers are almost paralysed. A whole army of swallows will then crowd the rigging of some lonely ship, clinging for hours to ropes and spars, until recovered strength again enables them to obey the "forward" impulse. No wonder if these beings of summer times sometimes marvel at the rough treatment received in our ruder latitudes. A cutting "north-easter" is no smiling reception for a creature which has been basking for months in the sun of Egypt. The result may amaze the swallows, but human philosophy can explain it all. They perish by thousands in such years. On one bitter spring day, a gentleman picked up in the course of his morning's walk ninety-two chimney swallows, not dead, but benumbed by the cold. Being placed in a warm hamper, they all recovered, and flew off the next day. On another occasion numbers were found on the widow-sills of a country house, heaped on each other five or six deep. Instinct had clearly led them to seek aid from man.—*Cassell's Popular Educator.*

A THOUGHT AFTER CHRISTMAS.

On the whole, it was well that the bells were rung, that wise men, like the magi of old on the first Christmas morning, bore gift, to childhood, that good wishes were exchanged, that feasts were spread, that the churches were filled with worshiping and rejoicing crowds, and that, for one day, all Christendom was bright with happiness and resonant with congratulations. It is well, too, to be sorry for those who, bound to the science of materials, have no comprehension of the science of morals and of history,—to pity those who, recognizing no facts but those apprehensible by the senses, fail to find the life and love which inform them, and ignore a revelation of truths of which the senses take no cognizance. For the bells will ring on through all the generations with finer and fuller music on every coming Christmas; the hands of those now unborn will blossom with richer gifts than those which bless our children; congratulations will fill all the lands and all the homes of the world, and our blessed fable will live until it shall be decked with all the laurels of Science, and until Reason shall be a devout learner at the feet of Faith. The one reforming, purifying, humanizing and saving influence of the world will not be outlived or outlaid. Even if its perpetuity depended upon the suffrages of humanity—which it does not—humanity cannot afford its sacrifice and will not consent to it.—*Scribner's.*

Laughing-gas is nothing new; but the "laughing-plant" is a novelty. It is a native of Arabia, grows about six inches high, and bears yellow flowers. Two or three black seeds are produced, which, when pulverized and administered, operate in a curious way. For about an hour the person who has taken it laughs, sings, dances, and conducts himself in the most ludicrous and extravagant manner. After the excitement has passed he falls into a profound slumber, on awaking from which he is unconscious of what has occurred.

Somebody inquiring at the Springfield (Illinois) Post-office for a letter for Mike Howe, received the gruff answer that there was no letter there for anybody's cow.