

The Love Cure.

(By Mary A. P. Stansbury.)

The windows of the great house were darkened, the door-bell was muffled, and the pavement in front strewn with rushes, while the physician's carriage waited long outside.

In the hushed chamber Mrs. Allison lay still with closed eyes. Doctor and nurse bent over her in anxious ministration, but the expression of the wan features never faltered, and, beyond a faint monosyllable elicited with difficulty in reply to a question, no words came from the pallid lips. The watchers exchanged significant glances.

'I will be back in an hour,' the doctor said, looking at his watch.

As he stepped into the hall, a waiting figure came forward to meet him.

'How is she now, doctor?'

The doctor shook his head.

'Shall we go into the next room, Mr. Allison?' said he. 'I will speak with you there.'

The two men sat down facing each other, Mr. Allison grasping the arms of his chair as if to steady himself. The lines of his strong, masterful face were drawn, and drops stood on his forehead.

'May I venture to ask you a delicate question, Mr. Allison?' said the physician. 'Can it be that some secret grief or anxiety is preying upon your wife's mind?'

'"Secret grief—anxiety"? Certainly not! My dear doctor, how could you imagine such a thing?'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Allison. It occurred to me only as a remote possibility. The facts of the case are these: The force of Mrs. Allison's disease is broken, and she is absolutely without fever. Yet she shows no sign of rallying. On the contrary, she constantly grows weaker. It is impossible to arouse her. There seems to be not only no physical response to the remedies employed, but she apparently lacks even the slightest interest in anything, including her recovery. Unless this condition be speedily changed—which appears altogether unlikely—I can no longer offer any hope. The patient is evidently drifting away from us, while we stand powerless to hold her back.'

Mr. Allison groaned aloud and laid his face in his hands. The physician rose, and, after a few sympathetic expressions, left him alone.

Meanwhile, in the sick room, the nurse busied herself with conscientious care about her charge. There was no perceptible movement in the outlines of the quiet form lying upon the bed, and the skilled watcher had no suspicion that behind the shut eyelids and apathetic features mind and spirit were still active.

'It isn't so hard to die, after all,' ran the slow current of the sick woman's thought, 'It is easier than to live. One grows tired, somehow, after so many years. It seems sweet just to stop trying, and—let go! I have accomplished so little of all I meant to do, but—the Lord understands!'

'The children will miss me for a while—poor dears—but sorrow isn't natural to young people. I'm not necessary to them as I was when they were little. It would have been dreadful to leave my babies, but now—it is different. Helen has her lover—Roger is a good man, and they will be going into a home of their own before long. And Dorothy—so beautiful, and such a favorite—her friends must comfort her. And the boys—somehow they seem to have grown away from me a bit. I oughtn't to mind it. It must be so, I suppose, as boys grow into men. It will be harder for their father; but



THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER.

'A man severe he was, and stern to view:  
I knew him well, and every truant knew.  
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.  
The village all declared how much he knew;  
'Twas certain he could write and cipher too;

While words of learned length and thunder-  
ing sound  
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;  
And still they gazed, and still the wonder  
grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew,  
—'The Deserted Village,' Goldsmith.

—he is so driven at the office—especially since he went into politics—that he can't have time to mourn as he would have mourned years ago—when we were first married. How happy we were—so long—so long ago—in the little house on Carlton street, where Helen was born! Henry has been a rising man. Any woman might be proud to be his wife. Somehow I've hardly kept pace with him, but I've loved him—loved him!'

The air of the room had grown heavy and the nurse set the door ajar. A sound of suppressed voices reached her ear, and she glanced anxiously towards the bed, but the sick woman showed no sign of consciousness.

'I need not close the door,' she said to herself. 'She hears nothing.'

Once more skill and training were at fault. That which in the nurse's ears, was only an indistinct murmur, to the nerve-sense sharpened by illness slowly separated itself into words which made their way to the consciousness awake and alert in the weak frame, as if spoken along some invisible telephone-line of the spirit.

'O Helen!' Could it be Dorothy's voice so broken and sobbing? 'No hope! Did the doctor say that?'

'None, unless her condition changes—those were his words father told me.' The words dropped drearily like the dropping of water in a cave.

'But she was better yesterday!' That was Rob, the handsome young collegian, who had been summoned home when his mother's illness began to cause apprehension.

'So it seemed. But she does not rally—she takes no notice.'

'But she can't be going—to die—and leave us! She wouldn't do such a thing—Mother!' The tones of sixteen-year-old Rupert were smitten through with incredulous horror.

'I don't understand it,' answered the older sister. 'She is "drifting away," the doctor says. O Dorothy! O boys!' she said, in a low, intense voice, 'we haven't any of us looked after mother as we ought. We have always been so used to having her do for us. I have been miserably selfish since—since I had Roger. I didn't mean it, but I see it all now.'

'You haven't been one-half as selfish as I,' sobbed Dorothy. 'Here have I been rushing here and there evening after evening, and she often sitting by herself! I must have been out of my mind! As if all the parties and concerts in the world were worth so much to me as mamma's little finger!'

'And I've been so careless about writing to her regularly.' There was a break in Rob's voice. 'There was always something or other going on out of study hours, and I didn't realize. It was so easy to think mother wouldn't mind. And now—why, girls, I never could go back to college at all