

thus grown up between the families a warm friendship; and what wonder that between Ernest and Edna this should have ripened into something more. Daily in one another's society, it is not surprising that there existed between them an affection which, perhaps, never does exist excepting when it has grown with the growth, and strengthened with the strength, of two earnest, thoughtful minds and loving hearts.

A year previous to the opening of our story, Ernest, on his becoming Mr. Clifford's partner, begged him to sanction his engagement with his daughter. This, the old gentleman willingly agreed to, for Ernest was a young man after his own heart, and he was ever holding him up as an example to his good-humored, careless son, Charles, who—though agreeing in all his father said, for he believed and declared that Leighton was the best fellow in the world—yet in his own mind thought "that he could never be such an extra good chap, and what was the use trying." Mr. Clifford, however, said that there must be a "special clause in the Deed of Transfer," as he termed it, and it was this: that Ernest must not remove his "rosebud," (as he loved to call Edna,) until she had reached her twenty-first year; it would be better for Ernest, the father said, as it would give him a chance to rise in his profession, unencumbered by the cares of married life; and the poor old man secretly hoped that he might never live to see his darling transferred to another's keeping.

Mr. Clifford was not exactly what is called an old man—being not more than fifty-eight—but he had known much sorrow, and was prematurely aged. Though not naturally taciturn or reserved, many circumstances of his life had tended to make him so; and to no one, now, did he ever speak of his feelings. He attended the services of his church, regularly; but hitherto had gone more as a matter of form, than from a real interest in spiritual things. The clergyman, until lately, was a man almost completely absorbed in study, seldom seen by his parishioners—excepting in the

pulpit—his sermons, though truly Scriptural, were not of an arousing or awakening character; he manifested little interest in his people, and seldom visited them, except in cases of severe illness. At length, wearied of a town-parish, he resigned his charge, and was succeeded by the Rev. George Wyndgate. To the new rector, Mr. Clifford was beginning to be much attached. His clever, well-delivered sermons had at first engaged his attention and excited his admiration; but his goodness and kindness of heart had already won his affection, for the Rev. George Wyndgate was a man for whom none but the most indifferent or profane could but feel respect and love. Though hardly three months had elapsed since his arrival at L——, he had already gained the esteem and affection of most, if not all, of his flock. His wife—a kind, motherly woman—was completely absorbed with the cares of her household and numerous family, consisting of three sons and four daughters, of whom three—named, respectively, Lionel, Margaret, and Jessie—were now grown up.

Margaret Wyndgate was a girl of no ordinary capacities; she was her father's coadjutor in all works of faith and labors of love, and was already well known in the homes of the poor belonging to Mr. Wyndgate's congregation—in her own home she was invaluable. Margaret was supposed to be able and willing to do anything any one wanted. Above all, she was an earnest Christian, and it was her humble endeavor to follow in the steps of her blessed Master, who went about doing good. Jessie was a gay, good-humored girl, with less depth of character than her sister, and possessing more of her eldest brother's disposition; but affectionate, and ever unwilling to grieve those she loved. She gave up any gaiety in which she would have been inclined to indulge, if her father and mother disapproved. She was the sunshine of her home, ever cheerful and ready to oblige, and a great favorite with her younger brothers and sisters.

To no one in the Rectory were Lionel