

able without him in any event. How she raved that her pride had been her destruction. Vane might have been her own, she had cast him away. *Woe, woe, miserable woe. Two weeks and I am lost forever.*

### Chapter Three

Oh purblind race of miserable men,  
How many among us at this very hour  
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,  
By taking true for false or false for true;  
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of the world,  
Groping

—Enid—Tennyson.

Meanwhile Vane Helmore was speeding on his way to Brandon. The emotions and tender feelings which stirred his breast were invisible from the exterior. Though somewhat in doubt as to the issue of his suit he retained a composure truly marvellous.

Besides himself there were three ladies and five gentlemen seated in the coach—in truth a small number. Before long all were on the best of terms, etiquette for the time being placed aside. Its iron links are often torn asunder when travellers meet together. How ridiculous it would appear if nine or ten persons were to meet and not speak, simply and solely because it was unfashionable to do so! While the train was tearing along faster and faster; while field after field of waving grain, as yet green, was passed in succession, Vane found himself the centre of attraction, for one gentleman desirous of amusing his fellow voyagers and so pass the time as pleasantly as possible, offered to relate a short story, provided the other male passengers would do the same. This was readily agreed to. The gentleman's narrative was most interesting, describing as he did the attack on Fort Garry, the many skirmishes therewith connected, the daring deeds of bravery by lone and defenceless women, the appearance, character and discipline of the generals and troops, and sundry other items in connection with the Rebellion. Vane's turn came next. Then did the full force of his eloquent oratory develop itself.

Choosing for his subject the remarkable adventures of Ferdinand de Soto, he soon enthralled his audience. At first his voice was soft and low, but as the spirit stirring actions of this remarkable man were recounted, it rose higher and higher,—dignified yet musical—awe-inspiring and grand. All are acquainted with the achievements of De Soto, how with Pizarro he had conquered the kingdom of Peru, and was again eager to explore. How an expedition to discover new regions and plunder their inhabitants was fitted out under his command. With six hundred men he landed on the coast of Florida, and marched into the interior. His object was to capture a large number of the natives. The Indians were warlike and resisted their would-be captors. Many hard battles were fought, and many captives taken. The Indians amused their conquerors with tales of enormous treasures of gold. To stimulate their knowledge, De Soto ordered many of them to be burnt to death. He eagerly sought for a City of Gold, but without success. Almost starved to death, he and his followers at length reached the noble Mississippi. Here, De Soto, broken in health and spirit, caught the fever and died. Interred in the trunk of a tree, the discoverer of this mighty river was buried beneath its waters. All this is perfectly familiar to us, yet the story seems always new.

When Vane at last finished his narrative, a deep sigh escaped from his companions. They had been enraptured—such story-telling was never heard before. Imagine their surprise upon finding that nearly three hours had been thus pleasantly spent. Still, it was so. Neither the shrieking whistle of the engine, the shouts of the conductor, nor the stoppages of the train distracted them from the tale. Vane was heartily thanked by all, which he accepted with humble courtesy, pleasing the others the more by his charming behaviour. When Brandon was reached, adieus were rendered in the warmest manner, and