

not hear and the purport of which I am yet partially ignorant of.

Then the stranger sulkily carried the boy back to the house. I heard him utter some dreadful oaths as he passed near us. The intention I believe was to have thrown the lad in the mill race; but the miller, either by reason of changing his mind or through fear, had ordered the villain to spare the poor boy's life. It was a relief to me, I confess, to see the matter thus disposed of, but, with Werbletree, I was satisfied that something should be done speedily to get the boy out of his present circumstances and the dangers that surrounded him. And through my friend's devices the feat was soon accomplished.

Before two weeks had passed Arthur Drammel as well as Werbletree and myself were back in my father's old summer residence near Hazelgrove.

CHAPTER XI.

If you to me be cold,
And I be false to you,
The world will go on, I think,
Just as it used to do.

—Will Carleton.

Shortly after my return to the old country homestead I called on a young friend in town, of whom it is not necessary to the ends of my narrative that I mention anything in particular, nor is he, by reason of his slight connection to these events, worth even being designated by a name. But this friend, as was customary with him, invited me out to see some of his friends. On the occasion in question, however, I met more friends than I bargained for. We went together to a club of which he was a member, and there I met Walter Marston, whom I had not seen since the night on the river shore, when I had poured out such a flood of confessions.

I had not seen Jessie Harle since, and I was anxious to know whether he had, and if so what her manners had been.

Strange I took such an interest in Walter Marston's wellfare—or was it Jessie Harle's?

Poor, pretty little Jessie! The idea of her beauty never leaves me. I am still in meditation repeating that merited praise, "Pretty little Jessie." Her beauty haunts me still, and if it does now, ten thousand times more so did it then. With breathless anticipation did I listen to his answers as I questioned him as to the girl's health, etc., in an apparently light manner, intending to laugh with him at his reply. But I might have known Walter Marston better than that. He had been unsuccessful in his attempts to meet Jessie again, two occasions of his visiting her she having been from home. From the circumstances of his previous visit Walter suspected that her aunt's stating that she was not home only meant she did not wish to see him, and so I construed it when he freely told me of his difficulties.

I tried to make myself believe that I intended acting for his interest when I suggested that I would go to her and try to discover her feelings.

He blushed slightly at my suggestion, and then as a drowning man catches at straws he agreed to it as an only hope of seeing the girl again.

Now that I had gained such an object—of seeing Jessie again, and by Walter's approval—I was eager to get away; and that very night before I returned home I walked along the street past the sweet girl's dwelling. The house was still lit up, but at such an hour and with positively no excuse that I could frame in any way I held back from entering, and in spite of my desire the demands of propriety rather than the laws of etiquette restrained me from calling.

But the following evening I called and Jessie was home alone, and as I followed at her bidding into the little parlor I felt agitated and awkward, an uncouth feeling with me I can assure you.

Jessie's hair was flowing loosely over her shoulders as I always admired it, and as she looked up archly at me from beneath her heavy silken lashes the mischievousness of her character was exhibited as I had often seen it before in happy hours long gone by.

I could see no sorrow in her expression indicative of any such feeling for Walter Marston.

Was she yet to be mine? Fate, I meditated, seemed working toward that end;

So long as her bashful reserve continued did my awkwardness increase, and her case now seemed as mine in her company when she was so young that I considered her a little girl. But that time had passed, and though I felt still a pity for her beauty, and that it devolved on me as a duty to protect it, I had still a perfect knowledge that she was not the same in beauty, in form, or in disposition that she was when I first met her. The rounded, healthy cheeks were not so plump or red, and the effect produced upon me by her bounding, frolicking movements no longer existed. Her whole bearing, in short, exhibited not the buoyant spirit of a school girl, but the stately beauty and dignity of a developed woman. Two years had changed her wonderfully, but still she was the same to me. Her mental beauty, her magnetic influence and her easy, graceful manners were alike powers which led me up out of the common track of life, and made my very flesh tingle with pleasure in her presence. Oh the divine ecstasies of love, and the pain of unrequited affection! Jessie was not the same to me to-night. Walter Marston's appeal had been agitating her, and the longer friendship that had existed between them had gained a stronger hold upon her, together with his assiduous attentions and evident affection, than my passionate, though never-expressed fondness, and my seeming coldness in not taking pains to meet her oftener.

Was I really beginning to view Walter Marston as a rival? Until now I had never looked at it in that way. But such seemed now to be the case. I had never suspected that it would result in this—I had never dreamed that my fondness for her, by reason of my previous circumstances, could end thus.

I had forgotten my mission to see Jessie. Walter Marston was not thought of again till I was about to depart, and then I discovered that she had been entirely ignorant of his calling on her, owing to her being absent and her aunt's not wishing her to receive his attentions, contrary to the wish of her sister at Shulton. For as already hinted, she had sent Jessie to her sister, for no other purpose than to give Walter ample opportunity to pursue his object, which she, with that match-making instinct, so common in woman, had seen for some time past.

Poor Jessie was without a mother to advise and govern her, and left thus to her aunts' guidance the best traits of her character were left undeveloped.

Too common is this state of affairs in girls with the advantage of a mother and a home. It is indeed remarkable how little most mothers realize the power they are capable of exerting in moulding out their children's characters. Only a father's influence could be greater in a daughter's development, and that too poor Jessie had scarcely known. I have wondered that the warmth of her nature had still kept so warm in spite of the cold, repellant aspect the world must have always presented to her.

But those matters were not thought of on the night of which I write. They are the outgrowth of present reflection.

I soon became accustomed to the girl's manners, and, like my old self, easy in her company. We conversed of various very uninteresting things for a while with a cold formality that chilled me, but as the evening progressed our thoughts flowed backward, and we talked as we were wont to do, and Jessie became more friendly; but as much as I would try to bring to her mind her former feelings, she never intimated that she had any recollection of them, or that I had ever been more than a mere acquaintance. Not till I was leaving did I see any of the old-time fondness, and then, as I said good-night and warmly pressed her hand her bright eyes that had so lately assumed such a cold expression, filled with tears, that sparkling, showed her heart's real tenderness. As we stood thus, her soft hand still in mine, my left hand involuntarily crept over her drooping shoulder beneath her heavy mass of hair.

"Good-night, Jessie," I said again, and was drawing her face to mine, when she suddenly drew herself up in an indignant attitude and her eyes gleamed with all their power of resentment.

How different to her former passive deportment!

"I beg your pardon, Miss Harle," I said, assuming some of her own dignity. "You have grown cold toward me since we last met; may I enquire the cause?"