

Papa had been an invalid so long, and had left his business affairs so entirely to an inefficient lawyer, that everything was found to be in a terribly confused state. And when Dr. Russell, kindly looking to my interest, had affairs straightened out, it was found that, after paying all debts, there would remain only a very small surplus for my support.

I remained with our old friend, after papa's death, until I obtained a position as governess. I was so thoroughly worn out with care and anxiety, as well as from bodily exhaustion, that I had neither the courage nor strength to start in my new life until the winter was well over, and the warm spring sunshine brought with it life and hope.

Edgar's letters had been long, but not as frequent as at first. Mine were never long, as he had all the news on his side; I could only tell him the daily events of my quiet life, and my thoughts, all breathing love for him. At last his letters appeared different to me. No personal news, which I so loved to hear, but all were descriptive, guide-booky—telling me what I might find there was a difference. At first, I laid it all to my morbid state; but as I became more like my old self, the tone of his letters seemed the same.

While at school, I had formed quite an intimate friendship with a girl named Anna Morrison. Rich, amiable, and handsome, she led the whole school. She became very fond of me, and I of her. Though she went abroad soon after our school-life ended, we still kept up, in a most unusual manner, a devoted correspondence. I had written to her, at the time of my engagement to Edgar, and had received the warmest and sweetest congratulations by the next mail. She had lately written that, much to her delight, she had met Edgar in Rome, at an artist's reception.

"With your name for a passport, it did not take us long to become acquainted, you can imagine," she wrote, going on to speak of him in glowing terms. "He is fast making a name here. His genius alone would gain that for him. And then his uncommon beauty and charming manners make him a great addition to society."

It was very kind, I know, of Anna to speak of him so highly, and I always wanted her to like him. But, with the perversity of human nature, I almost wished she was not so much pleased with him. For deep in my heart was a feeling that she unintentionally had caused the changed tone of his recent letters.

"What a beautiful place!" I said to myself, as I gazed at my future home. For it would be that to me, I supposed, as long as I assumed my duties of governess to the satisfaction of its inmates.

I saw a large, old-fashioned house, with terraces and a smooth, velvet lawn separating it from the street, all shaded by several large elms.

A flower garden on one side, and a croquet lawn on the other, complete this lovely old place.

The interior, as I found afterwards, was fully as attractive. There was a hall running clear through the house, with rooms on both sides. Large rooms, and yet the house was full of uncanny nooks and corners, also. For each generation had added to the homestead, and improved it, according to their individual tastes.

In short, it was a great, home-like house, especially when compared to the straight-in-the-air house of to-day.

Mrs. Ralston met me in the hall, and showed me to my room, a lovely little apartment, furnished in white.

"Do not feel obliged to come down to-night; I will send you some tea, and meanwhile you can rest yourself, and get used partially to your new surroundings."

I was unprepared for so much kindness from a stranger, and the tears came into my eyes as I thanked her.

"You are so young," she said, looking at me. "You do not seem to be much older than my daughter Edith. But I must leave you now. I hope you will find everything convenient. If you wish for anything, do not hesitate to ring."

I unpacked my trunk, put my belongings in their respective places, and throwing on a wrapper, seated myself at the open window, trying to realize where I was, and feeling how utterly novel was my position.

A servant brought me a most tempting supper, and in spite of new surroundings, which cannot but fail to be depressing to everyone, I observed that very little remained to be taken away.

I was up early next morning, and dressing quickly, ran down through the great halls, out into the garden, so that I could drink in all its beauties alone without the feeling that I must express my admiration in words.

Early as I was, there was some one ahead of me. "I know there is no Mr. Ralston, so who can it be?" I thought, as the figure threw away his cigar and came toward me.

"The children's governess, I presume?" he began. "Permit me to introduce myself—Richard Graham, Mrs. Ralston's brother. I suppose you are the new governess, as I know she came last night. Otherwise, judging by your looks, I should take you to be a playfellow of the children's."

I was both angry and ashamed—angry at his unpleasant tone, and ashamed because of my youthful looks, which I began to fear would seriously injure my chances as a governess, they having been twice remarked upon since my arrival.

"I am the new governess," I said, in my most dignified manner. "But indeed I am not young—I am twenty-two!" with a burst of confidence which I would have given words to recall it being pleasantly received by a half-smiling laugh, prefaced by the words:

"A grave age, indeed. I suppose you have given up all the frivolities of youth?"

I said nothing, involuntarily glancing at my black dress. A current of thought swept over me; the loss of papa, Edgar's unintentional indifference—in short, my loneliness, made me feel sick and faint. Only with a powerful effort did I awake myself to realities, and start to go in.

"You are ill! The sun is too strong for you! Let me walk to the house—No!" as I shook my head. "Take my advice, and don't try this again."

Encouraged by the difference of tone, for I hardly recognized it to be the same as I heard a few minutes ago, I turned and looked at him for the first time, and our eyes met. I never should have had the audacity to have spoken at all, had I looked into them before, so stern and grave were they. Mine quickly fell before them.

The summer passed by, and the cool and perfect September days came. Only a year had passed since Edgar and I parted. We still kept up a sort of hollow correspondence. At last, after a long letter from Anna Morrison, showing me, unknowingly, more of both their feelings than ever before, I wrote to Edgar, releasing him from our engagement. I soon received a letter in return, begging me to believe he still loved me, confessing that he did admire Anna—at first was interested in her as she was my friend, and afterwards liked her for her own sake—but that he did not love her, and had no reason to suppose she cared for him other than as the lover of her dearest friend.

This, and more; and though I knew Edgar was sincere in all he wrote, I could not feel he was what he had been to me. I was not exactly jealous, although it appeared so, but the feeling that they were better suited to each other than we could ever be took possession of me, and our engagement was broken.

Mrs. Ralston was never equal to entertaining visitors in summer to any great extent, being a sufferer from the heat. So, during the warm weather, the family, when heak, travelling, were quite by themselves. But the autumn found the house well filled with guests, for it was a place charming to visit at all seasons.

"Gertrude, my dear," said Mrs. Ralston one day to me, for she always called me that now, "I can see that you and Richard do not get along very well together. I have seen it for some time, but have hoped you would become better friends. I do not know I ought to say that, for Richard never quarrels with people unless he takes some interest in them. A queer and disagreeable habit, you think, and so it is. Listen, Gertrude, and I will tell you something: it is the old story of 'false and fair,' and Richard now has no confidence in woman. For when a deep nature like his is stirred to its depths, it takes some time for it to regain its natural evenness."

"Poor Mr. Graham!" I thought to myself, smiling, the next moment, at my daring to pity him. But I did, all the same, and hated the unknown, besides, for so embittering his whole life.

Richard Graham and I did quarrel terribly. We never met without disagreeing, and yet there were times when he seemed so strong and true that I felt myself involuntarily drawn towards him.

Mrs. Ralston was to give a party that evening, and as she was expecting numerous guests during the day, she was very busy, needing my assistance besides. Doors had been opening and shutting all day, and merry greetings exchanged. Even Richard Graham seemed to have caught the infectious spirit of the household, for every little while I could hear his low, deep voice, saying pleasant nothings to his sister's guests.

I was putting the finishing touches to some flowers in the drawing room, walking slowly backwards to observe the effect of my labours before going to my room to dress, when I heard a voice which sent my thoughts flying back to that last summer by the sea. I could see the red curtains waving to and fro in the cool evening air; the little table, with tea still on it, waiting for some one who was late; the soft Turkey rugs on the floor, and the low easy-chairs, with papa in his favourite one on the veranda. And, later, two figures seated on the rocks, hand in hand, whispering sweet nonsense.

All this came up so vividly before me, that I wondered if I were awake or dreaming, when the door opened, and Richard Graham entered, followed by a slighter, familiar figure. I was stupefied for a moment, so great was my surprise. Then I tried to pass them in the gathering dusk. But I was perceived by those searching eyes, which nothing seemed to escape.

"Miss Gertrude! What are you doing here, in this semi-darkness?"

He had time to say no more, nor I to reply, for at the sound of my name Edgar Gray turned, and, with a surprised "Gertrude! you here?" took my hands in a hearty, friendly way, and I knew I foresaw truly when I told him he would love Anna Morrison.

I was dressed for the evening, and was sitting for a few moments in my room before going down stairs, for Mrs. Ralston had insisted on my appearance. I knew I did not love Edgar now, and yet I was strangely sad to-night.

"No analyst can guess the cause, A woman's reason laughs at laws, Sure, I am glad to know the wound I gave is healed, that he has found Love's blessedness and peace: and yet A woman never can forget The man who once had loved her."

I repeated, softly, to myself, as I went down the broad stairs, forming, in my white dress, a part of the same ghostly picture in the flood of moonlight which came in from the open doors; for the air to-night was particularly soft and clear.

Nearly all had gone out to breathe the fresh air, and the lawns and garden were dotted over with gaily-dressed people. So I crept round to the library, to see if I could find Edith. It was separated from the drawing-room by heavy curtains, and as I partially hid myself in their folds, trying to attract Edith's attention, I was aware of another presence in the room, and in the dim light, in one of the deep window-seats, I perceived Richard Graham. He was in such deep thought, that he neither saw nor heard me, until, frightened by his silence, I laid my hand on his arm, forgetting my usual fear of him, and said:

"You are ill! Let me do something for you! Let me call your sister!" But as I started forward a hand stopped me, and a voice said:

"I am not ill. As long as Mr. Gray is not in sight, let me take you to my sister. If he were, I should not think of being so officious."

I looked at him in amazement, but had no opportunity to speak, as we were now at Mrs. Ralston's side.

"I was afraid you were still asleep; you were so tired," she smilingly said. "Now enjoy yourself," and she introduced several people to me.

I did enjoy myself, and danced, laughed, and flirted to my heart's content. I felt perfectly bewitched that night—not like a staid governess, but as any girl of my age should feel. Wherever I went I saw a pair of stern eyes following me.

I had been dancing so steadily that the air of the house seemed stifling, and, throwing a light shawl over my head, I went out into the garden. I wandered down one of the paths, thinking of the strange turn affairs had taken to-night, and trying, most of all, to understand Richard Graham's looks and words. Wrapped though I was in my thoughts, I heard approaching foot-steps, and crouched down behind some tall, white lilies. Richard walked passed me, stern and pale as in the first part of the evening. As he passed my hiding-place again I caught the words:

"Old lovers!" "Ah, no!" I said, in a voice hardly above a whisper, as I rose from my fragrant hiding-place.

Low as I said it, he heard me. "Gertrude, you here? What are you doing? Hearing my thoughts, so that you can trample on them? That is a favorite pastime of you all!" in his bitter tone I had learned to know so well.

"No—no! I wanted to tell you that Edgar and I are only friends," I said, in a foolish voice.

I drew nearer to him in my eagerness, when my hands were taken in his, and his voice said:

"Is that the truth? Forgive me for doubting, but I have been deceived once. Child—child! are you sure of what you are saying?" and my hands fairly ached in the intensity of his grasp.

I could only murmur: "Indeed it is true. Won't you believe?" A look of relief came over his face. He bent his head, and whispered in my burning ear:

"Do you think you could ever love such an ugly, jealous fellow as I am?" There was no need for me to answer, for my love was in my face; and, as he clasped me to him, and our lips met, I knew we both truly loved at last.

A. W.

Boys Again.

It is related of the late Judge Black that in 1857, just after he was appointed Attorney-General of the United States, he was staying at the Astor House in New York. Scores of leading politicians called upon him. One day, a small, gray-haired man arrived at the hotel, and registered himself as Judge J. Williams, Iowa. On seeing the name of Judge Black on the book, he took a card and wrote,—

"The Supreme Judge of Iowa presents his compliments to the Attorney-General of United States." He sent this up to Judge Black's room together with a half-sheet of paper on which he had written,—

"O Jerry, dear Jerry, I've found you at last, And memory, burdened with scenes of the past, Returns to old Somerset's mountain of snow, When you was but Jerry and I was but Joe."

In less than three minutes the great, dignified Judge Black was coming down the stairs, two steps at a time, with the little bell-boy in close pursuit.

The old school-mates and law-students were together after a separation of some thirty years.

Two old men embraced each other, and neither was able to utter a word. Both have passed away, and no better representatives of the American bar that have sprung from humble origin can be found in American history.

Proposal and Reply.

A widower named Little, shortly after he lost his wife, proposed to Hannah More, who was a small woman, in the following manner:

"I lost the Little that I had, My heart is sad and sore; I'm sure I would be very glad To have a Little More."

To which Hannah More replied:

"I'm sorry for the grief you've had, The pain you must endure; The heart by Little made so sad, A Little More won't cure."