

with large dark eyes, and hair like "the raven's wing," but without proud, selfish, and artful, but with an acquired softness of manner that partially concealed these defects. An only child, she had been petted and caressed, until the wayward girl had become transformed into the wilful woman, with all the strong impulses of her nature unchecked and uncontrolled by principle of affection, and yet, unlike as were their characters, Helen Linwood and Clara Howland were friends, in the worldly acceptance of the term; but though Helen's warm heart found some traits of character in Clara to love, and while free from every jealous thought, she admired her rare beauty, and generously excused her faults, Clara could not, and did not love the pure, high minded girl, whose gentle disposition, as well as exceeding loveliness, had won all hearts, and the words of praise lavished so freely upon Helen by old and young, fell like drops of poison into Clara's burning bosom.

A brilliant party was to be given at Mrs. Howland's and Clara stood before her mirror arrayed in a beautiful and costly dress, with the proud consciousness of beauty lighting up her brilliant features. Clara had long guessed the secret of Helen's heart; she had watched every tell-tale blush and smile, and she knew, though words had never revealed it, that Dr. Langdon loved Helen Linwood, and that she was not indifferent to that love, and in the depths of her wild, un-governed nature, she had vowed that she should never be his. For years she had loved him with all the selfish ardor that could but characterize the love of such a being, and she could not bear that another should win the heart that had turned so coldly from her; and she had resolved to take a bold step to defeat the end she most dreaded, the marriage of Helen and Dr. Langdon.

That day, in seemingly strictest confidence, she had imparted to Helen a secret, which she said was interwoven with her very being; she told her that her hopes in the future were about to be realized, and she had promised to become the wife of him she loved best on earth; and when Helen, with fond eagerness, had asked the name, Clara had hid her blushing face upon her shoulder and whispered the name of "Langdon!"

Helen's cheek grew pale, and for a moment her little features seemed chilled, but, with a strong effort, she rallied, and bending her head to Clara's cheek, kissed her fondly, and tried hard to feel that she did not love her less, although she had taken from her the brightest hope that had ever lighted her pathway.

Clara had returned home, exulting in the hope of the success of her project, and Helen sat by the window where the cool breeze could play upon her burning brow, and tried to still the tumultuous thoughts that thronged her brain. Vividly she passed came all before her, and the blush of mortified pride and feeling dyed her cheek and brow, as she remembered how often she had betrayed her preference for him. The excited state of her feelings made her magnify every circumstance of the kind, and she felt degraded in her own eyes, as she thought how he must despise the heart that gave its love unsought; and then, as the remembrance of that love came over her mind, she hid her face in her hands, and tears flowed fast and free.

Twilight came on, and its shadows deepened into night, but still she sat there, absorbed in her own sad thoughts.

The entrance of her maid,—who came to assist her in preparing for the evening, roused her from her bitter reverie, and pushing back the disheveled locks from her throbbing temples, she rose to her feet, and hastily began her preparations, and a short time after, when her cousin Mrs. Linwood, came in to put the finishing touches to her dress, Helen's features betrayed no traces of her recent emotion.

That night there was a deeper flush on Helen's cheek, and a brighter beam in her eye, and her voice, though slightly tremulous at times, was more than usually gay and mirthful in its tones, and none could have read beneath that bright ex-

terior, the feelings that swelled her heart, and oppressed her brain.

Never had she looked lovelier than on that night, and so thought Dr. Langdon as he advanced to speak to her as she entered Mrs. Howland's drawing room. Helen's heart beat almost audibly, as he took her hand, and fearing he might observe her embarrassment, and detect the cause, she hastily withdrew it, and the smile that accompanied her few words of greeting, he saw was constrained and cold. Touched by her manner, he turned away, and meeting the eye of Clara he crossed the room to her and when Helen saw him again, he was standing by her side, her hand within his arm, and her beautiful face upturned to his. With a faint, sickening sensation, Helen turned away, and forgetful of all around her, seated herself by an open window where the heavy curtains partially enveloped her form, and where she could gaze upon the calm, still starlight without. A few moments later, a gentleman followed her, and seating himself by her side began a conversation in which she took but little share.

Frederick Loring had loved Helen Linwood long and devotedly, but had never dared to breathe to her his feelings; but at that moment there was a subdued softness in her manner, a touching sweetness in her tones, that made him love her more, and dare to hope what he never hoped before. Helen, engrossed by her own thoughts, listened dreamily as he spoke of the beauty of the quiet evening—of poetry—of love, and as he talked, she gazed into the heavens above her, unheeding the passionate gaze that was bent so earnestly upon her, and though he spoke in low, soft whispers which betrayed the love his bosom felt, she did not realize his meaning until emboldened by her silence he placed his hand upon hers which lay upon the window sill, and bending nearer, spoke plainly of his love for her.

Helen raised her eyes to his, and a burning blush overspread her features; she saw her error and felt she had unintentionally misled him, she leaned her head upon her hand, and he still bent over her, listening tremblingly for the words on which his hopes all hung.

At that moment Clara, who was still leaning upon Dr. Langdon's arm, directed his attention to Helen, and with a peculiar smile said, "Helen is very happy this evening."

"Why?" said Dr. Langdon quickly.

"She is always happy when Mr. Loring is by her side," replied Clara.

"Are they engaged?" asked Dr. Langdon, making an effort to speak calmly.

"Certainly," said Clara, unblushingly meeting this inquiring glance, "did you not know it? but of course you did not, as it is of late date; but you must promise me not to mention it," she added, "for I ought not to have told you, as it was told to me by her in strictest confidence."

"You can trust me, you may be assured, Miss Howland," replied the Doctor, and after a few idle remarks, with a slight apology to Clara, he led her to a seat and left the room.

Had he stayed a moment longer—had he seen the expression that crossed the features of the gentleman at Helen's side; had he observed her manner as she rose from her seat, and came forward to mingle among the guests, he would have detected, with the quick eye of affection, that some sorrow had touched her, and that the assumed gaiety of the hour was not from her heart. He did not return that evening, however, and Clara spoke of his absence as if perfectly familiar with all his movements, and as Helen bade her a kind good night, and pressed her usual kiss upon her cheek, she did not dream of the deep-laid plot against her.

That night Helen wept herself to sleep upon her pillow, and Dr. Langdon paced his room for hours, at one moment bitterly reproaching himself for his infatuation, and again softened almost to woman's tenderness, breathing a prayer for her happiness, forgetful of himself. Oh, could the veil have been removed from either heart, and

the true feelings have been revealed, how readily would happiness have taken the place of misery—how many hours of concealed wretchedness been spared them both. "Life, thou art full of mystery."

To a proud and sensitive nature like Helen Linwood's no mortification could have been greater than to feel that her affections had been given to one who merely esteemed her as a friend; and though she strove hard to conquer her feelings, and would not allow even to herself how deeply her love for him had taken possession of her heart, yet notwithstanding her bitter condemnation of what she considered a weakness, nature would not thus be controlled, and a long attack of illness proved how deep had been the struggle between love and pride; and when she arose from her sick bed, her eye had lost its sweetest light, and her cheek its brightest bloom. As soon as she was able to travel, she left for home. Dr. Langdon called to say farewell, but a crowd was round her, and they simply exchanged a few words, held each others hands a moment, smiled and strove to appear to be, as they really seemed—indifferent—and parted, he with his strong heart swelling with emotion—the forcing back the tears, and biting the quivering lip to check the sobs that only burst forth when alone in the carriage she gave vent to her long suppressed feelings.

The morning after the party, Mr. Loring left to be absent some months, but Clara assured the Doctor that he was to follow Helen to her home, and be united to her there on his return.

Clara, freed from her fears of Helen's successful rivalry, put forth all her charms to win the heart of Dr. Langdon, and partly from the influence of her beauty, partly from the knowledge of her love for him, he insensibly became interested in her, and often he would spend an hour by her side to while away the moments that of late hung heavily on his hands, and more than once the floating breeze of busy rumor bore to the ears of Helen the report of an engagement subsisting between them, which tended to confirm her in her belief; and by degrees she taught herself to think upon the event with composure, if not indifference.

A change had come over the calm and quiet Dr. Langdon; his usually frank countenance was often overclouded, and his open, cordial manner had become reserved and cold. The truth was, this second disappointment had been felt more deeply than the first. The strong, deep feelings of manhood had been enlisted, and sturdy branches of the towering oak are less easily trained than the light limbs of the yielding saplings.

About six months after her return home, Helen received a letter from her cousin, Mrs. Linwood, urging her to pay her another visit; her husband was absent from home, her own health delicate, and she longed for the sweet companionship of her "sweet Helen."

After some hesitation Helen consented; she felt more confidence in herself, and thought, even if chance threw her in the way of Dr. Langdon, she could meet him without emotion, and in a short time she found herself again beneath the roof where she had passed her happiest, and most miserable moments.

Clara Howland was among the first to call, on her return, and found opportunity to tell Helen that, in consequence of some family matters, her marriage had been postponed, and that both she and the Doctor wished their engagement kept a profound secret. Helen's unsuspecting nature saw nothing to doubt, and readily gave the required pledge of secrecy.

Clara, who began to fear that Helen's unexpected return might mar the successful development of her plot, lost no time in impressing upon the Doctor's mind thoughts that would effectually preclude the possibility of expressing any feeling of affection for Helen; she knew his aversion to anything like coquetry, and she calculated well in supposing that the knowledge of such conduct on the part of any woman would go further to