

at the same thing before now. Yes, I was his wife. Death does not change us more than life, my dear."

"Do you come here often?" asked the child.

"I sit here very often in the summer time," she answered. "I used to come here once to cry and mourn, but that was a weary while ago, bless God!"

"I pluck the daisies as they grow and take them home," said the old woman, after a short silence. "I like no flowers so well as these and haven't for five and fifty year, it's a long while and I am getting very old."

"Then growing garrulous upon a theme which was new to one listener, though it were but a child, she told how she had wept and moaned and prayed to die herself when this happened, and how, when she first came to that place, a young creature, strong in love and grief, she had hoped that her heart was breaking as it seemed to be. But that time passed by and although she continued to be sad when she came there, still she could bear to come and so went on until it was a pain no longer, but a solemn pleasure and a duty she had learned to like. And now that five and fifty years were gone, she spoke of the dead man as though he had been her son or grandson, with a kind of pity for his youth, growing out of her own old age and an exalting of his strength and manly beauty as compared with her own weakness and decay; and yet she spoke about him as her husband too, and thinking of herself in connexion with him as she used to be, and not as she was now, talked of their meeting in another world as if he were dead but yesterday, and she, separated from her former self, were thinking of the happiness of that comely girl who seemed to have died with him."

"Wasn't it sad for the poor old woman, auntie? Think of her coming year after year to weep and mourn at her husband's grave, until five and fifty long years had passed, more than have a century, changing her from a young girl into an old old woman." "There are sadder things than death, my boy," returned Mollie with a little quiver in her voice.

"I think it would be sadder for two people who loved one another very very dearly to say farewell and part, each living a separate life far from each other, loving and longing, day after day, year after year to meet again, yet knowing that they shall never meet—see one another or clasp hands again on earth. But if one were in heaven it seems to me he would be nearer to the living whom he had loved."

All unconsciously the child spoke; not knowing that he was treading on holy ground and that every word he uttered wrong her heart with the anguish of a never-to-be-forgotten sorrow.

"I have a silent sorrow here,
Which never will depart;
It heaves no sigh—it sheds no tear,
But—it consumes my heart."

Bertie knew—or rather divined in some vague, instinctive way, that some great grief had cast a shadow over his aunt's life, changing her from the gay, merry-faced girl, whose portrait hung over the mantel piece, to the pale, subdued, yet beautiful woman who had filled the place of a mother to him and Lesley for six long years, and whom he loved and revered with an intensity little short of adoration. Perhaps in his grave, old-fashioned way, he had wondered and speculated on the subject in his own mind; but he had never dreamed of asking questions.

Mollie had kept her hand over her eyes whilst her little nephew spoke, and even when he stopped, she lay in the same position without speaking, for several minutes, then looking at him, she said sadly:

"What you have said is very true Bertie; there is no sadder word—God knows—than that—farewell," and he saw that her eyes were filled with tears. With quick sympathy he laid his little hand upon hers and said: "Why do you cry auntie? Did you ever bid farewell to someone whom you loved?"

"Yes Bertie; yes; years ago."

"With a gravely thoughtful face, the boy sat gazing into the fire; softly stroking her hand the while. Dimly, vaguely there crept into his childish mind the half-forgotten memory

of a face—a kind, good face with frank, laughing eyes, that even now seemed to smile at him from out the shadows of the Past, and a pleasant, ringing voice seemed to sound in his ears. What connexion had the Face with his life? Where had he heard that voice? Sitting there with his eyes bent upon the fire, he pondered deeply the perplexing question. But he could make nothing of it, till at last there darted into his mind the memory of everything. He remembered Fernside, when grandpapa and grandmamma were alive, when aunt Mollie was like the girl over the mantel piece, and he and Lesley were little wee things; it was then—it was there he had seen the kind face and heard the pleasant voice, which belonged to some one who used to come very very often to Fernside and play rollicking, noisy games with Lesley and him, in the short, dark winter afternoons. Then again it was summer time. Instead of the dazzling snow, there was the cool, green grass dotted with dandelions, buttercups, field-daisies and wild violets; the trees no longer mourned in winter nakedness, but rejoiced triumphantly in their summer garb of rich foliage; and the sky no longer gray and overcast, but blue, serene and fair; then how beautiful, how cool, how fragrant it was in the woods beneath the shade of the ancient trees, where the scent of the wild flowers lingered in the air and the birds sang and twittered all day long, from morn to eve. Ah! What was it he remembered of these woods? Dreamily he let his mind dwell upon this little bit of the past, and slowly it all came back to him. Those happy, careless hours spent in the fragrant woods, playing and shouting so gaily; making wreaths of the flowers with which to crown aunt Mollie—not the aunt Mollie who lay so still upon the sofa—but the happy, smiling aunt Mollie over the mantel piece. And there was some one else who used to come to the woods to meet them, whose coming was always greeted with a shout of glee, and whose pleasant face and merry, genial voice seemed as though the sun's rays had pierced the thick foliage of the trees and lighted up the shade beneath.

Whose face was it? Whose face. Whose face? Strive as he would he could not remember. Had it anything to do with the sorrow of aunt Mollie's life? Perhaps it had; and that was the reason he could only see it through the dim shadows of the past. Poor auntie! He said nothing about what had just been passing through his mind; he only laid his little hand upon hers and kept it there quite still and did not speak.

The long silence between them was broken at last by the sound of the little clock striking the hour of five and as if this were the signal for a general stir, the embers in the fire place fell with a little crackling noise into the grate; while the cat, aroused from her sleep, yawned and stretched herself and lay blinking at the fire for a moment after which, she sat up and blinked at Bertie, as much as to say—"I have had a good sleep this afternoon Mr. Bertie, and I feel much refreshed thereby."

"Five," said Mollie, looking at the clock, "I think as we must get our tea ready ourselves to night, we had better have it now and get it over. Christy will not be home till ten."

"I'll help you to get it ready aunt Mollie, I can set the table; you know I often do it for Christy."

"We must light a lamp first of all," said she as she rose from the sofa. "It is almost dark out of doors."

"Why auntie, it is snowing quite hard," cried Bertie from the window, "see the flakes glistening in the light of the lamp over there; the ground will be quite white soon. Oh! I am so glad the snow has come at last; we will have such fun."

"In a few weeks you will be coming in complaining of that 'nasty wet snow,' and wishing the summer were here again," said Mollie laughingly.

"Well sometimes it is awfully slushy you know; but I like it when it is clean and crisp;—I like to hear it crunching under my feet when I walk and falling all around me in big white flakes."

"You and I shall take some nice long walks through the snow," said Mollie, as she stood beside him at the window.