

there was no need to hide or to dissemble, she seemed most utterly and exquisitely at peace. She could not even be sad, and as they said but little at first, it was a long time before anybody knew of her serious and hopeless state. She grew weaker gradually, so that there was no violent wrench; things were given up one by one; little by little she was weaned away from earth and earthly things. She was able to see and even to enjoy the glory of an exceptionally full and lovely summer, and all the fields were ripe for the sickle, some of them reaped indeed, before she went up-stairs for the last time. The Denhams took their holidays in September, and both came to Stanerigg, where they abode all the time. When his leave was up, the minister returned to town alone, it being tacitly understood that his wife should remain to the end. She was needed now, for there were days of sore pain and weariness in the darkened room, days that made Mary Denham pray that the end might be hastened. But these passed, and just before the end there was a period of lovely and indescribable peace, of absolute respite from pain, a kind of Indian summer that comforted them all. Of