

to be happy. An unexpected aid soon came. Mr. Cameron, who was in bad health when we first saw him, died suddenly. Poor Marion's grief was terrible to see. Her father was dead, Stephen, as she thought, estranged; and there was no one else in the world who cared whether she lived or died, except myself. I brought her home with me, and was with her hourly till Mr. Cameron's funeral. How we got through that time I hardly know. Then came the necessary inquiry into his affairs. He had died, not altogether poor, but in reduced circumstances, leaving Marion an annuity that would scarcely give her the luxuries her state of health required. And where was she to live, and what to do? Stephen was the sole executor, the one adviser to whom she could look. He took two days and nights to consider, and then offered her his hand and home. At first she could not believe that his offer arose from anything but pity and compassion; but when he had told her the story of the last few months, and called me to bear witness to it, a great light seemed to come into her eyes, and a wonderful glow of love, such as I had never seen, over her face. I left them to themselves that evening, till Stephen tapped at the door of my room and told me all—nothing, in fact, but what I knew long before. In their case there was little cause for delay. Trousers were not the important matters in my day that they are in my grandchildren's; and Marion was married to Stephen, in her black gown, within a month of her father's funeral.

The next few months were a happy time for all of us. Marion's health improved greatly. The worried, frightened look she used to wear left her face as she recovered from the depression caused by her constant anxiety about her father, and the loss of rest she suffered in attending upon him at night. It seemed as if she was entirely recovering; and Stephen, if he did not lose his fears, at least was not constantly occupied with them. How happily we used to look forward to the future, for Stephen was beginning to save money; and how many were our day-dreams about professional eminence for him, and fashionable life in London, partly for Marion, but mostly for me. I have tried fashionable life in London since, but I never found it so happy as our days in that dear old Surrey village.

Well, our happy time did not last long. Marion caught a cough and cold as the winter came on, and was soon so ill as to be taken to London for advice. Stephen came back alone, with a weary, deathly-looking face. Marion had broken a small blood-vessel on the journey—not anything serious in itself, but ominous enough. They were to go at once to a warmer climate—not at all, we felt. Fortunately I packed up the necessary things, and went with Stephen to London the next day to say good-by to Marion, who had been forbidden to go home. The same afternoon they were on board a trading vessel bound to Leghorn. Luckily, Marion was a good sailor and well used to ships, for she had made more than one voyage to Madeira with her father. Much as I wished to go with them, and much as they wished it too, it was out of the question. Stephen had saved but little money, and could hardly see how he and Marion were to live, unless he could make himself a practice somewhere among the English abroad, and his taking me also was not to be thought of. I was to live for the present with my married sister. It was very sore to part with Stephen, with whom I had lived all my life; it was almost sorer still to part with Marion, who had been more than a sister to me ever since I saw her. Stephen and I were nearly overcome with emotion; but she was calm and silent, with an intense, wistful look about her lovely face that has haunted me all my life since. I can see it now when I shut my eyes, though it is fifty years ago. Need I say that I never saw her again?

I went to my sister's house, and began the fashionable life I used to wish for. It was not all that I pictured it, though it was pleasant enough to occupy me in the daytime; but at night I longed sadly for my darlings.

Stephen wrote letters full of hope, and talked of returning after spending two years in Italy. Marion, too, wrote favourably of herself, and my anxiety began to lessen. There was another reason for this at the same time—my late husband, the friend and partner of my sister's husband, was at that time beginning to pay his addresses to me; and the tender troubles of my own case made me careless of others. Summer came round again; and one day as I was half wishing for my country home again, a letter arrived from Stephen. Marion's complaint was at a crisis, and a great change would take place, one way or the other, in a few days. I was to go home, put the place in order, and be ready to receive them. I did not know till afterwards that Marion had begged to be allowed to die at home, if the change were for the worse; if it had been for the better, there would have been no reason for her staying abroad.

Well, I went home, arranged everything, and waited for them. Three weeks passed (the usual interval) and no letter; a month, and I supposed they were travelling slowly to avoid fatigue. On the day five weeks after I had received the last letter I was sitting alone, rather late in the evening, when a quick step sounded in the road outside, and Stephen came to the gate, opened it, entered the house, and sat down in silence. He was dressed as usual, and looked tired and travel-stained; but there was no sorrow in his face, and I felt sure that Marion must be safe. I asked him where she was. He said she was not with him.

"Have you left her in Italy?" I asked, heaving myself up to my feet. "She is dead," he answered, without a shadow of emotion. "How! Where?" I was beginning to question him, but he stopped me.

"Give me something to eat and drink," he said. "I have walked from London, and I want to sleep."

I brought him what he wanted. He bade me good night; and as I saw he wished it, I left him and went to bed, full of grief, but even more of wonder that he, who truly loved his wife, if ever man did, could speak of her not a month after her death without his voice faltering or his face changing in the least. "To-morrow will solve the question," I said to myself as, weary with crying, I felt sleep coming over me. But to-morrow did not solve the question. He told me as before, without emotion, what he wished me to know, and from that moment we spoke no more on the subject. In every respect but this he was my own Stephen of old,—as kind and thoughtful as ever, only altered by a rather absent and abstracted manner. I thought at first that he was stung by his loss, and would realise it most painfully afterwards; but months passed on without a change. He used Marion's chair, or things

of her work, or sat opposite to her drawings without seeming to notice them; indeed, it was as if she had dropped out of his life entirely, and left him as he was before he knew her. The only difference was, that he, naturally a man of sedentary habits, took a great deal of exercise, and I knew that he kept laudanum in his bedroom.

At this time my lover was pressing me to marry him, and with much difficulty I consented to tell Stephen about it, though I had no intention of leaving him. To my surprise he seemed pleased. I told him that I would never leave him alone, not for all the husbands in the world; but he would not hear me.

"I think it is your duty to marry him, Margaret," he said. "You love him, and have taught him to love you, and you have no right to sacrifice him to me."

"My first duty is to you, Stephen. I will not leave you alone."

"I see that I must explain to you," he said, after a pause. "When you leave me I shall not be alone."

"Who will be with you?" I asked, wondering.

"Marion."

I started as if I had been shot, for I thought he must surely be mad; but he continued, quite calmly and as usual, without emotion,—

"She died at mid-day. Till night I do not know what I did. I felt stunned and broken and dying myself; but at last, worn out with watching and sitting up, I fell asleep; and by God's mercy she came to me in my dreams, and told me to be comforted. The next night she came again, and from that time to this has never failed me. Then I felt that it was my duty to live; that if my life was valueless to myself, it was not so to you, so I came home. I daresay it is only a freak of my imagination. Perhaps I even produce an illusion, yea, an effort of my will; but however that is, it has saved me from going mad or killing myself. How does she come? Always as she was in that first summer that we spent here, or in our early time in Italy; always cheerful and beautiful, always alone, always dressed as she used to dress, talking as she used to talk,—not an angel, but herself. Sometimes we go through a whole day of pleasure, sometimes she only comes and goes; but no night has ever yet been without her; and indeed I think that her visits are longer and dearer as I draw nearer to her side again. I sometimes ask myself which of my two lives is the real one. I ask myself now, and cannot answer. I should think that the other was, if it were not that while I am in this I recollect the other, and while I am in the other I know nothing beyond. And this is why my sorrow is not like that of others in my position. I know that no night will pass without my seeing her; for my health is good enough, and I never fail to sleep. Sleeplessness is the only earthly evil I dread, now you are provided for. Do not think me hard to you in not having told you of this before. It is too sacred a thing to be spoken of without necessity. Now write to your husband that that is to be, and tell him to come here."

I did so, and the preparations for my marriage began. Stephen was very kind; but his thoughts wandered further and farther day by day. I spoke to a doctor, a friend of his, about him, but it seemed that nothing really ailed him. I longed, almost to pain, to ask him more about Marion; but he never gave me an opportunity. If I approached the subject he turned the talk in another direction, and my old habits of submission to him prevented me from going on. Then came my wedding day. Stephen gave me away, and sat by my side at the breakfast. He seemed to hang over me more tenderly than ever, as he put me into the carriage and took leave of me.

The last thing I did as I leaned out of the carriage window was to tell him to be sure to be my first visitor in my own home. "No, Margaret," he said, with a sad smile. "Say good-bye to me now; my work is done." Scarcely understanding what he said, I bade him good-bye; and it was not till my husband asked me what he meant that I remembered his strange look and accent. I then felt half frightened about him; but the novelty of my first visit abroad made me forget my fears.

The rest is soon told. The first letter I received from England said that on the very morning after my marriage he had been found dead and cold in his bed. He had died without pain, the doctor said, with his right hand clasping his left arm above the wrist, and holding firmly, even in death, a circlet of Marion's hair.—*Once a Week.*

[ADVERTISEMENT.]

THE BULLFROG,

A WEEKLY JOURNAL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND LITERARY,

"Too contemptible to be noticed, * * the style and tone of some of its late numbers, the great aim of which, in their several articles, from the leaders to the smallest paragraphs, has been to hold up our institutions, our modes of thought and actions—our public bodies and individual members to scorn and contempt. Perhaps we are justly entitled to all this."—*Hullifor Reporter.*

The BULLFROG is published every Saturday at one o'clock, P. M., by T. CHAMBERLAIN, 176 Argyll Street. Terms \$1 per annum, 6 Copies to one Post Office \$5; 7 Copies and over, 80 cts. per annum for each Copy, invariably in advance. Subscribers not renewing their subscription within a reasonable time will have their names struck off the list. A limited number of advertisements will be inserted at the usual rates.

All descriptions of job work neatly and promptly executed.