

"Does that mean that you are ready to be my wife?"

"If you still wish for me," she said timidly. Of late the fear had been growing upon her that perhaps, when it was too late, she had found her views of duty had been mistaken. She had fortified her heart, or tried to, with the assurance that the work for her to do would still remain, that she would only be one of many passing over that upward road that leads to God and heaven with the life-long hunger for human love, and the shelter of home and its dear delights withheld.

Douglass was so long silent that her heart throbbed heavily. Was it then too late? She turned away, — her promise to Martha Brand must be fulfilled. Years afterward, she used to smile when that hour was reviewed, at the anxiety that suddenly possessed her lest the breakfast might be a failure, — the first and possibly the last she would ever prepare for the man she loved so absorbingly, so despairingly.

She had only gone a step or two when Douglass spoke. She glanced up quickly, her heart giving a sudden bound as she saw the expression of his face, the gladdest, most triumphant she had ever beheld. "Were you going to leave me, Mildred?"