

sure I now anticipate at some future time. At present, I have only to congratulate you on your safe arrival home, and trust to see you occupy in society that eminent position which your talents and education have fitted you to adorn."

"Nay: you give me too much honour," said Langdon in reply; "a brighter destiny is in store for you than for me, and it only requires the exercise of self-reliance, assurance and energy, on your part, to insure you success in whatever you undertake. But as for me, I have built character on a bad foundation, and the props have almost fallen;—but, thank Heaven! human nature is not wholly evil,—there is a heaven of the good left, which we inherited from paradise, and I shall try to improve on that. Ah! well does Tennyson sing—

'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control:

These three alone lead life to sovereign power!"

As he spoke, one could not fail to observe the tone of sincerity in which these words were uttered, and it was plainly evident to Markham, who watched the expression of his pale countenance, and marked the change in his manner, that, henceforth to him, life would be no idle play, or bright romantic day dream,—but one of earnest labour and duties faithfully performed.

Markham spoke a few words of encouragement and hope, and, bidding him good night, hastily left the room.

Once more in his solitary chamber, he sat down and began to reflect on the various events of the day. To him it had indeed been an eventful one—the most eventful, probably, in the whole course of his life. Never before had he been so impressed with the solemn duties of life as on this day. Disappointment and sorrow had sent their keenest sting,—while hope shed but a glimmering and momentary light. Proud, sensitive and reflective, he had always been anxious to occupy a high position in the city in which he dwelt; but to-day, on hearing his loss dwelt upon as an idle tale, and his name passed from mouth to mouth, his pride and ambition were touched. He felt then keenly, that adversity comes not without its lessons, and that humiliation teaches far more than the foolish parasite of property, sloth and luxurious ease can ever know. Wealth has its devotees, who crowd around the shrine of mammon, and there are those who sacrifice health, virtue and love to its external forms of influence and power; but let the young take care that avarice and selfishness sap not the foundations of their character, or that the world grows not too much with them.

Markham sat for a long time apparently in the deepest thought, now and again running his hand through the thick masses of dark brown hair, that shaded his broad intellectual brow. At last he rose from his seat, and, lighting a cigar, commenced to smoke; but it was plainly evident from his nervousness, and fitful abstracted manner, that his mind was not at ease.

"It is very singular," he murmured, "that I have seen nothing of Valdemar since the loss of the vessel. I cannot conceive how it is he should have neglected sending me word, either by note or by messenger, concerning this hated business. I am getting more impatient than ever to learn the particulars of this affair, and shall certainly have a strict investigation on the morrow. I seem already to have a dull presentiment of coming evil that all has not gone well; in fact I begin to have some misgivings of mind concerning him, and very much doubt now the propriety of having entrusted the care of a vessel to one I had so imperfectly known. However, I shall see to-morrow.—Heaven forbid that I should accuse any one wrongly, without having some indubitable proof of evil intended or actually committed!"

Markham, as he sat thus meditating, had more hopeful thoughts and brighter visions to beguile the few moments before retiring for the night, than those upon which his mind had just been dwelling.

To Venetia his thoughts had, even in company with his friend Langdon, often recurred. He thought of her now, not as she appeared in the simple days of his boyhood—a girl with slight, graceful form, timid and shy in manner—but as a woman, grown with a woman's keen tastes and perceptions, and possessing an educated and refined mind.

He dwelt in fancy on the pleasure he would feel at seeing her again—in conversing with her on the old joys and pleasures of their early youth, and in listening to the tones of her soft and tender voice. Old melodies rang in his ear—tender associations, linked with love, threw a bright halo on the past, and it seemed that the memory of these scenes were refreshing and dear to his soul: like a luxuriant flowery oasis, amid the sterile wastes and barren tracts of the past!

Thus musing, in the solitude of his chamber, with his massive head resting on his arm, and the fast dying fire now and then casting its fitful gleam of light on his pale and pensive face, we will leave him to his repose, conscious that adversity of whatever kind will test the strength of his character.

CHAPTER III.

In the cold light of a February morning the two friends wended their way to the station. There was a misty appearance in the atmosphere, which the sun, however soon dispelled, and as they passed the broad but deserted park, which in summer is clothed with luxuriant foliage, they did not fail to observe the crystal tracery of frost on the rugged branches of the trees, which glittered beneath the sun's bright rays, presenting a scene of fairy-like enchantment and beauty.

Langdon's appearance was quite prepossessing, being elegantly attired in a new suit of fashionable colour, which gave him quite a distinguished and aristocratic look, compared to Markham's plainer and sombre garb. Every-