

THE VILLAGE ANGEL; Or, Agatha's Recompense.

CHAPTER LIII.—(Continued.)

Was fate and life the same to every one? Agatha wondered. It was not long since she had dreamed over the same thoughts—since she had wondered what her life would have been like had she never seen Vane Carlyon; and now the romance of her life was over. She was sitting here in the sunlight, listening to the sweet, simple love-story of another girl. How would it end?—in peril, as hers had done, or in peace?

CHAPTER LIV.

"YOUR EYES TELL ME ONE STORY, AND YOUR MINE ANOTHER." "One thing," continued Beatrice Penrith, "struck me very forcibly: the tall, handsome stranger looked very sad and melancholy; there was no smile in his eyes, and none on his lips. Something happened in the ball room; I forget now what it was—some absurdly comical incident—at which everyone laughed, but he did not even smile. I wondered if he had had any great trouble, or if by nature he was inclined to be melancholy, as some people are. I asked mamma, at last, who he was—she knows everybody—and she told me he was the Earl of Kelsio. I think he must have noticed how I watched him, and soon afterward he joined a group of gentlemen who were standing near mamma, and I heard him quite distinctly and clearly ask: "Who is that beautiful child?"

"You know how tantalizing that waits music, the rhythm of it seemed to pass into my feet—he looked at me as though he had made some strange discovery. "You would like to dance?" he said. "Yes—with you, I answered; and I never stopped to think whether it was right or wrong. "He laughed. "With me? I have not danced for years," he said. "And why not, Lord Kelsio? I asked. "I cannot tell. I have not been light-hearted enough to care for it. "Have you had a trouble in your life? I asked, impulsively; again never thinking whether it was right or wrong. "I suppose most people would call it a trouble," he said; and I saw that he was speaking more to himself than to me. "I looked up at him without any fear. "Try to forget the trouble, and be light-hearted again," I said. I can hardly keep from flying when I hear that music. "I could hardly keep from flying when I was seventeen," he said. "And then we walked together. "I had many partners during my one season but none like Lord Kelsio; and I enjoyed that dance I could not say how much. "I wish, I said to him, that all the men who go to balls danced like him. "Then I should have the advantage over them," he replied, laughingly. "Why do you want any advantage, I asked; and he said the question answered itself. "I forgot that evening to say good-night to Gerald Leigh, and I went home to dream of my earl—the happiest girl who slept that night under the light of the moon."

CHAPTER LV.

"ANYTHING CAN BE FORGIVEN TO A MAN WITH SUCH A REPUTATION." Ferrent tears filled her eyes and the pain deepened in Agatha's heart. Would this love-story end as hers had done? She prayed Heaven it might not. "Why do you always call Lord Kelsio your earl?" she said, suddenly. Beatrice laughed. "I knew a girl of my own age in London," she said; "Genevieve Dorlby; she was seventeen the day after my birthday, and she is going to marry an earl. But her earl is old—and horrible; he wears a wig, he has false teeth, and he requires I forget how many hours for dressing in the morning; his face is rouged, and he tries to make every one believe that he is quite a young man. When Genevieve and I talked about our lovers, she always said 'my earl,' and I always said 'my earl'; and now I am quite used to the title. I have thought of him and spoken of him so often as 'my earl' that it has become part and parcel of my love. Do you not think, Miss Brooke, that an noble, so handsome, so grand a man in every way, that it is a most marvelous thing that he should have fallen in love with me?" "No, that I certainly do not," replied Agatha, who thought the girl's grace and beauty, her candid, sweet nature, more than an equivalent for an earl's baronet. "He did fall in love with me," she continued; "he came continually to Penrith House, and mamma was always delighted to see him. After a time I grew shy of him, and when I heard his voice or his footsteps my heart beat, my face would either flush or grow cold, my hands begin to tremble, and I ran away. I remember one day—ah, me! what a dreadful day it was!—I was in the library of our London house, with papa; he was taking tea and lemonade and asking me to hold the plate of ice. Just as I had taken it into my hands Lord Kelsio was announced, and I dropped it—plate, ice, all went rolling away, and I thought in my distress I should have fallen. My father, you know, is rather impatient; he gave a little cry, but when he saw my face he was quite quiet, and said, 'poor child!' That made me more frightened than ever, and I avoided him, lest he or any one else should know how much I really cared for him. "He caught me one day. I was sitting alone in the great drawing-room; mamma was out, and I heard his voice in the hall. He was asking for me. Without stopping to think, I hastened through the room into the conservatory, feeling quite sure that he did not know I was there. To my delighted dismay he followed me. "Miss Penrith! Beatrice," he cried, "I want to speak to you. "I was obliged to go to him, but I dare not look up, and my face was burning. I tried to look careless and indifferent. "Good morning, Lord Kelsio," I said. "I am sorry that mamma is not at home. "I am very glad," he replied; "it is not mamma that I want, but you—you, sweet Beatrice! Your eyes tell me one story and your lips another. Which is the true one? Your lips speak carelessly, your eyes tell me that I have not sought for you in vain. "I cannot tell you more what he said, it was all like a dream to me—a dream from which I never wished to awake. I loved him and I idolized him in the same moment; but when he left the conservatory he was indeed my earl, for I had promised to be his wife. You are not laughing, Miss Brooke?" she added. "Ah, no! It was not to hide laughter that Agatha had covered her fair face with her hands—not laughter, but bitter, despairing tears. It all came back to her. She saw the bonnie green woods, the will flowers at her feet, the earnest face of her lover; she could hear again the passionate ring of his voice as he read the solemn words of the marriage service, and it had all been a life—a base, mean well-acted lie! "No; I am not laughing," she replied. "God grant to your sweet love-story a happy ending. "I think (he will," said the girl softly. "My earl is like the Douglas of the old song, his tender and true—his heart is as noble as his face is beautiful. I want you to see him, Miss Brooke. "I shall be glad to see him," said Agatha, and she felt some little curiosity to see what he was like, this noble earl, who had so completely won the heart of Beatrice Penrith. "My noble earl has fair castles and broad lands; he has grand domains that are far to see; he has all that the world values; but there is nothing like himself. I ought to thank Heaven; I do but then I have only one voice. I wish all the little birds on the trees could join me in thanking God who has crowned my life with the noble gift of the love of a noble man. Agatha bowed her fair head as she listened; her life had been marred by the love of a man who did not know what the word noble meant. The sweet summer days passed blithely at Penrith Castle. Agatha could not help seeing that both the earl and countess were delighted over their daughter's engagement, while Beatrice herself was so happy that it was a pleasure even to look upon her face. Snatches of blithe, sweet song were ever on her lips. She did not walk as ordinary

marriage, but it seemed rather as though her flying feet carried her at her will. The earl was expected in September, and the wedding was to take place at Christmas. Lady Penrith was not much delighted at that. Why not wait until spring; a wedding in winter was neither so pretty nor so pleasant. But then the earl said he would study the wife, and did not care to study the wife, and did not care to study the wife. The picturesque side of the Earl of Penrith could not, of course, be married like a more ordinary person; there must be great state and ceremony; nor can an earl be expected to prepare for the great event of his life without great festivities and royal bounties. Phillippa, Lady Penrith, was a proud and happy mother; her beautiful young daughter, after one season in London, had carried off the best match of the day. That, in itself, was triumph enough, though she tried not to be unduly elated. But that was not the best of it; Beatrice, her lovely and beloved child, was marrying for love. Never was there a marriage made in heaven if this were not made there. The girl loved him with her whole heart, so much so that the stately parents laughed at her graceful follies. Lady Penrith would have been much better pleased had this wedding taken place in the midst of the season, at the most fashionable church in town. She did not like winter weddings.

"How could they be made pretty? True, there were plenty of evergreens, and those, with an abundance of exotics, were always beautiful; but there was a prestige about a wedding during the season. Royalty itself had often been present, and she would have delighted in that. So Lady Penrith talked in a plaintive, sweet voice about "dear Lord Kelsio" and his taste. She liked to hear her lady friends admire him for it. She liked to make the complaint; it showed that her daughter had really been sought after, that she was eagerly beloved, and that the marriage was not a match made for worldly motives. Never was anything more complete than this happiness of Beatrice's. She was so earnest, so eager in her desire to fit herself for him that no one could help growing intensely interested. When she found that Lord Kelsio liked music, she studied hard; she begged Agatha, whose taste in music was perfect, to help her; she had books that she thought would fit her to converse with him; in fact, she laid out her whole life to please him. He was to come in September, and the wedding was to be celebrated a few days before Christmas Day. All went merry as a marriage-bell. It was delightful to see Beatrice when she received a love-letter; how she read them and cherished them! No word from one of these precious letters was ever whispered to any one. "She will be a great lady," thought Agatha, "and she will be a happy wife."

Up to this time she had never had the faintest doubt, but a little incident happened which made her anxious. Two of the "county ladies," both friends of Lady Penrith's, called during her absence, and as they had driven some distance, they went into the castle to rest. The day was fine, and they went into the gardens. Agatha, who knew them both well, went to see if she could do anything in the way of amusing them. As she drew near to the garden-chair on which they were seated, she heard, and could not possibly help hearing, what they were saying. Lady Tree had a loud voice, and Mrs. Darwin was deaf. "I would not give my daughter to him if he were twenty times an earl," Lady Tree was saying. She lowered her voice, but Agatha heard the words "a terrible scandal—a great sacrifice—years ago—always a bad match." Could they possibly be speaking of Lord Kelsio? Her face grew pale, and her heart beat with sudden fear. It could not be of him; why should she think it? The world was full of men, and, unfortunately, there were very few good ones. Lord Kelsio was not the only man going to be married; surely, surely, it was not him. If it was—if that bright, beautiful girl were to be made miserable; if that blithe, glad young life were to be wrecked; if that loving, gentle heart were to be broken, then there was no justice on earth, no mercy in heaven. She could not, would not, believe it. Was there no truth?—was every man false at heart? She raised her face in passionate appeal to the blue skies; they were blue, and blinding—hard as the green earth. She longed to ask them if they were speaking of the earl, but she knew that neither of the ladies would have answered her. They condescended at last to notice her, and in answer to her inquiries, Lady Tree said she would like a little fruit and a glass of milk. Mrs. Darwin declined taking anything.

The two great county ladies considered a governess of no more importance than one of the rose-bushes in the garden. Lady Tree murmured, as she went away, that she did not approve of beauty in a governess; and Mrs. Darwin said she would certainly not keep any one like Miss Brooke in her house; no good ever came of it. Beauty was quite a mistake in the lower classes. Then Agatha returned, with a fine bunch of purple grapes lying in the midst of green leaves, and then they thought her of so little account that they went on talking before her, just as though she had not been there. "Did you ever hear who it was?" asked Lady Tree, in the most confidential tone of voice. "No, never," was the reply. "Some insignificant person I fancy. The whole matter was kept very quiet, but Lady Penrith must know of it." "Of course she does; but an earl is an earl. How long is it since it happened?" "I do not remember," Mrs. Darwin was in town when all the clubs were ringing with it. But there is nothing can be forgiven to a man with such a reputation." "Should you think he cares for her?" was the next question. "I should say not—merely a caprice. She is a most beautiful child—not very strong or very wise; and he must be tired of worldly women. She will be happy for a few months, and then— "Then it will be like all other marriages, I suppose. And the two great ladies laughed. A broken heart in the gay world is looked upon as something almost comical. They did not know that the governess shrank away, scared and frightened, with a world of trouble on her sweet face. "Surely, oh, heaven!" she cried, "it cannot be true—so horrible a fate cannot be in store for that loving, beautiful girl! Is there no truth? Lady Penrith loves her as the very centre of her heart; it is not likely that she would allow her to marry a man such as these ladies spoke of." Yet a lingering cloud of doubt hung over her. Better for the beautiful child to die than to live to see her illusions all perish; better any suffering now than the horrible discovery afterward that she had married the most worthless of men. Perhaps, though, she would never know. Agatha was growing accustomed to the ways of the world; she knew that wealth, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. It was

just possible that even had he been all that they said, and worse, he might reform—turn out the most irreproachable husband and the steadiest of men; then his wife would never know—never know. Yet it seemed cruel, all the same. An hour later Beatrice came to the school-room in search of her, all blushing and smiling. "Miss Brooke," she said, "leave the children a few minutes. I want to show you something that my earl has sent to me—so beautiful! Come with me to my room." Miss Penrith's room was one of the most charming apartments in the castle—light, bright, and sunny, with a magnificent view over the park and the river. On the table lay a magnificent suit of pearls, set so as to form white roses. Beatrice looked at Agatha in loving, wistful triumph, longing to hear what she had to say in praise of them. "They are most beautiful," said Agatha. Her mind went back to the time when the man she loved so well, and whom she believed to be her husband, had bought jewels as fine for her. "I am so glad you like them! Mamma thinks it a very pretty and appropriate present; but I value the love that sent it far more than the jewels." Agatha looked up, with some anxiety in her face. "How much you love him, Beatrice!" she said gently. "Yes, how much!" was the quiet reply. "Do you think it quite wise," Agatha asked, "to centre the whole of your heart and soul on one object?" "I do not know whether it be wise or not, but it is very pleasant," she replied. "Do not be afraid for me. I have given my love wisely, to a good and noble man; nothing can hurt me."

Agatha spoke then without reflection. "Are you quite sure that he is a noble man?" she asked. "I am quite sure; he is a king among men, Miss Brooke. Why do you ask?" "Only from my great affection for you," she replied; "I beg your pardon, though; it was a question that I should not have asked. What should you do, loving him in this fashion, if anything prevented your marriage?" "I can soon answer that question," replied Beatrice. "I should die." But Agatha knew death would not always come when one desired it, and she knew, besides, how much one can suffer before it is time to die. Beatrice was looking at her with a shadow on her bright face. "Miss Brooke," she said, "I bring you to sympathize with my delight over my beautiful present, and you turn my pleasure into pain. Why are you so strange?" "I can only repeat that it is because I love you so much, and marriage is always a lottery." "And my earl is always a prize," she retorted laughingly. Then they discussed the pearls and their beautiful settings. Agatha resolved to say no more, it was quite useless; it served only to make Beatrice uneasy, and she evidently knew nothing of her lover more than she had been told, but she resolved to be on the watch. "If," she said to herself, with bitter tears, "if there had been some one to watch over me, how different my life would have been. I pray to Heaven that this loving, beautiful child may die rather than suffer, as she will do if she is deceived in her lover."

"LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN." Beatrice Penrith stood at the school-room window, and for the first time in her sunny, happy life there was a shadow on her bright face. Agatha was busy with the curly-haired children, and Beatrice was waiting until lessons were over and Miss Brooke had time to attend to her. A shadow on her face, the sweet eyes clouded, the laughing lips firmly closed. Yet it was September and Lord Kelsio was at the castle. Great preparations had been made for his arrival. Beatrice had been in one long ecstasy of expectation. He arrived one evening when the sun was setting over the beautiful lime trees which as yet had not lost a leaf. There is something at times almost solemn and terrible about great happiness; so Beatrice found it. She loved Agatha very much, and when she heard that her lover had arrived, she went at once to her. It was evening then; the children had gone to the nursery, and Agatha was busy with her books. "Let me come in for a minute, Miss Brooke," said a sweet voice, and Agatha looked up with a smile. The love story of this bright, beautiful girl was the one pleasure of her life. "My earl has come," said Beatrice, with a blushing, happy smile. "Mamma says that I am to go and spend half a hour with him before dinner. I have come to ask you if I look nice—really nice. I could not trust to my own taste; and he is very fastidious—mamma says that he is the best judge of a lady's dress that she knows." "Then he cannot fail to be pleased with yours," said Agatha. "It is perfect; and you look well, because you look so perfectly happy."

"I am happy," said Beatrice, and it there was something almost solemn in her manner. "You cannot suggest any alteration, then, in my dress or flowers, Miss Brooke?" Agatha went up to the beautiful young girl. "I can suggest one thing, Beatrice," she said; "just take a little of your soul out of your eyes. Lord Kelsio has only to look at them to see at once how much you love him—it is all told there." "I thought to be the very right thing," said Beatrice, laughing and blushing; "my eyes must tell him what my lips will always be too shy to utter." "All his welcome is written there," said Agatha, and looking back to the old days, she wondered if Sir Vane Carlyon had read the same love and greeting in her eyes. "You could not look better, Beatrice," she said slowly. "Go and be happy, my dear." "Kiss me," said Beatrice, raising her fair fresh face to that of her companion, and Agatha, understanding all the yearning for sympathy there was in the girl's heart, kissed the fresh young face. "Now go, Beatrice," she said; "Lord Kelsio will be quite impatient." She watched the slender, lithe figure, and the pretty, graceful dress; her heart and thoughts followed the young girl; books had no charm for her that evening. It was the old story over and over again. She wondered that the sun which shone at noontide, and the moon and stars which shone at night, were not tired of it; she wondered that the tall trees did not shake their branches in utter contempt of it. It was so sweet, so entrancing, yet so vague and empty. What did love end in anything but pain? The sweeter it was in the present, the more bitter in the future. She closed the books, the restless fever woke again in her heart; no more quiet reading or study for her; her heart beat in great painful throbs, her face flushed. She must go out in the fresh, sweet evening air. It was not an unusual thing for her to do. A door led from the school-room to the grounds, a pretty, quiet spot, where the

children played under the shade of the great green trees. She went out now; nothing but the voice of the wind and the rustle of the river, the light of the moon and the stars; nothing else could comfort her when these fevers of unrest came over her. It was a lovely moonlight night, and as she walked quietly to and fro under the shadows of the great trees her mind went back. Ah, me! the repressed passion and pain of this loving heart! She was back once more in fancy at Whitefort, watching the moon shine on the old church and on her mother's grave; she knew just how the shadows fell over the old house and in the woods; she went back again to the grand old chateau, and saw the moon shining on the mountains and lakes. Where was he?—the man who had drawn and absorbed her whole life in himself—where was he?—the man who had taken the light of the sunshine and the beauty of the moonlight forever from her—where was he? Looking, perhaps, in some face fairer than her own, loving some one for whom he cared more than he had ever cared for her. She had been one of many to him, he had been the only love of her life. She raised her eyes to the quiet night skies. "Heaven knows," she said to herself, and the words echoed the restless fever. "Heaven knows I never meant to do wrong. Men might judge as they liked, Heaven knew best."

Then, under the influence of the great voices of the night, the bitterness of pain and the sting of memory passed. Her thoughts went back to the smiling, happy face of Beatrice Penrith. She was with her lover now, seated by him, looking at him, listening to him, happy beyond the power of words to tell. Would it all end in misery, or was Beatrice one of the few who were to be happy on earth and happy in heaven? Later on, when the night grew chill and cold, and she had gone back to her room, she heard the clear, sweet voice ringing through the house, and she knew that Beatrice was singing to her lover. She did not see her during the whole of the next day—a party of visitors had arrived. Lady Penrith was far too wise to allow the lovers to grow tired of each other. She knew that a man like Lord Kelsio must have amusement, and that the earnest love of a girl like her daughter would soon become monotonous to a man of the world. With plenty of visitors to help to amuse him, all would go well, so that Beatrice was not able to pay her usual visits to the school-room, and Agatha had not seen her since the night on which she had looked so brilliant and happy until now that she stood by the window with that shadow on her face. "Miss Brooke," said Beatrice, plaintively, "what can it matter whether those dear children know the past part of the verb 'to be'—to-day or to-morrow? Do leave them a few minutes, and talk to me. I have to go out at noon, and this is the only leisure that I shall have. I want to talk to you."

Agatha fancied she detected a faint sound as of trouble in the sweet voice. She gave the children something to employ themselves with and went to Beatrice, who turned to her with a sigh of relief. "Thank you," she said; "you are always kind to me, Miss Brooke; it is good of you to be so patient with me. I have no one to whom I can speak of my earl but you; I do not think mamma understands love as you or I do; she always speaks of marriage as 'contracting an alliance,' and a faint smile curled the girl's lips. "I believe, for the first time in my life, I have a heavy heart, and I want you to tell me if it is so." "How can I tell you, Beatrice?" asked Agatha, half smiling at the girl's utter simplicity. "You know everything about love, and pain, and happiness," sighed Beatrice; "I know you have heart-ache, because I have seen you when I am sure you have spent hours in crying. I am afraid my heart is heavy, and it should not be when my lover is here. I do not feel quite like myself; I am more inclined to cry than to laugh; there is something wrong with the sunshine." "And what is the cause?" asked Agatha. The girl laid her head wearily on the cold glass. "I can hardly tell," she replied. "I talked a great deal with Lord Kelsio last night, and there seemed to be such a distance between us. I can hardly explain what I mean, but it made my heart ache." "A distance between you? I hardly understand, Beatrice. In what manner?" "You see, Miss Brooke, my life has been so simple; I have lived under such love and care; I have never been away from my parents. There are stars and troubles in the world, but I do not even know them. I am such a child," she continued, passionately—"such a stupid, ignorant, foolish child! While he knows everything, I wish I were more like him."

"What you call ignorance is most probably your greatest charm," said Agatha. "However worldly a man may be himself, he likes an unworshipful woman." Her face brightened. "Do you think so? I am so glad. I heard him talking to mamma—she seemed to understand him—and she laughed. I could never amuse him as she does. Then I asked him why his eyes always were that melancholy look, and what do you think he said?" "I cannot guess, Beatrice." "He said I did not know that I looked melancholy, Beatrice; I shall not do so when I have you near me." "I persisted," Miss Brooke, I said to him, 'It is nothing to do with me; the first night I saw you the same look was there. Why are you sad when you have everything that this world can give you? And this was his answer—'this is what puzzled me so.' I have lost something out of my life,' he said, 'and life will never be the same again.'"

about resting them—they are to be mine. We began to talk about jewelry and ornaments, and I had noticed for some time that my earl always wore a locket—it is a gold locket, with one diamond. I asked him to let me look at it; he seemed rather confused at first, but I insisted. You may look at every locket I have, I said; why should I not look at yours? "Then he took it from his watch chain and gave it to me. I opened it, and in beautiful, golden hair. I could see at once that it had been cut from the head of some fair woman. I asked him whose hair it is this? and he answered—'it belonged to one who is now among the angels. Dead, do you mean?' I asked. 'Yes, dead,' he replied, and his voice was sorrowful—ah, as the sighing of the wind when the leaves die. Then an idea came to me—he said he had lost something from his life; he said also that this hair belonged to some one who was dead; it seemed to me that he had loved and lost some beautiful woman, to whom that hair belonged. I can understand what it is to be jealous—a pang like no other pain that I have ever felt went through my heart."

"You need never be jealous of the dead," said Agatha. "I could not help it—I you will think me selfish, I know, but I could not bear to think that any one else had ever had a share of his heart. I could not bear it—living or dead. No woman must have any place in his heart but me." And it seemed to Agatha, as she listened to the passionate words, that in a few short hours Beatrice Penrith had changed from a simple, loving child, to a passionate, loving woman. "I am afraid I am not so good as I ought to be. I know that she loves me, and I should be content; but I am jealous of that part of his life in which I have had no share. I should like to know everything about him, from the time he first began to walk until now. I cannot bear that part in which I did not know him, in which he had loved and hated, all dead letters to me. If there were ever so many faults I would forgive them all; but I cannot bear to remember he has had a past that I shall never be part of. Do you understand, Miss Brooke?" "Yes, I understand perfectly," she replied. "I know you would. If I were to talk in this strain to mamma, she would think me insane. I have told Lord Kelsio everything in my life—not that there has been very much, except, perhaps, about Gerald Leigh. He laughed about Gerald, and said that he was the finest young officer in the queen's army. He was not in the least jealous, as I thought he would be, but when I had told him everything about myself that I could remember, and I asked him to tell me all his life, and everything in it, he looked—well, I can only say he looked perfectly miserable. "My dearest Beatrice," he answered, 'our lives have met now like two streams; but the one is a clear, sweet transparent brook—the other, a muddy river; the brook will purify the river. Now what could he mean by that?'"

"I should think the lives of most men would more resemble a muddy river than a clear brook," said Agatha. "Perhaps he had no particular meaning. You, Beatrice, have known nothing but the beautiful, holy life and love of home; the earl has, perhaps, like other people, gambled a little, drank a little, bet and lost; and now, in the light of eyes so pure and sweet as yours, his errors look very big and black, indeed—the muddy river, in fact." The beautiful young face brightened at her words; Beatrice flung her arms round Agatha's neck, and thanked her for her sympathy. "I am glad you think so. I could not understand. And you are quite sure there is not a beautiful woman in it?" "I cannot be quite sure," replied Agatha, slowly. "My dearest Beatrice, how can I tell? I should most certainly say that whatever has been, however, you now better than any one in the world; and if I were you, dear, I would not wonder if I would not even think about his past. Trust him all in all; think of the present, and how to make him most happy—never mind the past." "You do not think—you are so nice, Miss Brooke—you do not think from what I have told you, that he has ever really loved any one else but me?" "What does it matter, Beatrice, if he loves you best now? No, I do not see anything in what you have said to induce that belief. Be happy, and do not make trouble, Beatrice."

"You have not seen my earl yet, have you, Miss Brooke?" she asked. "Not yet," replied Agatha. "When you do, you will not wonder that I am just a little jealous. My only wonder is that every one does not like him as much as I do." Agatha laughed. "It is just as well as it is," she replied. But when Beatrice, considerably relieved and much happier, hastened away, she felt anxious and depressed. "It would have been much happier for her had she fallen in love with Gerald Leigh," she thought. "In all that she tells me about Lord Kelsio there is something from which my whole heart rebels. I wish she had loved Gerald Leigh." Some few days passed then, during which she did not see Beatrice. The castle was full of visitors; there were continued gayeties—balls, picnics, parties of all kinds. Beatrice had only just leisure to run in and speak two or three words. "I am so happy!" she would say. "Thank Heaven for me!" And these few words always brightened the day for Agatha. The marriage was one of the general topics of conversation, and several paragraphs concerning it had been published in the papers. Few people were ignorant of the fact that the Earl of Kelsio was to marry the beautiful young daughter of the session—the daughter of Lord Penrith. His preparations for the marriage went on steadily; Beatrice forgot her doubts; the earl no longer wore the locket, with the single diamond, that held the pale golden hair. The happy days passed on, and brought with them no clouds. "I wish," said Beatrice, one morning, "that I had studied music more carefully. I had no idea that the earl enjoyed it so much. I wish I had your talent for it, Miss Brooke."

CHAPTER LVIII.

"I WISH I COULD ALWAYS BE NINETEEN."

"I think it a good sign when a man loves music," said Agatha. "Does he sing, himself?" "No; at least, I have not heard him. You know that we went to Liscom Priory yesterday, and dinner was delayed for an hour in consequence. In the lovely time that passed all the glowing; when I went down, and finding no one about I went to the piano in the oak room, and Lord Kelsio followed me." "That was very natural," laughed Agatha. "It was the happiest hour of my life," continued Beatrice. "He was so kind,

he seemed to know every one—all the beautiful women had smiles and bows for him, all the men a cordial word. He pointed out to me several new and most beautiful flowers, but he did not ask me to dance with him; I saw Gerald reaching me with troubled eyes, I myself was like one in a dream. I remember wishing that the night might never end; that I might wander with him through banks of sweet blossoms forever. At last—