

unhappiness their discovery could not but occasion you at home. Could I be a coward for my own, at least for your sake, dearest, I must needs be brave."

They were walking slowly along the ridge of the long river-slope, near where the great convent crests the rise to-day. The night-wind swept cold across the river, and sighed mournfully among the reeds. The girl shivered as she stopped, and turned her face homewards. More than a mile away loomed the city, the dull glare of its oil-lamps scarcely brightening its murky outline.

"You are wisest, and are, I suppose right," she sighed. "But, oh Garrett, if this horrid quarrel could never have happened, and if no outside influence could have come between you and him! I do think," she went on, in a reproach that was half a wail, "that, for my sake, you might have been something less determined, and have given away even to an old man's fancy."

"Alice, you are scarcely yourself to-night, or you would not have me abandon what I know to be right and true. You remember that last fierce passion of your father's, when he forbade me to again enter his house until I should have consented to give up my faith to his prejudice, and you well remember, too, what I told you then—that I had become a Freemason, because I had observed throughout the world, that the men whom I most esteemed, and whose lives I held in highest honour, were, with scarcely an exception, Craftsmen. Had I known of his objections earlier, I cannot say whether I should have done so, for I could not have said whether they were well or ill-founded. But, now that I am capable of judging, you would not have me play the hypocrite by a pretended abandonment of my convictions, and dishonour myself that I might have his consent for you to share the dishonour with me."

Alice was silent, but she held her lovers arm closer in her own as they walked slowly townwards. Again I must remind you that the age had not then been born when men, or women either, should cease to have pride in a lofty devotion to pure principle, or should be eager to barter what they knew to be True for any considerations of convenience or of pleasure.

Still she was but a weak girl, and the blank before her seemed very long and very dismal. Once more she made a forlorn attempt at compromise.

"I do not know what my father's objections may be; but, as he said to you then, I have often heard him say before and since too. These meetings of yours, to which no one else may be admitted, he looks upon as evil, if only from their secrecy, and believes that the mysterious ceremonies with which you are said to invest them are but a disguise for a vulgar revelry you are ashamed openly to own. That you can take part in them, Garrett, is proof enough for me of how far he is mistaken, but, though I know him to regard you, otherwise, with more favour than any other man living, such reasoning as mine would hardly have weight to combat what has been so deeply rooted a prejudice for years. But, if you were to give up any further attendance on these meetings, and but to content yourself with practising through the world those lessons of which you speak without prominently identifying yourself with their adepts here—everything might, after a little, come smooth again, and I—I should be so happy."

As she clung lovingly to him in her entreaty, and her eyes looked up tenderly in his own, the temptation was sore indeed. But the solemn words of the charge were yet fresh in his ears, as he put it away from him bravely if sadly.

"It was an accident that brought up this question between your father and myself, dear," he said gently; "I never deceived him from the beginning, and I cannot affect to do so now. It is only to-day that I have taken another step binding me closer than before to the associations which he dislikes so unreasonably. With us, whose aim is the enlightenment and improvement of the world, and the correction of the meanest of its vices, there is no stopping half-way. And, when Mr. Creagh finds that my companions have not succeeded in debauching me," he added laughingly, "perhaps even he will be inclined to confess himself mistaken in their character and purposes."

Alice knew her father's indomitable obstinacy better, and only shook her head in answer. And so the subject dropped then, and was happily forgotten for the time, while other language was being spoken, such as we have no right to overhear, and while the moon peeped out upon the old old picture, and the stars twinkled with glee to listen to the old old story. It was the eighteenth century to be sure, and in many ways differed widely from our own. But, in the one way that is eternal as the heavens, it was the same as its forerunner and its successor. And the sigh of the night-wind moaned no longer sorrowfully through the reeds, but stole in plaintive cadence over the long waving grasses of the upland verdure, and what it whispered then has been whispered still, and always—"Ah! it was ever so in the olden time."

He did not leave her until they reached the corner of the old Wall, within a stone's throw of old Michael's door. And there, making that last farewell that is sacred, and, after holding out all prospects and promises of the brightest for his swift return, Garrett recurred playfully to the old topic:

"Masonry, it is said, can sometimes help men through sore trouble. Alice you will not be sorry to remember that I take with me one extra chance for safety through the dangers you so greatly fear."

And then he was gone. Out into the blackness of the night, and to face the lurking shadows of the Future. Out into the hand of God—but confronting the Unseen, under the protection of this special amulet he had told her of. Those latest words of leave-taking were to be her comfort through many a long night afterwards, while the wind was howling through the crooked chimney-tops, and the lonely chime of the great Cathedral peal rang like a fitful prayer for the souls of the drowned!

Mr. Creagh, as a man of business, knew well that the *Thetis* had cleared. I think he could not but have shrewdly guessed how his daughter's evening hours had sped. But, whether he could feel any remorse for the obstinacy which had brought such sorrow to his darling, is more than I am able to judge. At least he had neither remonstrance nor rebuke for her practical disobedience. For, when, an hour later, as he sat in his big leathern chair, by the wide open fire-place, where logs and turf mingled harmoniously to a merry sparkling glow, smoking one of the long Dutch pipes our great grand fathers were wont to love, and only