

tion of manhood can possibly fancy him; yet—and here was the sin of my engagement—I did not love him.

Loneliness and pique were the two great moving powers that influenced me; so I married him, unloving and cold, stoical and reserved, yet craving with a passionate yearning for something with which to fill my empty heart. Volumes of words would fail to give expression to the wondrous tenderness with which he ever encompassed me, but my heart slumbered in a trance of forgetful misery, while even the light of his love shining upon it seemed to possess no awakening power.

We had been married two months, during which no breath of care had been allowed to blow upon me; no pleasure had been denied, when my husband, John Lithgow, took me down to the sea-side, for my pale face, with the heavy circles round the eyes, told its own tale of health undermined. In truth, I thought I was going there to die, and I used to wickedly wonder if Douglas would feel a pang of compunction or pity when he heard of my death. So I used to lie on the sea-shore, listlessly and wearily, for when the pique had died out my heart was very cold and still, almost too languid to beat. I was filling life with "the grave, dark deeds that cannot be undone," hating it for a passage as I threw away the noble love God had bestowed upon me for the crowning of my life, while I wasted the riches of my own heart upon an affection whose object was a figment of my brain, not the reality I fancied him.

My husband loved me right royally and purely, with a sweet tenderness, as manly as it was great, yet I made no effort to return it.

I must have been mad in those days, or else childishly ignorant of the gift I was spurning. I know not which. When God took it from me I woke with an exceeding bitter cry to the vain knowledge that it was gone for ever.

For ever! did I say? Nay, surely God is more pitiful. Will He not let me have it again when I am more worthy of it? It was a soft autumnal day when He took it back to Himself. Sometimes I think that when the winter is over, and the new spring breaketh, He will restore it to me.

Oh, that day! It had been hot and oppressive throughout every hour of it; so unbearably sultry that even the cool wafting of the sea-breezes had failed effectually to lessen the temperature. All nature grew drowsy, as if a heavy sleep was falling upon it, while the low distant mutterings of the coming storm were the only sounds that broke the brooding silence.

During the whole day I had not moved outside the house, but when the evening came, I said to John, "We will go down to the beach for a little while."

"There is a storm coming, my love; you will be best indoors," he made answer. But a spirit of contrariness moved me, and I persisted in going; so a few moments later we were down in the very midst of a group of anxious fishermen, who were straining their eyes to catch a sight of the little boats which had not yet come in, while the women were flocking down with white, anxious faces. Poor wives, whose bread-winners seemed always in danger! As we stood there, the wind began to rise, and the mutterings of the thunder grew louder and louder, booming over the expanse of sea with a noise too fearful to describe.

"God help the poor wives!" my husband breathed, as the storm swept on, lashing the waves into huge billows of foam, while the glare of the lightning lit up all the strained, anxious faces into unearthly weirdness and beauty.

A moment or two of intense suspense; then a boat was sighted, a tiny fishing smack, with its precious freight of living souls, four in number. The little bark struggled gallantly, while we stood awe-stricken, watching the weather-beaten faces of the sailors who were waiting to throw the ropes to its crew.

Another fearful glare! The waves seemed on fire. Then we saw the men struggling in the white foaming billows. A piercing shriek rang out from the lips of the women, while one fell down upon her face, and cried frantically to God for aid. I shall never forget that scene! The white set faces of some, who turned their anguished, appealing looks towards the sky; the screams of others, who were too young to control the bitterness of sorrow which came upon them when they remembered their own husbands and fathers, who had not yet returned; the women who grovelled upon the earth in the midst of the dark seaweed, crying to the all-pitiful Father as she never had cried before! I see it all! Would to God I could forget it!

I shut my eyes upon the scene, as one to whom the revelation of life comes too sharply. I think my senses were leaving me, for I remember nought excepting the fashion in which John was straining me to him, and the words ringing in my ears, "God bless you, my love, my dearest, if I do not come back again."

The very expression dazed me, and I remember no more until the storm had ceased, and the moon was playing over the waters like a mother dallying with a placid, sleeping child! I was in bed, and a woman sat by my side as if watching me!

Like a fearful dream the whole scene came back. I sat up in bed still half-unconscious, with a vague wonder moving me as to where John could be. I dare not write more of that coming back to life! Often I wonder if it was not an awful dream from which I shall awaken to see John at my side again. Too late! when I would have given my life for a word from his dead lips.

He had gone into the plunging, treacherous sea to save the husbands of others, and left his own wife desolate for ever more!

The bright, sunny head was chill and damp with the waters of death, and the lips I had never sought half enough in life, were dead for ever to my wildest caresses.

Almost half a century has fled since then. I sit in the firelight's glow, with my hands folded across my lap, and when I am alone I see the face of my lost love—loved too late—until I wonder if this "long ago" of mine was not only the event of yesterday. When I sit and ponder over it I am glad with a great gladness that though there is a "river of life" in the great city, yet there is "no more sea." Often John lays his hand in mine, and I know that he is leading me! No, I am not childish! He is sitting beside me now as I write, and when God says to him, "Bring her home," I am so weary that I think even the angels will chant "Amen!"

Yes, I am glad—"There shall be no more sea!"

I have known no earthly love since the waves took my husband, but his God is mine, and soon I shall see them both "face to face."

The shadows of life lengthen, but the day is breaking over the mountains—a new day in which I shall "go home."

AFFLICTIONS.

LUTHER was wont to say three things made a good minister; temptation, affliction, supplication. The same also conduce to the making of a good Christian. And, indeed, 'tis seldom that a soul comes to any eminence in grace, until he has been exercised with sanctified afflictions and temptations. And doubtless there is many a soul who may and must say, that next to Christ, his afflictions have, through His grace and blessing, been His mercies. Oh how should this draw souls to Christ, and allure them into a marriage covenant with Him! Poor soul! it may be that which keeps thee from Christ is the fear of what afflictions thou mayest meet with in His ways. But know (1) thou mayest meet affliction, yea, first or last, thou wilt assuredly meet with affliction, though thou never closest with Christ. Alas! wicked men and unbelievers meet with troubles and afflictions, and that even in this world oftentimes. However, to be sure at last, they will have a full cup, yea, the very dregs of God's wrath poured out unto them. (2) Whatever afflictions thou mayest meet withal in the way of Christ, closing with Him, He sweetens all for thee; and that so as thou wouldst not have been without them for a world! Oh, scarce not at the Cross, but close in with Christ!

DRESS IN CHURCH.—Nowhere, we are ashamed to say, is the bad taste of ostentation in dress more conspicuous than here. It seems as if, with many, the Sabbath were the grand occasion for display, and the church the place for self-exhibition. In no other country have we seen so much show and tinsel in the churches as in some of our own cities. In Europe—not only in England, but on the Continent—such display is rigidly forbidden, not by law, but by the recognised canons of good taste. Nothing is considered more vulgar—a more certain mark of low breeding—than this kind of ostentation in a place of worship. It is only the "new rich"—what we should call the "shoddy"—that try to exhibit themselves in the house of God. But as that class is larger in this country than anywhere else, we have more of these wretched exhibitions.—*The Evangelist.*