

By this time they had reached the house. As they entered the garden gate Tom said :

"I wish to say in conclusion of the subject, that I *can* wait patiently, and sleep eight hours per night in the meantime. And, mind, if you lower me in Miss Fairweather's estimation by depicting me to her as being in such an insipid state as you have insinuated, I'll scold you in all the dead and living languages of which I have a smattering, which, I promise you, will eclipse slang in the density of its significance."

But, somehow, whether it was the change of air or the novelty of his surroundings, *something* cheated Tom of his usual repose. What it was, even to himself, he argued was wholly a matter of conjecture. He was in robust health, he had nothing to worry him—nothing upon his mind—no, he was sure there was nothing upon his mind, yet he muttered : "Blamed if I can get to sleep until past midnight." Then he commenced to catechise himself thus : "Sure it is not the latent effects of hard study in preparing for that last exam. ! Yes. Sure it wasn't that. Sure it is not due to indigestion ? Yes. Or Fanny Fairweather ? Yes ; sure—well, anyway, I don't think so. Now, Tom Twitchett, be careful how you answer me. Remember the words of Professor Puffin : 'The diagnosis is of first importance ; the treatment and regimen are determined by it.' You are not positive as to the latter suggestion. Now answer these questions—yes or no—without equivocation : When you unexpectedly met Miss Fairweather crossing the meadow the day before yesterday, did you not experience violent palpitation, a sudden rushing of blood to the face and a sensation of sinking through the earth to the Antipodes ? Come, now—yes or no ? Yes. Since which occasion you have been troubled with insomnia ? Yes. That'll do. I see it is a clear case of heart disease. Take care, young man—take care, or you will be Dr. Twitchett's first patient."

This dialogue between Tom and himself occurred in his bed-chamber before he retired on the night of the Wednesday preceding Miss Fairweather's proposed visit. An hour

later, as Tom made a third resolve that he would go to sleep that time, the whole household was aroused by a knocking at the front door. Tom heard his uncle go down stairs and open the door. Then he heard him in conversation with some one who talked in a low voice that he could not hear. Presently his uncle left the person in the hall and came upstairs, his footsteps drawing nearer until they stopped at the door of Tom's room, at which he rapped and requested admission.

"Tom, my lad," said he, coming to his bedside, "here's a case for you. Miss Fairweather's mother has had a bad turn, and, as you are the only doctor nearer than Plymouth, Miss Fairweather is sorry to disturb you, and wishes to know if you would be so kind as to come at once and see her mother."

"Certainly, uncle, with as much pleasure to be of service to Miss Fairweather as I am sorry to hear her mother is worse."

Tom was up and dressed and on his way with Miss Fairweather to the sick room in a few moments.

Some time ago Mrs. Fairweather had been stricken down with a paralytic stroke, since which time she had been confined to the house an invalid. Even to inexperienced Tom it was evident she had sustained a serious relapse and was in a critical condition which seemed hopeless. He administered such restoratives as his knowledge suggested and stayed with the patient, who was unconscious, until the arrival of the family physician from Plymouth in the morning.

Dr. Vaughan endorsed the treatment of his young colleague, saying he had done all that could be done under the circumstances, and expressed an opinion that the patient would never recover consciousness. Nor did she. Ere the next day closed, Frances Fairweather mourned with a grief that refused her the relief of tears, the death of her mother, who to her had been a wealth of affection and the dearest object of her attachment on earth.

PART II.

Frances Fairweather bore her bereavement with commendable fortitude. The years wherein she had ministered to the necessities of her afflicted mother, and had by her diligence as organist and at music teaching kept their little hoard of ready cash in the Post Office Savings' Bank intact for exigencies, had made of her a brave little woman, able to rise superior to the adversity of circumstance by an effort of her will. Tears she often shed after the poignancy of the cruel separation was past, but only in the privacy of her own room, when pain and despondency oozed from her tender eyes with the love-drops of grief, only to leave her troubled heart soothed with consolation which, by the magnetism of faith, she drew down deep into her soul from above. Outwardly her countenance betrayed not the concealed burden of her heart ; it was serene and cheerful as before and its sunshine had not departed. Although the cloud that darkened her life had bedimmed the quiet mirthfulness of those deep blue orbs, they beamed with a new-born foregleam of that exultation which could triumph even over the desolation of the worst enemy and see beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death a vision of life's sequel. Thus fortified against despair by a confident trust in the goodness of her God, she could challenge with the words of scripture the death and the grave that had taken and engulfed her mother : "O Death,

where is thy sting ? O Grave, where is thy victory ?"

Nobly she bore her sad part alone, and yet not alone, for beside the sympathy of true friends that compassed her with healing comfort, who shall say that there is not support in the companionship of a kindred spirit, transformed in the laying hold of eternal life ? She was of an unselfish nature, yet it was not wholly from a desire to avoid being a bore to her acquaintances that she forbore to obtrude her sorrow upon them : she was chiefly actuated to an almost jealous reserve by the fealty of her heart to its affection, and the commingled love and pain made the memory of her bereavement a bitter-sweet, for which she craved as an evidence of her union with the spirit of a just woman made perfect. So she did not parade her grief or for proffered sympathy return a moan. She gave friendship for friendship—love for love—smile for smile.

After the formalities of the funeral were over, she allowed herself to be persuaded to take a brief respite from her musical engagements and visit her friend, Nellie Jeffrey, who with her uncle had secretly conspired to entice her to Oakleigh—the name of Mr. Preece's residence—under the pretext of a visit, purposing to induce her to defer her departure from time to time until they won her consent to remain altogether.