

DEATH.

This is a narrow path, and the journey of death can be made only by a narrow path...

EDITH YORKE.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

A part of Miss Miller's fortune was given to the church, the rest was left conditionally...

On Miss Ollinton the effect of this death was terrible. She alternately refused to believe that it had taken place...

But this silence was not forgetfulness. She saw plainly; yet, from that time, Miss Ollinton never allowed herself to be left alone a moment...

When spring came again, she was unable to leave her room, and, in a short time, was confined to her bed, and from querulous became light-headed.

Carl made a desperate effort one day to induce her to see a priest or a minister, using every argument in his power...

Carl, she called out, as if he were far away and out of her sight, "who was it said 'O God!—if there is a God—save my soul—' if I have a soul?"

She did not look at him, but leaned out of bed, staring wildly round the room. He tried to soothe her and coax her back to her pillows again.

"Was it I said it?" she asked excitedly, resisting him and sitting upright. "Was it I said it? It sounds like me, doesn't it?"

So Carl Yorke was at last rich and free, with the world before him. There was but little for him to do at present.

Now that it was summer, he would go down and stay with them a while. If rest and pleasure were to be had there, he would have them. He felt like one who has travelled over a dusty, sultry road, and longs to plunge into a bath, and wash all that heat and dust away.

"I will not turn my back upon delight, and invite dryness of life by looking for it," he thought. "If the Bible does not proclaim my right to pursue happiness, the Declaration of Independence does, and I will give myself the benefit of the doubt."

On the surface of these halcyon circumstances, Carl Yorke found his lot a flower growing. Every body was smiling and congratulatory. Congratulations, not always over delicate, on his accession to fortune met him at every hand, and callers became more frequent, in spite of a reputation as cool as politeness would allow.

"Now that the priest is gone, we have peace," said the Boston paper. In fact, having driven the priest away, so that these poor souls were deprived of their consolations and restraints of religion, having destroyed their school-house, so that there seemed no possibility that the school could continue after the cold weather should set in, there appeared no more mischief to do.

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but the smile that brightens when fortune brightens, must, in a noble nature, awaken a feeling of involuntary disgust.

Dr. Martin and his wife called a few days after Carl came home. He was rather an embarrassing call, for there was scarcely a non-explosive subject on which they could speak, but by dint of careful management on the part of the ladies, and a determination on the part of each gentleman that he would not be the aggressor, no violent reproofs of Mr. Yorke and the minister exchanged.

Mr. Yorke and the minister exchanged a few words on agriculture, and a few sentences on the "voluntary" smoking, the appetites of the "uphill" talk. Mrs. Martin and the minister talked kindly souls on the subject of worried work, and grew glibly intimate over a new pattern and a rainbow package of wool.

"He asked me once," she said, "if when I came to die, I should need any one but Christ. I could not answer him, for I did not understand then that he was attacking the doctrine of Extreme Unction, and intimating his belief that Catholics think only of the priest, and not of all of God? But I noticed that he showed a great deal of feeling, and when he said, 'If you have Christ, you need no one else, there were tears in his eyes. Since then I have liked him. I think he is mistaken, rather than malicious."

"Mr. Yorke looked gravely at his niece. 'I sometimes think,' he said, 'with Pope, that there is nothing needed to make all rational and disinterested people in the world of one religion, but that they should talk together every day. If people would ask what you believe, and listen to you, instead of telling you what you believe and abusing you much as they might avoid it.'"

"I think Dr. Martin's motive in coming here was good," Mrs. Yorke said. "He knows that we are going away, and wishes to part in peace."

"Carl, you settled what you are going to be?" Edith ventured to ask when he joined her afterward in the garden.

"No," he answered, with hesitation. "Something depends. I am at the north pole, and all roads lead south. Meantime, I am not idle."

She waited for him to continue, but he said no more, and she felt chilled and mortified at having questioned him. No one in the world was less curious concerning the private affairs of others than Edith, and she never asked a question except from a feeling of tender interest. Therefore she considered herself repulsed.

"What are you studying now?" Carl asked, after a moment, the silence becoming awkward.

"I have almost given up books," she replied quietly, and the hands with which she was weaving a morning-glory vine into its trellis were not quite steady.

"Oh! he would only question her, and insist on knowing everything. She was in deep waters, and she longed to tell him all, and ask the solution of her doubts. With a fine, unerring instinct which she felt, but did not understand, Edith could tolerate the thought of no other confidant. Yet a great barrier stood between them. She could go frankly to Dick, if she had anything to say to him, but Carl was different. She could tell him nothing, unless he asked her. Besides, he never told her anything. Now she thought of it, except these silent motions of sympathy, their intercourse had been very exterior. She knew nothing of his real life; and yet he, too, was at the point of choice in some things, and must have much to say to one he cared for and trusted. She waited a moment, then walked toward the house, and they separated rather coldly."

Edith had, indeed, dropped the study of physical science, but she had taken up another, and it perplexed her sorely. Within the last year she had been striving, with but little help, to learn something of the science of the heart. What was this love that had started up in her path, and demanded to be listened to, and returned? She had written as frankly as she could to Father Raale, telling him of her promise to Dick Rowan, and his answer had disappointed her. She read some of the moralists, and her soul recoiled. If that was love, why were the stories of Jacob and Rachel, and Esther and Assuerus, told without sign of reprobation? She went to the novelists, and they pleased her but little better. In despair, then, she went to the poets. Euræka! Here was what she wanted: the affection at once pure and impassioned, heroic and tender, demanding all, yet sacrificing all, proud yet humble, inexplicable rave by the poet and the lover! It was fitting that the poets should be its interpreters, for it was above common life, as song is above speech. Grapes were not sour because they grew high, nor things impossible because rare.

"Dear Mr. Browning!" she whispered, as she read *Aurora Leigh*. "What a pity she had not faith! Her nature is glorious. How she spurs the low!"

She read Tennyson, and sighed with delight over the *Arthur*. Edith, and wept for Elaine dead, and floated down the river to Lancelot, her letter to him in her hand.

So, with the help of the poets, Edith escaped the danger of being contaminated by the efforts made to save her from harm. With her intuitive beliefs confirmed by these prophetic singers, she refused to let that yet unfolded blossom of her life trail in the mire, but held it up with a proud, though trembling hand. To her loving was a holy and beautiful thing.

But she longed to know what Carl thought of it. Clara kept up his regular hours of study, and he set up his easel, and made a crayon group of his father, mother, and sisters. Mrs. Yorke insisted that he should paint his own portrait separately for her. Being in a bitter mood one day, he sketched himself as Slayphus standing on the hill-top, and watching the great stone, which he had just rolled patiently up hill, roll down again of itself. Edith sat by him, saying a word now and then, and watching his work.

When his hand paused to let his imagination picture first the dull misery in the face of the dazed and baffled giant, she said quietly, "What great bovine creature the Titans were, after all! I did not admire them much, even when you read me the translation of the *Prometheus*. All that splendor of soul, was *Zsobylnis*, not the fire-stealer. But wasn't it a beautiful voice? 'Stately and antique' were thy fallence roar?"

"Still, the mastodon is stately and antique, too. The Titans were too easily conquered. They cut like great meadows. If their spirit had been equal to their size, they would have snatched the Olympians like dry twigs beneath their feet."

She stretched her hand, and softly took by the hand, drew the crayon from his hand, and laid it on the table. The picture would have been a masterpiece, though it were out of sight.

"It was better than a 'wisdom' word," Carl said, looking at the picture. "I shall be glad to see it when you go to paint your portrait in oil."

"I will be your rich patron, and you a poor artist," she said, "and you will paint for me, and I will give you a gold medal of the Immaculate Conception, or a little silver crucifix, with the figure of gold, whichever you choose. Then I will be a poor lady and you a rich artist, and you shall give me the picture back, and what will you give me for it? I know what I like that you have."

"What do you like," asks Carl, placing a large sheet of drawing paper on his easel. "A tiny brooch, that you never wear, with a carbuncle in it. I confess to you that I have longed for it. It is like a coal of fire. It is most beautiful. You know I have a passion for gems! Flowers make me sad, but gems are like heavenly joys and hopes that never fade. There is no object in nature that delights me like a beautiful gem. They are the good acts of the earth. A ruby is an act of love, a sapphire an act of faith, an emerald an act of hope, a diamond an act of joyful adoration. Pearls are tears of sorrow for the dead, opals are tears of sorrow for sin. The opal, you know, is the only gem that cannot be imitated."

"So you wanted the carbuncle," Carl said, much pleased. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"I waited till I knew that you cared nothing about it," Edith answered.

"But I do value it very much now, young woman; and if you know where it is, you will bring it to me at once. I am impatient to see it."

She went out and got the brooch. It was a smooth, oval stone of a deep-red color, with a tiny flame flickering in it. The lapidary had been too true an artist to spoil the stone with facets, and the result was a little crystallized pool. Edith laid it on black velvet, and held it out for Carl to see. "There," she said. "It had never occurred to them to look at it before, but now its beauty was apparent."

"I am delighted to give it to you, dear," he said affectionately, and pinned the velvet ribbon round her neck with it.

They smiled at each other, well pleased; then she sat down by him, and watched while he began to sketch.

"Isn't it odd, Carl," she said, "that you and I should be rich people, when we were so poor a short time ago? Only I did not know that we were poor. I always felt rich after I came here."

"I half remember a fairy story," Carl said. "It is of a fairy who wore pearls around a sunbeam, or a moonbeam, to prove to her lover her miraculous power. I am going to paint you as that fairy. Shall it be a sunbeam or a moonbeam melody?"

"Make it a tropical full moonlight, Carl, and give me a palm-tree to stand under. It would be refreshing to stand in the midst of such a scene, even on canvas."

The artist sketched lightly and swiftly. "Here, at the right, a troop of fairies shall dance, only half seen. Near them a thin strip of a waterfall shall leap and drop, and lose itself in spray, and gather so slowly, and stream shall look like a vein of amethyst damasked into the turf, not a ripple nor a bubble to be seen. The orchestra, blowing on flower-trumpets, and shaking campaniles of bluebells and lilacs-of-the-valley, are hidden by their instruments beside this waterfall, and their music makes the thin sheet wave as it drops. The palm-tree lifts itself against the moon, and seems to be on fire with it, and drops in a verjant cascade above you, every feathery plume fire-fringed with light. But only one beam, like a shaft of diamond, shall pierce that foliage, and there you stand, with your arms uplifted, bradling pearls around it. You are smiling softly, your hair is down, and filmy sleeves drop back to your shoulders. As you breathe, the light prisoned inside changes the pearls to opals."

"You will never be able to make me look like a fairy," Edith said. "I see a moral in everything. Fairy stories and myths always seem to me Christian traits in masquerade; as though the truths, jealously wishing us to prize them, put on dress after dress, to see if we would recognize them in each. If you really care for me, you will know me through any disguise; that is what they say. Why, Carl, if you and I were at a masquerade, and you did not know me, I should feel sure."

"We will, that some night in Venice," Carl said, smiling to himself.

"Yes. But this moonbeam hid in pearls to me it is like a true thought well spoken; or, no, it is the Immaculate Conception. And now, good-by. I must go to my school."

Since she could not be permitted to instruct Catholic children, Edith went four times a week, and every Sunday, to the Paterans, and taught them whatever they seemed to be most in need of. The town-schools were far away, and the mother too hard-worked to do more than feed and clothe her children, and these ministrations were thankfully received. Edith held her school on a large flat rock near the house, so as not to interfere with Mrs. Patten, and embarrassed her in her work. Only on Sundays did the young lady enter the house, and then there was a grand dress parade, to which the family looked forward all the week. On these occasions the children were all washed "within an inch of their lives," as Mrs. Yorke's Betsy expressed it; their best clothes, given by Mrs. Yorke, were donned; and their hair combed down so smoothly that it seemed to be plastered over their heads. Woe to that child who should rumple a hair or disturb a fold when all was done! Since her accession to fortune, Edith had given the family, among other things, a clock—they had formerly reckoned time by the sun—and, at precisely half past nine, Joe sat himself in the south window to watch for the teacher. According to Mrs. Patten's notions of propriety, it would be indecorous for any of them to be seen outside the door on Sunday till after the instruction. The house was as clean and orderly as such a place could be made; the sacks of straw and dry leaves that answered for beds were made into two piles, in opposite corners, and used as sofas; the calico curtains that divided the bedrooms were artistically looped; a vast armful of green boughs concealed the roots of the rough chimney, the stocks laid there to be lighted to get dinner by, and the pots and pans in which that dinner was cooked. Green vines and flowers and moss were placed here and there, and the door by which Edith entered was always made into a sort of triumphal arch, where she stood a moment to exchange her first salutation with the family. They were drawn up in two lines, to right and left, the girls headed by their mother, the boys by their father, and as that pretty shallow head goes with a shallow heart, and his first thought was merely how he should evade the weight of his wife's dependence,

dropped a short courtesy, and the remaining five achieved a simultaneous snapping. What they have a sensation of snapping, what a beautiful salutation was that low, dull, earnest, "Good-morning!" of hers, and what would equal her grace that slight bending-half bow, half courtesy, with which she greeted them. One side of her face was a little smudged, with a chair behind her, and the whole company good will. Edith had taken her seat there. She never did so, without a blush of humility.

To one less earnest, and less preoccupied by the real work they had to do, this ceremony would have seemed sufficiently indignifying. Or, perhaps, we should say, rather, to one less tender of heart. But Edith Yorke saw only the eager gratitude and desire to do her honor, the simple earnestness and good faith, and that mingling of poverty and taste which silently showed all the misery of poor Mrs. Patten's life. For all that was done was hers. Without her, the children and their father would have been almost as close.

"There is a certain arrogance, of a facility, with which the rich sometimes approach the poor, as though wealth and education constituted an essential difference which they are elaborately anxious should not too much humiliate their progeny. This the intelligent poor are very quick to perceive and inwardly, if not outwardly, to resent. Others assume the rude manners of those whom they would benefit, in order to set them at ease—a good-natured mistake, but one which inspires contempt, and weakens their influence. Edith Yorke's quick sympathies and delicate intuitions rendered it impossible for her even to make either of these mistakes."

She carried herself with perfect dignity and simplicity, was kind, and even affectionate, without lowering herself into a cowering familiarity, and thus gave them a sample of exquisite demeanor, and, at the same time, set them as much at their ease as it was well they should be. If people of rude manners were always perfectly at ease, they would never improve. Mrs. Patten, who was often Edith's guard with a perfect lady; and when an intelligent poor person gives such a verdict, without hope of favor from it, it is, perhaps, about as good a patent of social nobility as a lady can receive.

Paul and Sally were still at "the hall," where Mellicent considered them her especial subjects, and taught them in season, and out of season; but, alas! there were still nine children at home. Polly, the baby of six years ago, is now a solid lassie of seven, and there are two younger, the last only six months old.

One hot Sunday in July, Edith found the feminine procession without its head. Everything else was in order, but Mrs. Patten sat in a corner of the room, holding her sick baby. It had been sick all the week, and Edith had visited it, and sent the doctor, but this morning it was worse.

"We need not interrupt your discourse, though," Mrs. Patten said. "He doesn't notice anything."

In those Sunday lessons, usually consisting of Bible instructions, histories of the saints, and explanation of Christian doctrine, Edith had instilled a good deal of Catholic truth, without alarming her hearers. She had even obtained permission to teach the children to bless themselves, and say the *Hail Mary*; only Mrs. Patten had wished that *Mother of Christ* should be substituted for *Mother of God*.

"But was not Christ God?" asked the young teacher.

"Yes, Miss Edith," the woman replied. "But Mary was the mother of his human nature only, not of his Godhead."

"You cannot separate them," Edith said. "He was not born a mere man and defiled afterward: his birth was miraculous, and God was his Father. She was the mother of all that he was. To be a mother is not to create. You did not make that child's soul, yet you are his mother. You would not stop to say that you are the mother of his body, and that his soul came from God. You are his mother, because you gave him human life; so Mary did for Christ. Besides, you will always be your child's mother, though his body will turn to dust, and be regathered again at the last day. But the body of Christ never was destroyed. It sits now at the right hand of the Father, the same human form that Mary cherished, as you do that child."

Boodices was silent. "If you shall say Mother of Christ, then, the next time she came, they said Mother of God. She made no verbal comment on the amendment, but bent and, for the first time, kissed the forehead of the child who gave the title, tears of joy shining in her eyes."

On this July day, after taking her seat, and watching the family arrange themselves to listen, Edith heated on what subject she should speak. She had one prepared, but presently concluded to change it.

"I will tell you what baptism is today," she said; and then gave them a clear and simple explanation of the sacrament.

Joe sat on a low stool, with a child in his arms, tears dropping down his cheek now and then, as he glanced from the speaker to his sick child. Mrs. Patten's face showed only a quiet endurance.

"So necessary is baptism," Edith concluded, her voice slightly tremulous, "that even a baby must not die without it. If one should be in danger of death, any person who knows how can baptize it."

She said no more, but after distributing some little presents to the children, as her custom was, and sitting by the baby a few minutes, went home. The mother was very pale. She sat looking at her child, and indispensed to speak. There was even a sort of coldness in her manner when she took leave of her visitor. The children went out, and looked after the lady as long as they could see her, then gathered in a whispering group about the door. They felt, rather they knew, the impending sorrow. Joe went, stoop in hand, and sat down by his wife. Her lips began to tremble. She was only a woman, poor soul! and wasted comfort, not only for the grief before her, but for the new and terrible fear that had risen up in her heart while Edith Yorke spoke.

"Joe," she said unsteadily, "that girl is very learned. Dr. Martin can't equal her. She makes everything awfully clear. She leaves no hole for you to crawl out. If baptism isn't what she says, then there isn't any sense in baptism."

"Yes," sighed Joe, "she's a mighty smart gal."

"Oh! you broken reed!" she exclaimed, with suppressed passion. Thus apostrophized, Joe became desperate, and that desperation imparted to him an air of unwonted decision and authority.

"I tell you what it is, Sally," he said, "these rules and regulations are very well for learned folks, and they're to blame if they don't keep 'em. But I don't believe that the Lord is going to punish us for our young ones for what we don't know nothing about. He knows well enough that we're a laid-out, ever-soul-of-'em, baptized, if we'd a thought he wanted us to. I'm sure I don't begrudge the young ones being baptized. So don't you belly-ache, Sally, but he'll say 'em in somehow, poor little creature. Why, do you suppose that while we were sitting here and crying over our 'dead babies, and saying, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,' blessed be the name of the Lord, that just at that time he'd got 'em out of his sight—somehow, and—was pinching on 'em and hurting on 'em for his own amusement, with their scared little faces looking up at him? It don't stand to reason, Sally!"

The first tears she had shed started from the mother's eyes and ran down her cheeks. "Joe," she said gratefully, "you've got some grumblings in you, after all."

Edith went home that day with a troubled heart. Two or three times on the way she stopped, having half a mind to turn back, but did not. She was too agitated to keep quiet or to eat. One thought filled her mind; a soul just slipping away from earth for it the gate of heaven. The thought was overpowering.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Yorke and Mellicent went to see the sick child, carrying everything they thought might be needed. Edith had sent for the doctor again, and he came while they were there, and accompanied them home. She listened to their talk, and heard them say that the child could not live more than twenty-four hours longer. They spoke kindly, and they acted kindly, yet it all jared terribly on her. Of the highest interest at stake, of the miraculous possibility that she saw, they knew nothing. Dared she wait?

After tea her resolution was taken. She came down stairs, and found Carl pacing to and fro at the foot of the terrace. He threw the end of his cigar away as she approached him, but did not take any further notice of her till it became evident that she wanted him.

"Carl," she said, "I want you to go over to the Paterans' with me."

"Certainly!" He did not annoy her with questions, nor exclamations, nor expostulations; he simply and promptly started. They avoided the family in going. When one is in suspense, it is distressing to have to explain to those who cannot help and do not understand the need.

"I am going to baptize the baby, if they will let me," Edith said when they entered the wood.

He only answered "Yes!" He knew enough of Catholic doctrine to understand the importance which she attached to the ceremony.

The sun had gone down in a splendor of rose color, and all the forest was steeped with it. The silver stems of the birches flickered like rubies, and all the streams and springs blushed as if they had newly been changed to wine for some great marriage feast. A brook ran toward them all the way beside their path, like a breathless messenger, bidding them hasten at every step. Then that airy flood light ebbed down the west, and left a new moon stranded there, and stars sprinkled all through the blue. When they came into the clearing it was deep twilight. The cabin window shone out red through the dusk, and from the open door a lurid path of light stretched across the garden-plot and plunged into the woods opposite.

Like most people who live in the woods, the family kept early hours, but to-night none of them had gone to bed, nor were the beds prepared for them. The children were huddled together near the fireplace, sleeping, and casting frightened glances to where their father and mother crouched on the floor beside the cradle, in which lay their dying baby. They had no lamps nor candles, but a pine-knot, fixed in the fireplace, sent a volume of inky smoke up chimney, and made a crimson illumination in the room. In that light every face shone like a torch.

The sick child lay in a stupor, sometimes holding its breath so long that the mother started and caught it up. Thus partially recalled, it breathed slowly again. There was no sound in the room but that low breathing, and the hissing of the flame in the chimney.

But presently there was a sound outside of steps coming nearer, and as they looked at the door Edith appeared on the threshold, all her whiteness of face, dress, and hands changed to pink in the light, as Charity might look hastening on her errand. Her eyes were wide open and startled; her hair, which had fallen, caught in the low bough of a tree as they came, was drawn over her left shoulder, and twisted about her arm.

After the pause of an instant she came swiftly in, and knelt by the cradle, leaving Carl standing in the doorway.

"Thank God! I am in time," she exclaimed. "I have come, you dear parents, to baptize this child, if you will permit me. You were not to blame for the others because you did not know. But now you know. Consent quickly: for it is almost gone!"

"Yes, yes," said the mother. "Make haste!" Edith called the children, and made them kneel about the cradle, with their hands folded, palm to palm, and she scarcely noticed that Carl came in and knelt behind them.

"I am so anxious to do it right-ly," she said, with one swift glance round the circle. "I never did it before, but it is very simple. I am very unworthy, and am afraid. All of you must say an Our Father for me."

Edith put a crucifix in her father's hands, and, as he held it up, bowed herself, and kissed the floor before it. Then she lighted a wax candle she had brought, and gave it to the mother to hold. Lastly, she knelt by the head of the cradle, and poured out a little vase of holy water.

Was all on earth. But who shall say what it was all on heaven? "It was quite dark when the two went home again. The rusty air was still, and performed with sweet fern and wild violets, and the brook ran along with them now with a sound like a child talking to itself. The candle had in hand, guided by that same hand."

"I am very, very happy," said Edith. "Carl said nothing, but stopped at the door. 'Have you lost the track?' he asked. 'There was a still moment of absence,' then he said in a stifled voice, 'I have found it again.'"

Poor Carl! His finding of that path was heroic. Born a hunter, a flower-wreathed wicker had seemed to swing across his way, and a path of delight to lead from it. He closed it, and walked on.

After a minute Edith recollected that she had brought a second candle. They stopped and lighted it, then resumed their walk. She held the candle in her right hand, her left she placed in Carl's again. The air was so still that the yellow flame waved only with their motion, and the light of it made a halo about them, and brought out leaves and flowers, and drooping branches, that shone a moment, then disappeared.

That ancient forest had arched over many a human group during the unknown centuries of its life, dusky hunters in the chase or on the war-trail, pale-faced pioneers, glancing right and left for the savage Joe, the Catholic missionary, armed only with the crucifix, yet with that weapon and with his pleading tongue conquering the hatchet and the tomahawk, children and youths going a-maying, yet never did it overshadow a fairer group than this.

Looking down at Edith, Carl renounced the thought of painting her as a fairy; he would paint her walking through a dark forest, with a candle in her hand. "Perish civilization!" he said suddenly. "I wish there was not a house between here and Massachusetts Bay!"

Edith smiled, but said nothing. She did not speak till, too soon, they reached the house. There she stopped to enter by the side door. "I will go in this way," she said. "I do not wish to speak to any one else to-night. Please talk to them what I am one else to-night. He was going, when she softly called him back. 'After he was baptized,' she said hurriedly, "I whispered, and told him to pray for you and me when he reached heaven. Good night, Carl!"

The next forenoon Edith went up to her chamber to dress before dinner. She braided her hair, put on a rose-colored lawn, and fastened a velvet ribbon around her throat with the precious carbuncle. She was blissfully happy, she scarce knew why. Never had she been conscious of such delight. "How sweet, how beautiful is life!" she said to herself. "Thanks, dear Lord! I am so happy!"

She looked smilingly over her shoulder toward the door, for Clara had come running up the stairs and burst into her room.

"Edith," she said breathlessly, "he has come! Mr. Rowan has come! He is down in the parlor with papa and mamma and Mellicent."

Edith did not change her position nor say a word. She looked steadily at Clara and waited.

"He is as handsome as a prince," her cousin went on with enthusiasm. "He gave me this slip of paper for you. Will you be right down?"

"Go and tell him that I will come down in a minute," Edith said quietly, and still looked at her cousin till she went out of the room and shut the door. Then, overcome by a sudden weakness, she dropped on her knees.

"I am very glad," she said solemnly, and lifted her eyes. "I thank thee for bringing him safe home again. Help me!"

She unfolded the slip of paper, and read the line it contained: "Don't come down, Edith, if you are going to say no to me."

She had never thought of saying no to him. A minute later she stood in the door of the parlor, where they all were. She was very white, but her lips wore a sweet and resolute smile.

Dick came to meet her, his face in a fine flame, and she placed her hand in his. "It is yours, with their consent," she said.

For a moment he was unable to speak. He looked at her searchingly, his eyes full of tears. "Are you willing, Edith?" he asked.

"I am more than willing," she replied. He led her to Mr. and Mrs. Yorke. "I would not dare to ask you for such a precious gift," he said, "if God and herself had not already bestowed it."

To be continued.

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