

the busy life of praise and work that had been carried on them day and night to the glory of the Lord, and for near four hundred they had lain desolate and destroyed, while the life of the world had passed them by, and work and praise had fulfilled themselves in other ways. The grass had grown green over the graves of the old abbots and churchmen of the long distant past, and ivy and the scented growth of myrtle and fig and magnolia had thrown a veil over the scarred walls and pointed arches, as beautiful now in their decay as they had been in the days of their pride; and never more beautiful than on this still winter night, when every leaf and twig was immovable, as if carved in stone, with sharp white lights and inky shadows, bound in the grip of the rimeless frost.

It was a scene of romantic beauty, and no doubt enhanced the delight of the two pairs of lovers for whom there were shadowed arches and doorways under which to whisper renewals of vows already many times declared. It was as Mrs. Redcliffe had foreseen. Wrotham and Norah, and Francis and Hilda had paired themselves and she was left to pace the paths of the cloister garth with Browne and Turner.

"Capital idea this," said Turner, burying his hands in the depths of his ulster pockets and hunching his shoulders. "Much better than sitting over a stuffy fire on a night like this. Might have picnicked out here if we'd thought of it."

"Always grouching!" said Browne. "I'm glad we came. Never seen the cloisters look more beautiful, with the moon and all that. Some people would give a lot to see this."

"You're such a romantic young fellow," said Turner.

"Don't quarrel," Mrs. Redcliffe interrupted. "It is the last night of the year. I am glad we came, too, Mr. Browne. When you think of all the centuries that this quiet place has seen, it helps you to make little of the troubles that life brings you. They are soon over, and then time buries them."

"They're pretty real while they last," said Turner. "We've