

IN THE MOONLIGHT WITH RUTH. 289

though she placed one hand over my lips and whispered, "Hush, hush, you must not talk about the angels," I knew that she did not dislike my words, for my eyes attested their sincerity.

That experience, that epoch in life comes but once. It can never be repeated. There is but one first, fresh, pure, unselfish, holy love, the love of youth, the love of two hearts that beat as one. The real force of the poet's expression never broke upon me till I came to set these words down. Some may imagine that they can repeat the experience, but it is surely a fanciful dream. There is a lofty, unselfish elevation in the first wild, incomprehensible rush of love; there is something romantic, sublime, seraphic, when the words are exchanged, and each feels the tender delicacy of the bond that exists. How the boy, or it may be the man, guards with jealous eye his sweetheart. How he construes every attention to his love by another as an occasion of deep resentment; how apt to misconstrue or misunderstand a look, and how sweet to hear the explanation and enjoy the reconciliation. How could it be that such a feeling, that almost borders on the celestial, could come to mortal more than once? I have set my conviction down with the confident expectation that no soul will attempt to controvert it.

I was in Paradise, and Ruth—dear Ruth!—was with me; and there we sat by the little rippling, crystal stream till long after the sun dropped out of sight, till the birds went to sleep in the waving branches, and even the frogs ceased to "sing." We needed no music, for our souls were ringing with rarer and sweeter