

that had fallen upon her the man or his jibes were as the idle wind that passed her by. He talked on, until the nurse coming up, and seeing her face, motioned him to go.

"Tell my husband to come to me," she said. He twirled his hat uncertainly.

"Well, it's not likely he will be here soon. He's going on a journey, and is considerably pushed for time. I said I would take any message you may have for him."

"I have none."

"All right. I'll tell him you're looking better." "There's no use in explaining Harold's arrangements to her as long as it can be helped," he reasoned, going down the avenue. "I'll take good care he don't see her till my visit has time to digest."

"Your wife's as rosy as a milk-maid," he said, meeting Harold on the road. "But they won't let you in—doctor told me so. Excitement, and all that."

"You told her about my going?" laughing excitedly. "What did she say, M'Vey? How pleased she would be!"

"She did not seem particularly pleased or interested."

Harold was silent a moment.

"But about the boys?"

"I told her they were gone. But she asked no questions."

"She is so feeble, I suppose. It was difficult when I saw her for her to articulate," said Harold, with a bewildered face.

"Mrs. Harold does not appear feeble to me. What a luxurious nest she has there! The nurse told me Doctor Thorpe was an old friend of hers. If contrast with her home life will cure her, he will be successful."

Harold laughed uneasily. He was glad that, in any way, ease and comfort should come to his wife; and yet if he could have given it to her! Strange too that he knew nothing of Doctor Thorpe's old friendship.

A few hours after Doctor Thorpe came into Susy's room and found her apparently senseless.

"What does this mean?" he asked, in alarm.

"She has been in this stupor since the man left her," said Agnes.

Mrs. Harold lay with her hands clasped over her head, her eyes set and starting.

The doctor touched her.

"Do you want to go home?" he said; but he had to repeat it once or twice before she heard him.

"Home! Home!" she muttered. "What does it matter whether I go or not! Ben would not care."

Doctor Thorpe was silent so long that the nurse looked up at him. Then he said, cheerfully:

"Lie still, my child. You have nothing to do but to sleep now."

Something in his tone startled her. She looked up at him steadily.

"You are very kind to me!" she said. "Nobody is so kind to me as you."

She shut her eyes to hide the tears.

He stood a moment irresolute and then sauntered off, thinking as he went of what this woman had been to him, and how late in the day it was when she found out even that he was "kind." He wiped the cold perspiration impatiently from his face. Was he a boy that passion should shake him thus?

The month passed by. The letters that came from Harold to his wife accumulated in a pile on M'Vey's desk. Some day, he told himself, he would walk out and deliver them. To do him justice, he only meant to administer a little wholesome neglect to a woman whom he believed to be shirking her duty in guilty idleness.

Meanwhile, Susy lay through the long days, believing husband and children had forsaken her. One lives fast in those quiet watches of the sick-room. The sharp, stunning agony passed, and then, harder to bear, came the doubt, which follows disappointment in married life, whether it had not been all a mistake.

"He never loved me," moaned poor Susy. "I never was meant to be his wife. Or how could we have wandered so far apart? I tried to do my best."

And then she suddenly saw how, for the first time in years her real self had now the space to unfold and bloom; and in all her pain there was a half-conscious delight in this; the natural satisfaction of a plant restored to its natural soil, of the animal when breathing the air for which its lungs are fitted.

Susy had a certain proud reticence. She was not going to show her trouble to any alien eyes. She could only be helpless and keep silence as the days came and went. She could not help the flowers that were heaped about her pure, beautiful room, the rare prints on the walls, the music that charmed her to sleep every night. Doctor Thorpe read to her every day, taking Agnes's place. It did not occur to her that the books chosen touched her peculiar tastes by a magnetic sympathy. But they touched her the more because of this very ignorance.

Doctor Thorpe had the skill and subtlety to move strong men at his pleasure. This was a woman, and a weak woman; and behind all his acquired arts lay the master passion of his life, open and dominant, to give them force. For he no longer hid to himself what it was that he would do.

It had never entered into Benjamin Harold's mind that both his wife and himself had an infinite range of talents, tastes and sympathies, and that just as these were developed together they became living creatures, and their love worthy the name. But Doctor Thorpe knew

this secret which ought to underlie all married life. Not an hour passed in which his magic did not waken in Susy's new sensations and consciousness, exquisite flashes of pleasure, which she, perforce, associated with him.

One day, a cold winter's day, no flowers came. There was neither music or books. Doctor Thorpe, the nurse said, was absent. Mrs. Harold hardly, she thought, regretted him; she had but more leisure to wait all day for the message from home. She waited all day by the dull window, her eyes fixed upon the narrow road that split the snowy plain like a black belt. If she could but see M'Vey's gross shape lumbering along it! If she had but one word from one of her noisy, loving boys! Ben she thrust out of her thought now with a dull rancour. She had one picture of him, dictating to the florid widow. It maddened her brain. To-day she was left alone with it.

The next she was left alone with it, and the next. The snow fell steadily. The sky was unbroken gray. She made them lift her into a chair, by the window, and sat shivering. When the nurse came to carry away her meals they were found untouched.

"I thought Georgey would come to-day, or Joe," she said, looking up at her, with wide, dry eyes.

The nurse, a stupid, good-hearted creature, was touched with pity, and set off through snow into town. She came back at night-fall.

"I went to your husband's house," she burst out in a fever to tell the ill news, "and it's locked up. He's gone for good—packed up and gone, and Mrs. Wagner went with him."

"Very well, Mary."

Mrs. Harold stood quite erect until the woman had left the room, then she sat down by the window and looked out into the night.

An hour after she saw a glimmer of light in the room, and Doctor Thorpe was beside her.

"Are you alone?" he said.

It seemed to her as if this man had the right to drag the secret from her soul.

"Yes, I am alone," she answered, standing up before him. "I have neither husband nor child. I gave them all the love I had. But I have nothing—nothing," stretching out her arms with a despairing cry.

He put her down again, and chafed her cold hands in silence, until she was still.

"You have your friend," he said then, in an ordinary tone.

But the violent trembling of his hands frightened her.

"I have distressed you by my trouble, Dr. Thorpe," she said. "I am so selfish! But you have been so kind to me that I could hide nothing from you," laying one of her hands on his gently.

The touch was more than he could bear. He pushed her from him, as he stood before her in the dim lamp-light.

"Are you blind?" he cried, desperately.

"You—you have fallen into a pit and dragged me with you, woman; and yet you cannot see the truth! You tied yourself to a boor—to a log, and called that marriage! See to what it has brought you. I ought to have been your husband. I loved you, though you have forgotten that you ever saw my face. I love you now." His tones sank to low and subtlest entreaty. "I know you, my darling, as no other man ever did. Come to me."

She looked about her bewildered, trying to push him back.

"I never thought of this!" she cried, feebly. "I love Ben."

"Are you sure you do?" the grave face and passionate eyes close to her own. "In your soul you know I am your kinsman. He is a stranger. He has drawn away from you year by year—left you alone. Is that marriage? What can you do? He has shaken you off. Your children are taken from you. Have you been so blind," angrily, "that you have not seen I was trying to show you that here was your home, that the man who understood and loved you should have been your husband?"

"I did not see it," said Susy, with an effort at an ordinary tone. "I'm a very dull woman. Will you let me go now, Dr. Thorpe? I must find my husband."

He drew back. For a moment the man and woman faced each other. There were signs of deeper suffering on his face than hers. He held his arm suddenly across his breast, with a quick, long breath.

"I do not remind you," he said, "that I am ready to give for you the good name and hopes of my life. But I want you to remember that I love you."

After all, some one loved her; she was not a strong woman.

He saw his advantage, with a hawk's eye. "I know it is a shock to you. Yet I ask very little; only to be your friend. You are alone. Even if your husband were waiting for you, you could not return to him."

She looked up, a nameless terror in her eyes. "Yes," he said, hastily. "I mean that. Your sojourn here has been misinterpreted. You cannot return to him with a tainted name. I will be your friend and protector until I have learned how to win your love. Then you shall be my wife. This old life shall be cut as a dream."

The uncertain light rose and fell. Susy understood it all, now, at last. She was utterly alone. Before her was dishonour.

She put out her hand.

"What did you say?" she said, breathlessly.

"I did not hear. Give you time? Yes—yes."

He placed her on a seat, and then left her, leaving the door open.

The room beyond was full of warmth and light. The home of beauty and ease, which he offered her, rose before her. And, as he had said, she was homeless. Yet she had but one thought, it was that her peril was extreme, and that her only refuge was death.

On the table were some phials. She chose one, and, hiding it in her hand, opened the French window and went swiftly out into the night.

Passing round the building, she sank down in the snow, upon the step, at the foot of an iron railing.

He would follow. There was not a minute to lose; but a minute would be enough. She looked up to the cloudy sky.

It was so bitter cold to go out there alone. She was so young—so young. And Georgey and Joe—never to see them again.

A hand was laid on her shoulder. It was good, motherly Agnes. Susy hid the phial again. She must send Agnes away. No human being could bring her help. She must send the nurse away.

Agnes did not seem surprised at finding her patient there.

"You should not be here, my child," she said, "I heard you had bad news from home; but—"

"I have no home. I have no husband, nor child, nor good name."

"You have Heaven."

Susy shuddered. Pain and fear had quieted down into a dull impatience to be at rest. Heaven seemed very far off to her.

She drew the cork from the phial. She heard Dr. Thorpe's step on the crushed snow. She was driven to bay! Even death was cut off. If she had but one moment.

"See who comes, Agnes," she said, hurriedly.

"I will be here when you come back." She held her hand hidden under the shawl. "And, Agnes," detaching her with a quick breath, "if you see Ben, tell him I loved him!"

Agnes, thinking her mind wandered, put her hand about her quickly.

"Yes, child," Agnes said, cheerfully. "It will all be right. Don't lose your trust in Ben, and all will be well."

Then she drew away, and went down the quadrangle, and Susy was alone.

She held the phial to her lips.

"Trust in Ben! Trust in Ben!"

Did Heaven speak that to her?

The hot blood rushed like a torrent from her heart. The poison fell from her hand, and burned the pure snow.

"I'll trust him. I'll trust Ben a little longer," she said, and then stood still and waited.

Agnes's eyes shone as she came back.

"It was Dr. Haller; he is looking for his patient," she said, hurriedly, wrapping her shawl about Susy, and bringing her into the hall. "You are waited. It is a visitor, and I think it is Ben!"

A quiet, country parsonage, a plain little house, with woods and old-fashioned gardens about it. Here is a congregation who worship their new clergyman as only country congregations know how; here is the school where George and Joe are trained to exhibit more mercy in their management of their mother than of old; here is Harold growing into benign, partly middle-age, with a watchful eye always fixed on his rosy little wife, as a man guards something of which death had almost robbed him; and here, in the middle of all, sunning, coloring, warming all, is Susy, with her head full of all the troubles of the village, her busy hands full of help, and her heart, I'm afraid, so full of "Ben and Georgey and Joe," that there is not much room for anybody else.

Now and then, a visitor from town drops into the pretty, drowsy village, and inquires if Harold does not regret his old fold of usefulness.

"I came that my wife might find room to live," Ben sometimes answers; "and I find no less work to do here than in a more compact settlement."

"But your assistants, sir? What can you do without such valuable help as you left? Mrs. Wagner was a host in herself. You miss your uncle, too, don't you? An energetic, resolute man!"

"We manage as well as we can," Mr. Harold replies, with a mischievous glance at his wife.

Mrs. Harold's system of religion is very concise. She often gives it to her sons.

"Trust in Heaven, boys," she says, "no matter how hardly you're pushed. And if you forget to do that, trust in the people you love. I've had that serve me very well at times."

A DUEL OF THE GENTLER SEX.—It is related that two girls in the Royal tobacco factory at Madrid recently had killed each other in a hand-to-hand contest. The mode adopted by the combatants was as romantic as it was barbarous. The antagonists, who were both about twenty years old, and remarkably handsome, repaired, one Sunday morning, accompanied by certain of their comrades, to a village some four or five miles distant, where they breakfasted sumptuously at different tables. The repast ended, they closed the window-curtains, stripped themselves to the waist, and requested their friends to leave the room. Then, at a given signal, they attacked each other with their navajas, and slashed and thrust, until both fell to the floor mortally wounded! When a few minutes had elapsed their friends re-entered the room. Estefania, one of the combatants, had received ten wounds, from which she bled to death in about half an hour. Casilda, her antagonist, died somewhat sooner from a ghastly wound in the neck.

## SPRING.

Arise, ye merry maidens!  
Away to pastures free!  
A thousand birds are chanting  
Their May-day melody.  
From many a leafy woodland  
The tuneful echoes ring  
With glad triumphant chorus  
Of welcome to the Spring.

The lark at earliest day-dawn  
Leads up with joyous note,  
The lusty blackbird follows,  
And thrush with speckled throat.  
Then comes the little linnet,  
With new-preened plumage gay;  
The nightingale, sweet songster,  
Joins in the roundelay.

Arise! Leave drowsy slumber  
To dull the sluggard's brain?  
Spring calls on all to follow  
Rejoicing in her train.  
She bids the milk-white hawthorn  
Its pearly buds unfold,  
And clothes the flaunting May-flower  
In gorgeous robes of gold.

She tints the eastern heaven,  
She paints the western sky,  
With hues whose brilliant colors  
All human art defy.  
Up! Up! The cuckoo calls thee,  
The lark is on the wing,  
A thousand voices bid thee  
Go forth to meet the Spring!

## MATTIE ELLISON.

Mattie Ellison stood looking from the window of her own cosy room upon a bleak winter landscape, and the lowering clouds and very gloomy prospect seemed to be faithfully mirrored in her own face.

It was a face that needed the sunshine of cheerfulness and happiness to make it pretty, round and child-like, with a rosebud mouth, and large blue eyes, shaded by curling lashes of the same sunny brown as her short, clustering curls of hair.

But though Miss Mattie, standing at her window, was arrayed in a new and most becoming dress, her face was doleful, and her fingers tapped on the sill a slow, melancholy movement, as if the monotonous motion was indulged in to keep back a fit of crying.

Her thoughts ran something in this fashion—"I suppose I must go down pretty soon, or the dinner bell will ring, and papa won't like that. Besides, I must be introduced, and might as well have it over. Oh, dear! I thought such a will as grandfather's never existed out of a story-book, and here I am the victim of one. But I won't marry Bernard Cooper. I won't."

And, seemingly nerved by this heroic resolve, Mattie turned from the window, adjusted her ribbons and ringlets a moment, and went slowly to the drawing-room, where her father sat in earnest conversation with a tall, quiet-looking man, who rose as the little lady entered.

The introduction of Mr. Cooper to "my daughter Martha" was courteously acknowledged by both parties, and the conversation became general until the dinner bell rang.

The will of the late Herbert Creighton, the father of Mattie's long dead mother, and of which Mattie considered herself a victim, had left that young lady half of a large fortune, the other half going to the adopted son, Bernard Cooper, who was the only child of a friend of the old man's.

Left an orphan at ten years of age, Bernard had been taken at once into Mr. Creighton's home, where pretty Fannie his daughter, petted him for six months before she married, and went with her husband to a distant city, only living two years, and leaving Mattie motherless before she was out of long clothes.

Left childless, Mr. Creighton centred all his affections upon the son he had adopted, and Bernard Cooper had every advantage love and wealth could offer him.

From mere boyhood he was a scholar, following his adopted father into fields of learning and scientific reading, when most lads are devoted to tops and marbles; and giving his heart to books, when that organ might have been naturally supposed to be thrilled by blue or black eyes, and voices feminine.

Dreamy, studious, and talented, he had accepted his adopted father's support and protection as lovingly as they were given, and had faithfully filled the place of a devoted son, making of his many studies, one specialty that might win him bread when he was left alone in the world.

"I can always teach Greek, Latin, and mathematics," he thought, "and may get a professorship or school of my own."

Once only had there been almost a quarrel between these two, after twenty years of loving intercourse, and then Mr. Creighton lay upon what proved to be his deathbed.

He had sent for his lawyer, and was making his will, Bernard being in the room.

"I leave all my fortune to my adopted son, Bernard Cooper," he said, "Put it into legal shape for me, but all for him."

"Stop, sir," Bernard said, as the lawyer was gathering up his papers; "surely, sir, you cannot mean to forget Fannie's child."