

## A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

BY MISS MULLOCK.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

I had a third reason. Sometimes I feared, by words Penelope dropped, that she and my father had laid their heads together concerning me and my weak health, and imagined things which were not true. No; I repeat, that was all; I should have recovered in time. If I were not quite happy, I should have recovered from that also in time. I should not have broken my heart. No one ought who has still another good heart to believe in; no one need who has neither done wrong nor been wronged. So it seemed necessary—or I fancied it so, thinking over all things during the long, wakeful night—that, not for my own sake alone, I should rouse myself, and try and get well as soon as possible.

Therefore I made no objections to what, on some accounts, was to me an excessively painful thing—a visit to the Cedars.

Pain or no pain, it was to be, and it was done. I lay in a dream of exhaustion, which felt like peace, in the little sitting-room, which looked on the familiar view—the lawn, the sun-dial, the boundary of evergreen bushes, and farther off, the long, narrow valley, belted by fir-topped hills standing out sharp against the western sky.

Mrs. Granton bustled in and out, and did everything for me as tender as if she had been my mother.

When we are sick and weak, to find comfort; when we are sore at heart, to be surrounded by love; when, at five-and-twenty, the world looks blank and dreary, to see it looking bright and sunshiny at sixty—this does one good. If I said I loved Mrs. Granton, it but weakly expressed what I owed and now owe her—more than she is ever likely to know.

I had been a day and a night at the Cedars without seeing any one except the dear old lady, who watched me incessantly, and administered perpetual doses of "kitchen physic," promising me faithfully that, if I continued improving, the odious face of Dr. Black should never cross the threshold of the Cedars.

"But for all that, it would be more satisfactory to me if you would consent to see a medical friend of mine, my dear."

Sickness sharpens our senses, making nothing seem sudden or unnatural. I knew as well as if she had told me who it was she wanted me to see—who was even now at the parlor door.

Dr. Urquhart came in and sat down beside my sofa. I do not remember anything that was said or done by any of us, except that I felt him sitting there, and heard him in his familiar voice talking to Mrs. Granton about the pleasant view from this low window, and the sunshiny morning, and the blackbird that was solemnly hopping about under the sun-dial.

I will not deny it—why should I?—the mere tone of his voice, the mere smile of his eyes filled my whole soul with peace. I neither knew how he had come nor why. I did not want to know; I only knew he was there, and in his presence I was like a child who has been very forlorn and is now taken care of—very hungry and is satisfied.

Some one calling Mrs. Granton out of the room, he suddenly turned and asked me "how long I had been ill."

I answered briefly, then said, in reply to farther questions, that I believed it was fever and ague, caught in the moorland cottages, but that I was fast recovering; indeed I was almost well again now.

"Are you?" Give me your hand." He felt my pulse, counting it by his watch. It did not beat much like a convalescent then. I know. "I see Mrs. Granton in the garden; I must have a little talk with her about you."

He went out of the room abruptly, and soon after I saw them walking together up and down the terrace. Dr. Urquhart only came to me again to bid me good-bye.

But after that we saw him every day for a week.

He used to appear at uncertain hours, sometimes forenoon, sometimes evening, but faithfully, if ever so late, he came. I had not been aware he was thus intimate at the Cedars, and one day, when Mrs. Granton was speaking him, I happened to say so.

She smiled.

"Yes, certainly, his coming here daily is a new thing, though I was always glad to see him, he was so kind to my Colin. But, in truth, my dear, if I must let out the secret, he now comes to see you."

"Me?" I was glad of the dim light we sat in, and, horribly ashamed of myself when the old lady continued, matter-of-factly and grave.

"Yes, you, by my special desire, though he consented willingly to attend you, for he takes a most kindly interest in you. He was afraid of your being left to Dr. Black, whom in his heart I believe he considers an old humbug; so he planned your being brought here."

sure he himself has taken care of you in every possible way that could be done without your finding it out. You are not offended, my dear?"

"No."

"I can't think how we shall manage about his fees; still it would have been wrong to have refused his kindness—so well-meant and so delicately given. I am sure he has the gentlest ways and the tenderest heart of any man I ever knew. Don't you think so?"

"Yes."

But, for all that, after the first week, I did not progress so fast as they two expected—also papa and Penelope, who came over to see me, and seemed equally satisfied with Dr. Urquhart's "kindness." Perhaps this very "kindness," as I, like the rest, now believed it, made things a little more trying for me. Or else the disease—the fever and ague—had taken a firmer hold on me than any body knew. Some days I felt as if health was a long way off, in fact, not visible at all in this mortal life; and the possibility seemed sometimes easy to bear sometimes hard. I had many changes in mood and temper, very sore to struggle against; for all of which now I humbly crave forgiveness of my dear and kind friends, who were so patient with me, and of Him, the most merciful of all.

Dr. Urquhart came daily, as I have said. We had often very long talks together, sometimes with Mrs. Granton, sometimes alone. He told me of all his doings and plans, and gradually brought me out of the narrow sick-room world into which I was falling, toward the current of outward life, with its large aims, duties, and cares. The interest of it roused me; the power and beauty of it strengthened me. All the dreams of my youth, together with one I had dreamed that evening by the moorland pool, came back again. I sometimes longed for life, that I might live as he did; in any manner, anywhere, at any sacrifice, so that it was a life in some way resembling and not unworthy of his own. This sort of life—equally solitary, equally painful, devoted more to duty than to joy—was, heaven knows, all I then thought possible. And I still think with it, and with my thorough reverence and trust in him, and his sole, special, unflinching affection for me, I could have been content all my days.

My spirit was brave enough, but sometimes my heart was weak. When we have been accustomed to rest on any other—to find each day the tie become more familiar, more necessary, belonging to daily life, and daily want—to feel the house empty, as it were, till there comes the ring at the door or step in the hall—and to be aware that all this cannot last, that it must come to an end, and one must go back to the old, old life, shut up in one's self, with no arm to lean on, no smile to brighten and guide one, no voice to say, "You are right, do it," or "There I think you are wrong" then one grows frightened.

When I thought of his going to Liverpool, my courage broke down. I would hide my head in my pillow of nights, and say to myself, "Theodora, you are a coward; will not the good God make you strong enough by yourself, even for any sort of life. He requires of you? Leave all in his Hands." So I tried to do; believing that, from any feeling that was holy and innocent, He would not allow me to suffer more than I could bear, or more than is good for all of us to suffer at times.

I did not mean to write thus; I meant only to tell my outward story; but such as is written, let it be—I am not ashamed of it.

Thus things went on, and I did not get stronger.

One Saturday afternoon Mrs. Granton went a long drive, to see some family in whom Dr. Urquhart had made her take an interest; if, indeed, there was need to do more than mention any one's being in trouble, in the dear woman's hearing in order to unseat a whole torrent of benevolence. The people's name was Ansdell; they were strangers, belonging to the camp; there was a daughter dying of consumption.

It was one of my dark days, and I lay thinking how much useless sentiment is wasted upon the young who die; how much vain regret at their being so early removed from the enjoyments they share, and the good they are doing, when they often do no good, and have little joy to lose. Take, for instance, Mrs. Granton and me; if death had been between us, I know which he had better choose; the one who had least pleasure in living, and who would be easiest spared—who, from either terror or fate, or some inherent fault, which become almost equal to a fate, had lived twenty-five years without being of the smallest use to anybody; and to whom the best that could happen would apparently be to be caught up, in the arms of the Great Reaper, and sown afresh in a new world, to begin again.

Let me confess all this—because it explains the mood which I afterward betrayed; and because it caused me to find out that I was not the only person into whose mind such wicked thoughts have come, to be reasoned down, battled down, prayed down.

posed to be lying peacefully on the sofa, but in reality covering down all in a heap, within the small circle of the fire-light. Beyond it was very dark—so dark that the shadows would have frightened me, were there not too many spectres close at hand; sad or evil spirits, such as come about us all in our dark days. Still the silence was so ghostly that when the door opened I slightly screamed.

"Do not be afraid. It is only I."

I was shaken hands with; and I apologized for having been so startled. Dr. Urquhart said it was he who ought to apologize, but he had knocked, and I did not answer, and he had walked in, being "anxious." Then he spoke about other things, and I soon became myself, and sat listening, with my eyes closed, till, suddenly seeing him, I saw him looking at me.

"You have been worse to-day?"

"It was my bad day?"

"I wish I could see you really better."

"Thank you."

My eyes closed again—all things seemed dim and far off, as if my life were floating away, and I had no care to seize hold of it—easier to let it go.

"My patient does not do me much credit. When do you intend to honor me by recovering, Miss Theodora?"

"I don't know; it does not much matter." It wearied me to answer even him.

He rose, walked up and down the room several times and returned to his place.

"Miss Theodora, I wish to say a few words to you seriously, about your health. I should like to see you better—very much better than now—before I go away."

"Possibly you may."

"In any case you will have to take great care—to be taken great care of—for months to come. Your health is very delicate. Are you aware of that?"

"I suppose so."

"You must listen—"

The tone roused me.

"If you please, you must listen, to what I am saying. It is useless telling any one else, but I tell you, that if you do not take care of yourself you will die."

I looked up. No one but he would have said such a thing to me—if he said it, it must be true.

"Do you know that it is wrong to die—to let yourself carelessly slip out of God's world, in which He put you to do good work there?"

"I have no work to do."

"None of us can say that. You ought not—you shall not. I will not allow it."

His words struck me. There was truth in them—the truth of my first youth, though both had faded in after years—till I knew him. And this was why I clung to this friend of mine, because amid all the shams and falsenesses around me, and even in myself—in him I found found, clearly acknowledged, and bravely outspoken—the truth. Why should he not help me now?

Humbly I asked him, "if he were angry with me?"

"Not angry, but grieved; you little know how deeply."

Was it for my dying, or my wickedly wishing to die? I knew not; but that he was strongly affected, more even than he liked me to see, I did see, and it lifted the stone from my heart.

"I know I have been very wicked. If any one would thoroughly scold me—if I could only tell anybody—"

"Why cannot you tell me?"

So I told him, as far as I could, all the dark thoughts that had been troubling me this day. I laid upon him all my sins; and when I ended, not without agitation, for I had never spoken of myself to any creature before, Dr. Urquhart talked to me long and gently upon the things wherein he considered me "wrong in myself and in my home; and of other things where he thought I was only 'foolish,' or 'mistaken.' Then he spoke of the manifold duties I had, in life; of the glory and beauty of living; of the peace attainable even in this world, by a life, which, if ever so sad and difficult, has done the best it could with the materials granted to it—has walked, so far as it could see, in its appointed course; and left the rewarding and the brightening of it solely in the hands of Him who gave it; who never gives anything in vain."

This was his "sermon"—as, smiling, I afterward called it, though all was said very simply, and as tenderly as if he had been talking with a child. At the end of it, I looked at him by a sudden blaze of the fire; and it seemed as if, mortal man as he was, with faults enough doubtless—and some of them I already knew though there is no necessity to publish them here—I saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. And I thanked God, who sent him to me—who sent us each to one another.

For what should Dr. Urquhart reply when I asked him how he came to learn all these good things, but—also smiling—"Some of them I learned from you?"

"Me?" I said, in amazement.

"Yes, perhaps I may tell you how."

hurriedly, and immediately began talking to me about, and informing me—as he had now got a habit of doing—exactly how his affairs stood. Now they were nearly wound up; and it became needless he should leave the camp, and begin his new duties by a certain day.

After a little more talk he fixed—rather, we fixed, for he asked me to decide—that day, briefly, as if it had been like any other day in the year; and quietly as if it had not involved the total ending for the present, with an indefinite future, of all this—what shall I call it?—between him and me, which, to one at least, had become as natural and necessary as daily bread.

Thinking now of that two or three minutes of silence, which followed—I could be very sorry for myself—far more so than then; for then I hardly felt it at all.

Dr. Urquhart rose and said he must go—he could not wait longer for Mrs. Granton.

"Thursday week is the day, then," he added, "after which I shall not see you again for many months."

"I suppose not."

"I cannot write to you. I wish I could; but such a correspondence would not be possible, would not be right."

"I think I said mechanically, 'No.'"

I was standing by the mantle-piece, steadying myself with one hand, the other dropping down. Dr. Urquhart touched it for a second.

"It is the very thinnest hand I ever saw? You will remember," he then said, "in case this should be our last chance of talking together—you will remember all we have been saying? You will do all you can to recover perfect health, so as to be happy and useful? You will never think despondingly of your life; there is many a life much harder than yours; you will have patience and faith and hope, as a girl ought to have, who is so precious to many? Will you promise?"

"I will."

"Good-by, then."

"Good-by."

Whether he took my hands, or I gave them, I do not know; but I felt them held tight against his breast, and him looking at me as if he could not part with me, or as if, before we parted, he was compelled to tell me something. But when I looked up at him we seemed of a sudden to understand everything without need of telling. He only said four words—"Is this my wife?" And I said, "Yes."

Then—he kissed me.

Once I used to like reading and hearing all about love and lovers, what they said and how they looked, and how happy they were in one another. Now, it seems as if these things ought never to be read or told by any mortal tongue or pen.

When Max went away I sat where I was, almost without stirring, for a whole hour, until Mrs. Granton came in and gave me the history of her drive, and all about Lucy Ansdell, who had died that afternoon. Poor girl—poor girl!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

HER STORY.

Here, between the locked leaves of my journal, I keep the first letter I ever had from Max.

It came early in the morning, the morning after that evening which will always seem to us two, I think, something like what we read of, that "the evening and the morning were the first day." It was, indeed, like the first day of a new world.

When the letter came I was still fast asleep, for I had not gone and lain awake all night, which, under the circumstances (as I told Max), it was a young lady's duty to have done; I only laid my head down with a feeling of ineffable rest—in Heaven's kindness, which had brought all things to this end—and rest in his love, from which nothing now could ever thrust me, and in the thought of which I went sleep, as safe as a tired child; knowing I should be safe for all my life long with him—my Max—my husband.

"Lover" was a word that did not seem to suit him, grave as he was, and so much older than I. I never expected from him anything like the behavior of a lover; indeed, should hardly like to see him in that character, it would not look natural. But from the hour he said, "Is this my wife?" I have ever and only thought of him as "my husband."

My dear Max! Here is his letter— which lay before my eyes in the dim dawn; it did not come by post—he must have left it himself; and the maid brought it in, no doubt, thinking it a professional epistle. And I take great credit to myself for the composed manner of fact, which I said "it was all right, and there was no answer," put down my letter, and made believe to go to sleep again.

Let me laugh—it is not wrong; and I laugh still as much as ever I can; it is good for me and good for Max. He says scarcely anything in the world does him so much good as to see me merry.

It felt very strange at first to open his

Saturday night.

MY DEAR THEODORA—I do not say "dearest," because there is no one to put in comparison with you: you are to me the one woman in the world.

My dear Theodora—let me write it over again to assure myself that it may be written at all, which, perhaps, it ought not to be till you have read this letter.

Last night I left you so soon, or it seemed soon, and we said so little, that I never told you some things which you ought to have been made aware of at once; even before you were allowed to answer that question of mine. Forgive me. In my own defence let me say, that when I visited you yesterday I meant only to have the sight of you—the comfort of your society—all I hoped or intended to win for years to come. But I was shaken out of all self-control—first by the terror of losing you, and then by a look in your sweet eyes. You know! It was to be, and it was. Theodora—gift of God!—may He bless you for showing, just for that one moment, what there was in your heart toward me.

My feelings toward you, you can guess a little; the rest you must believe in. I cannot write about them.

The object of this letter is to tell you something which you ought to be told before I see you again.

You may remember my once saying it was not likely I should ever marry. Such, indeed, was long my determination, and the reason was this. When I was a mere boy—just before Dallas died, that happened to me, an event so awful, both in itself and its results, that it changed my whole character, darkened my life, turned me from a lively, careless, high-spirited lad, into a morbid and miserable man, whose very existence was a burden to him for years. And though gradually, thank God! I recovered from this state, so as not to have an altogether useless life, still I never was myself again, never knew happiness—till I knew you. You came to me as unforeseen a blessing as if you had fallen from the clouds: first you interested, then you cheered me, then, in various ways, you brought light into my darkness, hope to my despair. And then I loved you.

The same cause, which I cannot now fully explain, because I must first take a journey, but you shall know everything within a week or ten days—the same cause which has oppressed my whole life prevented me from daring to write you. I always believed that a man circumstanced as I was had no right ever to think of marriage. Some words of yours led me of late to change this opinion. I resolved, at some future time, to lay my whole history before you—as to a mere friend—to ask you the question whether or not, under the circumstances, I was justified in seeking any woman for my wife; and on your answer, to decide either to try and make you love me, or only to love you, as I should have loved, and shall love you.

What I then meant to tell you is still to be told. I do not dread the revelation as I once did: all things seem different to me.

I am hardly the same man that I was twelve hours ago. Twelve hours ago I had never told you what you are to me—never had you in my arms—never read the love in your dear eyes—oh, child never be afraid or ashamed of letting me see, you love me, unworthily as I am. If you had not loved me, I should have drifted away into perdition—I mean, I might have lost myself altogether so far as regards this world.

That is not likely now. You will save me, and I shall be so happy that I shall be able to make you happy. We will never be two again—only one. Already you feel like a part of me, and it seems as natural to write to you thus as if you had been mine for years. Mine! Some day you will find out all that is sealed up in the heart of a man of my age and of many disposition—when the seal is once broken.

Since, until I have taken my journey, I cannot speak to your father, it seems right that my next visit to you should be only that of a friend. Whether, after having read this letter, which at once confesses so much and so little, you think me worthy even of that title, your first look will decide. I shall find out, without need of your saying one word.

I shall probably come on Monday, and then not again; to meet you only as a friend, used to be sufficiently hard; to meet you with this uncertainty of exchanging me would be all but impossible; honor to your father compels this absence, and silence until my explanations are made.

Will you forgive me? Will you trust me? I think you will.

I hope you have minded my "orders"—rested all evening and retired early! I hope on Monday I may see a rose on your cheeks—a tiny, delicate, winter-rose. That poor, little thin cheek, it grieves my heart. You must get strong.

It is your winter you show that this letter has changed your opinion of me, that you desire yesterday to be altogether forgotten. I shall understand it and obey.

Yellow Oil is the most deservedly popular remedy in the market for Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Sprains, Bruises, Frost Bites, Sore Throat, Lamé Back, Contraction of the Muscles, Croup, Quinsy, and every variety of Pain, Lameness, or Inflammation. For internal or external use. Yellow Oil will never fail you. Sold by all dealers in medicine.

Burdock Blood Bitters is the best Blood Purifier, Liver and Kidney Regulator, and Restorative Tonic in the world. It acts upon the Liver, the Kidneys and the Bowels, curing all manner of Bilious complaints, Kidney complaints and diseases of the Blood. Ask your Druggist for Burdock Blood Bitters. Sample bottles 10 cents, regular size \$1.00.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Papa, how do editors get in 'free at all the shows?' 'Well, sonny, as a general rule, they give \$5 worth of ad-

er you are ever my own or not, that you are the only woman I ever wished for my wife—the only one I shall ever marry."

Yours, MAX URQUHART.

I read his letter many times over. Then I rose and dressed myself carefully as if it had been my marriage morning. He loved me; I was the only woman he had ever wished for his wife. It was in truth my marriage morning.

Coming down stairs, Mrs. Granton met me, all delight at my having risen so soon.

"Such an advance! We must be sure and tell Dr. Urquhart. By-the-by did he not leave a note or message early this morning?"

"Yes, he will probably call on Monday."

She looked surprised that I did not produce the note, but made no remark. And I, two days before, should have been as pale and tongue-tied, but now things were quite altered. I was his chosen, his wife; there was neither hypocrisy nor deceit in keeping a secret between him and me. We belonged to one another, and the rest of the world had nothing to do with us.

Nevertheless, my heart felt running over with tenderness toward the dear old lady, as it did toward my father and my sisters, and everything belonging to me in this wide world. When Mrs. Granton went to church, I sat for a long time in the west parlor, reading the Bible, all alone—at least, as much alone as I ever can be in this world again, after knowing that Max loves me.

It being such an exceedingly mild and warm day—wonderful for the first day of February—an idea came into my head, which, was, indeed, strictly according to "orders," only I never yet had had the courage to obey. Now I thought I would. It would please him so, and Mrs. Granton too.

So I put on my out-door gear, and actually walked, all myself, to the hill-top, a hundred yards or more. Then I sat down on the familiar bench, and looked round on the well-known view. Ah me! for how many years, and under how many various circumstances, have I come and sat on that bench, and looked at that view.

It was very beautiful to-day, though almost deathlike in its supernatural sunny calm, such as one only sees in the accidental fine days which come in early winter, or sometimes as a kind of special antitype of spring. Such utter stillness everywhere. The sole thing that seemed alive or moving in the whole landscape was a wreath of gray smoke springing from some invisible cottage behind the fir-wood, and curling away upward till it lost itself in the opal air. Hill, moorland, wood, and sky lay still as a picture, and fair as the Land of Beulah, the Celestial Country. It would hardly have been strange to see spirits walking there, or to have turned and found sitting on the bench beside me my mother and my half brother, Harry, who died so long ago, and whose faces in that Country I shall first recognize.

My mother. Never till now did I feel the want of her. It seems only her—only a mother—to whom I could tell, "Max loves me—I am going to be Max's wife."

And Harry—poor Harry, whom also I scarcely knew—whose life was so wretched, and whose death so awful; he might have been a better man if he had only known my Max. I am forgetting, though, how old he would have been now; and how Max must have been a mere boy when my brother died.

I do not often think of Harry. It would be hardly natural that I should; all happened so long ago that his memory has never been more than a passing shadow across the family lives. But to-day when everyone of my own flesh and blood seemed to grow nearer to me, I thought of him more than once; tried to recall the circumstances of his dreadful end; and then to think of him only as a glorified, purified spirit, walking upon the hills of Beulah. Perhaps now looking down upon me, "baby" that was, whom he was once reported, in one of his desperate visits home, to have snatched out of the cradle, and kissed; knowing all that had lately happened to me a happy life with my dear Max.

I took out Max's letter, and read it over again in the sunshine and open air.

I went through it eyes. Pe where. I penitential The police Judges said to do. B buildings, inals, we establish the Presid ed for a d ed service The preac condition and depk had come ons for d