

"Edith," he said, "is there no forgiveness in your soul? Can no change in me, no sacrifice, no probation, obtain mercy for us both?"

Edith rose, with her hand to her heart, and replied, brokenly—

"Nothing can excuse you. The thought of that miserable girl suffering through you, and the knowledge of your selfish, cowardly, ignoble soul, will haunt me for ever. Leave me, if you have a spark of honor. Leave me; for the sight of you makes me hate and despise myself for having loved you!"

Peter winced beneath her scorn. But he saw that she loved him, and determined on a great venture. He advanced a step, and took her in his arms.

"You are mine," he said, "and I will keep you in spite of yourself!"

For a few moments she lay in his embrace, quietly, and he kissed her. But the kiss changed her. With a shudder she woke from the seeming trance, and slipped from his arms, her eyes blazing with anger.

"Coward!" she said. "True to your character to the last, you take advantage of a woman's heart, even of the heart of her you claim to love! Oh! I could strike you dead, only that I should be then like you—a murderer!"

Peter was cowed, and actually trembled before the girl who, not deigning to notice him again, left the room and sought her carriage. He was filled with a terrible sense of what he had lost, and turned mechanically away to the drug-room. Here the laudanum bottle met his eye, and he took it down. His face was pale and his eyes sparkling. He handled the bottle lovingly, and pouring some of the fluid into a glass, held it up to the light.

"Poison," he whispered—"death! no, this is death I live; and life is the death that lurks in every drop of this. Ah! my pretty Edith, I could tear your heart with this, if I but drank it. Proud heart, that will not stoop to the man it loves!"

He raised the glass to his lips, when a strong hand detained his wrist, and he set the glass down again.

"That is laudanum, Dr. Simson," said the nurse.

"Is it?" he replied; "I was wondering if it was. It is careless to leave it out like this."

"Yes," was the reply. "I came to tell you, doctor, that there is a new case in the accident ward. You are wanted at once."

Peter left the room, followed by the nurse, who locked the door and pocketed the key.

The first use to which Mr. Forbes put his new fortune was to purchase the old homestead of the Tiltons, and he removed Lizzie and her mother thence soon after the burial of Bolton and old Mr. Tilton.

Lizzie entered the old house with a strangely tumultuous heart. The old mossy well recalled those forever departed days of first love, with its perfect truth and ideality. The rooms were full of ghostly voices of her former joys, and her greatest and smallest griefs came back to her. There was the corner in which she had sobbed all one summer afternoon away because her dolly had fallen into the well, and was fished up limp and colorless. There were more griefs than that connected with the well now, and yet she did not sob so much.

The shadow of death still hung over the ill-fated family. Mrs. Tilton, who had lived chiefly for her husband's sake, now drooped. Her death took place a year afterwards, and was quiet and painless. It had been so long expected, that Lizzie's grief, while deep and sincere, was not poignant, and did but make the girl's face graver and her smile sweeter. She was a woman now, by right of love, of years, and of troubles, and her heart was sympathetic and self-reliant.

After the death of Mrs. Tilton, Mr. Forbes was faced by a dire necessity. Every day, instead of growing older, he felt himself becoming younger in feeling, and he saw that for Lizzie and him to remain now under one roof would create talk among their coarser fellows. Perhaps he deceived himself, and could have constituted himself her guardian without comment. It may have been the wily influence of the master passion that made him think he was too young still. If so, Lizzie must have been deluded by the same deceiver, for it was scarcely a week after her mother's death when she quietly prepared to remove from the old home once more.

A schoolmaster is not much use if he cannot circumvent a woman. Mr. Forbes noticed her actions, and before she could speak he told her he was going up to the city for some time, and wanted her to remain in charge of the house in his absence. She could have Granny Smith say with her if she liked.

What could Lizzie do but accede to Mr. Forbes' wishes? Her heart clung to the old house with double tenderness now that it was all that was left her of her earlier life. So Mr. Forbes went away, and Lizzie took charge, with Granny Smith as lieutenant.

Mr. Forbes was bad tempered all the time of his absence. Even Dusk and Dawn could not enliven him. Poor Dusk! her efforts may have been sham, but Dawn's certainly were not. Mr. James took his old friend in hand, but could get nothing out of him.

"I cannot understand Forbes," he said one day to Edith; nothing seems to please him now. He's not nearly so sweet tempered as he was."

"Do you know, father, I think he is in love!"

"I never was that way, Dusk."

"You won, father. Loss may make a woman sweet tempered, but it spoils the temper of most men."

The words were very grave, and her father bent down and kissed his daughter's brow.

"You brave, true-hearted dear," was all he said; and they understood one another.

"But Mr. Forbes, papa, whom can he love?"

Mr. James mused a few moments.

"It is no one he has met in town," he said at last. "It must be some country girl. I have it!—at least, I think I have. That fellow Simson had a sweetheart—the girl he deserted—and Mr. Forbes was terribly incensed over it. Could he be in love with her?"

They could not decide that, but the more Mr. James thought the matter over, the more convinced he was that Lizzie was the cause of Mr. Forbes' new develop-