

enterprise, and on the day itself were doing everything possible to ensure its success. I was presented to Mrs. Richards early in the afternoon, and never since the death of my own mother, five years earlier, had I been so drawn to any woman. There was strength there, and sweetness; and that beautiful, saintly face, still young, under its crown of snow white hair, affected me with a feeling of reverence that I cannot describe. It was plain to see that she was of those who have come through great tribulation and learned the purifying lesson of adversity. In her gentle way she drew me out, knowing me for a stranger in Boston, and soon I had told her of my mother's death and the blank it had left in my life. We were not allowed many minutes together, for soon she was called to some duty connected with the fête; but before leaving me she asked me to come to tea on the following Sunday. I did so, and there I met my fate in the person of her daughter Mary.

"Many years have passed, but I have only to close my eyes to see, as though it had been yesterday, that pure and lovely face and girlish form as she came down the steps of the verandah and crossed the lawn to where her mother and I were seated. She was then just past her eighteenth birthday, on the threshold of a perfect womanhood, possessing a winsomeness and charm that were as exceptional as was her beauty. I was not impressionable as most young men are; never before had my fancy been touched by any girl; but even while she was crossing the lawn I yielded the whole love of my life to Mary Richards. I became a constant visitor at her home, making no attempt to conceal the strong attraction she had for me; and the quiet, affectionate smile with which Mrs. Richards always welcomed me gave me to hope that in her I should find no obstacle to the fulfilment of my great desire. And though no word of love passed between Mary and me I knew by many little tokens that she cared for

me. O those happy, happy weeks, when we love and believe we are loved in return, and yet postpone the moment of avowal, being loath to end the strangely sweet uncertainty of the present!

"All this time Mr. Richards was absent from home, having gone to New York for an extended business visit. At length word came of his intended return, and when I bade Mrs. Richards good-night the evening before he was expected I could not refrain from referring with shy impulsiveness to my desire to interview him 'on a matter of very great importance'. In the smile with which she answered me there was understanding and the assurance of support; and the world held no happier soul than mine as I trod the moonlit streets to my lodgings.

"But alas for all my hopes of happiness! The following evening when I presented myself at the door I was informed by the servant that Mrs. Richards had given instructions that I was to be taken to her immediately. I was conducted to her boudoir, where I was alarmed to find her in a state of extreme agitation and showing unmistakable signs of some terrible grief. For some time she could not speak; and then, with her arms about me and in a voice shaken with emotion, she told me that something terrible had happened which made marriage between Mary and me utterly impossible. She could give no reasons, but pleaded with me to trust her when she said that there was absolutely no way out but the way she was taking. She promised that she would send for me at once if it should ever be possible for me to come to Mary, but meanwhile exacted my promise that I would make no attempt to communicate with any member of the family for one week.

"The door that I had entered so buoyantly and hopefully an hour earlier I went forth from a broken and half-crazed man. How or where I spent the hours of that long night I never knew; dawn found me sitting,