

hold us back! No tie of home or kin. All we had in the world to leave behind us was some futile scribbling on various sheets of paper. And of that sort of thing both our heads were full enough. I think it was but the veriest chance that, having begun that walk, we did not go on and get our fill of wandering, and ruin our lives.

Well, that same wild, adventurous spirit came upon me now and then. There were times when, for the moment, I forgot that I had a wife and a child. There were times when I remembered them as a burden. Why should I not say this! It is the history of every married man—at least every manly man—though he be married to the best woman in the world. It means no lack of love. It is as unavoidable as the leap of the blood in you that answers a trumpet call.

At first I was frightened, and fought against it as against something that might grow upon me. I reproached myself for disloyalty in thought. Ah! what need had I to fight! What need had I to choke down rebellious fancies, while my wife's love working that miracle that makes two spirits one!

What is it, that union that comes to us as a surprise, and remains for all outside an incommunicable mystery? What is this that makes our unmarried love seem so slight and childish a thing? You and I, who know it, know that it is no mere fruit of intimacy and usage, although in its growth it keeps pace with these. We know that in some subtle way it has been given to a man to see a woman's soul as he sees his own, and to a woman to look into a man's heart as if it were, indeed, hers. But the friend who sits at my table, seeing that my wife and I understand each other at a simple meeting of the eyes, makes no more of it than he does of the glance of intelligence which, with close friends, often takes the place of speech. He never dreams of the sweet delight with which we commune together in a language that he cannot hear—a language that has no formulated words, feeling answering feeling.

It is not wonderful that I should wish to give expression to the gratitude with which I have seen my life made to blossom thus: my thankfulness for the love which has made me not only a happier, but, I humbly believe, a wiser and a better-minded man. But I know too well the hopelessness of trying to find words to describe what, were I a poet, my best song might but faintly, faintly echo.

I thought I heard a rustle behind me just now. In a little while my wife will come softly into the room, and softly up to where I am sitting, stepping silently across your bearskin rug, and will lay one hand softly on my left shoulder, while the other slips down this arm with which I write, until it falls and closes lightly, yet with loving firmness, on my hand that holds the pen. And I shall say, "Only the last words to Will and his wife, dear." And she will release my hand, and will lift her own, I think, to caress the patch of gray hair on my temple; it is a way she has, as though it were some pitiful scar, and she will say, "Give them my love, and tell them they must not fail us this Christmas. I want them to see how our Willy has grown." And when she says "Our Willy," the hand on my shoulder will instinctively close a little, clingingly; and she will bend her head, and put her face close to mine, and I shall turn to look into her eyes.

Bear with me, my dear Will, until I have told you why I have written this letter, and what it means. I have disease of the heart, and the doctor has told me that I may die at any moment. Somehow, I think—I know the moment is close at hand; I shall soon go to that narrow cot on the right of the door, and I do not believe I shall wake up in the morning with the sun in my eyes,

to look across the room and see that its companion is gone.

For I am in the old room, Will, as you know, and it is not ten years since you went away, but two days. The picture that has seemed real to me as I wrote these pages is fading, and the thin gas-jet flickers and sinks as it always did in these first morning hours. I can hear the roar of the last Harlem train swell and sink, and the sharp clink of car-bells break the silence that follows. The wind is gasping and struggling in the chimney, and blowing a white powdery ash down on the hearth. I have just burnt my poems and the play. Both the table drawers are empty now; and soon enough the two empty chairs will stare at each other across the bare table. What a wild dream have I dreamt in all this emptiness! Just now, I thought indeed that it was true. I thought I heard a woman's step behind me, and I turned—

Peace be with you, Will, in the fullness of your love. I am going to sleep. Perhaps I shall dream it all again, and shall hear that soft footfall when the turn of the night comes, and the pale light through the ragged blind, and the end of a long loneliness.

After I am dead, I wish you to think of me not as I was, but as I wanted to be. I have tried to show you that I have led by your side a happier and dearer life of hope and aspiration than the one you saw. I have tried to leave your memory a picture of me that you will not shrink from calling up when you have a quiet hour and time for thought of the friend whom you knew well; but whom you may, perhaps, know better now that he is dead.

REGINALD BARCLAY.

## II.

### THE PARAGRAPH.

[From the New York Herald of Nov. 18, 1887.]

Reginald Barclay, a journalist, was found dead in his bed at 15 St. Mark's Place, yesterday morning. No inquest was held, as Mr. Barclay had been known to be suffering from disease of the heart, and his death was not unexpected. The deceased came originally from Oneida County, and was regarded as a young journalist of considerable promise. He had been for some years on the city staff of the Record, and was the correspondent of several out-of-town papers. He had also contributed to the monthly magazines, occasional poems and short stories, which showed the possession, in some measure, of the imaginative faculty. Mr. Barclay was about thirty years of age, and unmarried.

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