

was almost calm, if it was husky with emotion:—

“Reginald, you must not speak so. Is it not enough that I shall be left behind, that you must break my heart with your passionate words? For many reasons I cannot go with you. I could not leave my mother now, dependent as she is upon me; nor, Reginald, could I go with you as you now are. Until you could find some employment I would not only be an additional expense, but an actual hindrance to you. You know,” she continued, with a sad attempt at a smile, which faded ere it was half formed, “you would not do much if you had me to take care of. So you must go without me and just wait in patience.”

While she had been speaking such a change came over Reginald Leigh that in those few moments he seemed to grow years older. Slowly the clock ticked the flight of time, but neither spoke; one hundred and fifty times the pendulum slowly moved backwards and forwards, then Reginald rose, staggering like some old man.

“Well, Mabel,” he said, hoarsely, “good-bye. I little thought to leave you thus when I came to you so full of hope this evening. I suppose,” he continued, almost bitterly, “you will not even write to me?”

“Reginald, when you can truly feel that your life is what it ought to be—when you can truthfully, honestly tell me that the hope I have is yours too—that my God is your God—then, Reginald, write to me, and, if God has spared me to that time, I will come to you wherever you may be. I think you are right in going; but you know how I would advise you without my writing letters to tell you—to whom I would bid you look for strength in the warfare you must fight—for grace to come off more than conqueror. You know, Reginald, that I love you truly, faithfully—will ever, ever love you. God bless you! oh! God bless and keep you, my darling!” She threw her arms round his neck—with one long, gasping sob he strained her to his breast, and kissed her again and again, then, without one word, he turned and left her.

CHAPTER IX.

Oh! the weary days that ensued for Mabel Merton when Reginald had left—the days that slowly crept into weeks, the weeks that dragged themselves into months! It was hard to live so without a word or sign from Reginald—to think of the dangers that might surround him, the lonely death he might meet, and she, perhaps, never know of it! To think that this uncertainty might continue for years—that dreary watching, waiting, listening, which is harder to bear than the certainty of the saddest evil! And then, worst of all, the feeling that it might have been so different, that whatever trials or hardships Reginald was undergoing, she might have shared them with him; that, perchance, she might have saved him from some, and comforted him in all.

But then Mabel had acted for the best and it was not always these sad thoughts came; at a bitter, bitter cost to herself she had done what she thought would be for Reginald's good, and why should she regret the step she had taken?

I had learnt to read my dear mistress' face like the pages of a book; only Annie Miller beside myself knew what a terrible struggle Mabel had undergone, for to Annie she confided much that even Kate did not know. Thus a year, almost two years, glided away, and still not a word from Reginald; the letter did not come that Mabel longed and prayed for, and believed some day would come, even if it should be when she was a grey old woman.

Mabel's life was much the same as before Reginald had left her; but his—ah! to what dangers might he not be subject! what a strange wild life he might be leading!

But a change was to come over my mistress' quiet life; and as it is so often the case that important events do not come singly, so it proved in this case. Almost at the same time two unexpected changes came which produced a complete revolution in the little cottage.

The first was a partial fulfilment of Mrs.. Merton's prophecy, in the form of an offer of a house for herself by some distant