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## THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

BY MRS. MARY H. PARSONS.

(Continued from p. 242.)

Everard heard her to the end silently. Ay, though the blood leaped in his veins, and his teeth ground together like iron, though the hue of the grave spread over features rendered harsh, to ferocity, by contending passions; but when she had done, he leaned down and spoke, in that low, fearfully calm voice, peculiar to him when strongly excited: "In years long gone, Leora, there was one as young and fair as thou art. She listened to the tempter, and fell! I cursed her memory and sex, I loathed and hated all that bore the name of woman. For thy sake, girl—for thy sake—I have trusted them once more. Do not you deceive me, too. You are my only child, the sole tie that binds me to a false and hollow world—you have been the solace of long years, left solitary by the guilt of another; all this you are to me, and more than this; yet, girl, I would wrap thee in a winding sheet, and see thee in the tomb, ere I would see thee wife to son of Morton Clare!" He started from his seat, his whole frame convulsed by the fierce struggle that racked him, and with rapid steps he paced to and fro the apartment. Leora rose up feebly, as one who had received some dreadful blow, yet scarce comprehended it.

"Father!" she said, in her sore anguish, "you did not say so! you did not mean so, father! What has Frederic Clare done, to merit such bitter anger?"

"Wilt marry him, girl?" he said in mockery, "wilt league with the son of my bitterest enemy, and prove, like your base mother, a curse to my existence? Ha! it were worthy of her daughter!" and again he paced the room with hurried and irregular strides.

"My mother!" cried Leora, in her agony, "would to heaven, I had died ere I heard her name! Turn to me, father, turn to me in your kindness. I will marry no man without your blessing—what is the world to me without it?" and she wept bitterly as she sank down among the cushions upon the sofa, helpless and despairing. Then Everard took her in his arms and blessed her, and although she was as a flower on which a blight had fallen, and her heart was sinking in dismay for the fearful future, that blessing came soothingly over her troubled feelings, and she felt strengthened for the trial before her.

"Forgive me, Leora, I have been very harsh," said her father, "but you know not my provocations from Morton Clare, you can never, with your gentleness of spirit, fully estimate them; but no more of them. Say you forgive, Leora, and will forget, my violence?"

She clasped her arms around his neck, and though her voice was choked with tears, she murmured, "I have nothing to forgive."

Everard smoothed back the long hair that had gathered over her temples, kissing her brow as he did so, and whispering words of approbation and love: but her face grew paler every moment, until even her lips took the same hue, the eyelids closed heavily over the dark orbs, and the breath came with an effort, and almost with pain. Everard started up in alarm, and when he looked again he saw she had fainted; for a brief moment, the father would have given her to Frederic Clare, to have restored her to happiness and life, so great was the shock that look of death gave him. Other thoughts came, (his life had been a long struggle with feeling, he had learned to conquer,) she was borne to her chamber, and such remedies applied as her case demanded. She recovered soon, answered feebly but affectionately his enquiries, but seemed indisposed to converse; and Everard saw she retained the hand of Mrs. Castlemore, and appeared unwilling her aunt should leave her; it was the first and only time Leora had ever manifested such feeling for Mrs. Castlemore in preference to himself; he had been hitherto the engrossing object of her love; and unconsciously Leora inflicted a bitter pang upon her erring yet fond father. That night Luis Everard laid his head upon a troubled pillow, he felt himself lowered in the estimation of his child, sunk in his own esteem, devoid of the magnanimity and generosity of character Leora believed him to have possessed.

The morning came, and Clare was informed of the determination of Leora's father, and her compliance with his wishes: Everard desired the truth might be told him, that he might feel the hand that dealt the blow, and he accompanied the letter she had written with one of his own, couched in cold, formal language, insisting that all farther communication between them might cease. Clare made great exertion to see Leora, if only for the last time; but she feared the struggle, and shrank with absolute agony of spi-

rit from witnessing his distress. Every effort failing, Frederic left Florence.

Leora Everard had made a great and fearful sacrifice, and she felt at times how bitterly it was made to the prejudices of her father. Still it had been made, and Leora struggled hard to bear cheerfully with her lot, but the shock had come suddenly, when she was wholly unprepared for it; even now she could scarce realize it was her father, who visited upon the head of the son the parent's offences. She changed, and none saw it with keener eyes than Everard; lassitude stole over her frame, she was unwilling to go forth into the open air, she no longer loved the sunshine nor the soft south wind that swept over her brow; hers "was a young spirit blighted, and she faded like a flower when the stalk is injured."

One morning Leora was reclining upon the sofa. She had not, as usual, forced her spirits in a vain effort to be cheerful, but she lay there motionless, yet apparently suffering, the colour rose high up in her cheek, and then would fade away into a deadly paleness. Everard watched her, and with pain; he moved his seat to the sofa, and gently said:

"Leora, there is something wrong; what is it, my child? You are ill, I fear," and he took her hand within his own, and looked tenderly upon her. The tears started to her eyes as she met that glance, and she said mournfully,

"I do not know, father, I am often thus; but I feel strangely oppressed to-day—hot and cold by turns: I fear I am going to be ill," and she trembled as she made an effort to rise. Everard assisted her, and conducted her to her own chamber; they placed her on a bed, and for long days and nights they never hoped to see her rise again. The news went abroad in the world around them, that the fair English girl was dying; people turned aside, for a brief moment, from their worldly pursuits—"so young too!" and the thoughtful and gentle added "so lovely too!" The voices of the poor went up in prayers, and blessings, for the safety of one who had administered to their wants, and bestowed many comforts. But, there was one mansion in Florence, where the news brought anguish almost too great for the sufferer to bear. It was a lofty and vast apartment; pillars of carved marble supported the ceiling; costly hangings of the richest and heaviest silk shaded the windows, and their golden fringe swept downward to the floor; elegance and taste marked the rare garniture of that room, and the thousand toys strewn around, were such as wealth alone can gather for the affluent. It was evening time, and the pale lamp-light fell over the face of a noble lady. Reader, that lady was Aline Delavel! Nineteen years of suffering had gone over that stately head and bowed it in the dust! through protracted grief and undying remorse. There was no sign of life upon the pale lips, and the face was colourless as the dead; the once rounded and beautiful form was attenuated and thin to emaciation. What a mockery was the splendour around her! All had been left to her by Delavel; but he died within the year after their marriage; for him she had forfeited the world's esteem, her own respect, and burdened her soul with a weight of guilt she could never atone for.

Through one of her servants, Aline received information of Leora's arrival at Florence. What a world of new feelings were stirred within the bosom of that guilty and humbled woman! She longed to gaze upon her child, of whom she had thought, until thought had become agony; but she could not, lest she should spurn her to the earth. For a time she strove against her wishes, but in vain! She went forth in secrecy and disguise, and there was no day she had not watched Leora, unseen herself. The maiden was much abroad; ah, how little did she dream how closely her steps were followed; like a shadow the mother watched her child, and moments of joy would steal into her aching heart, amply repaying the many penalties she was compelled to pay to continue undetected. After the return of Everard she never saw Leora again, night and day her vigil was unceasing, but the maiden came forth no more. Then came the tale of her sickness, again the news was worse, she was dying. Aline had heard all, and she sat alone in her lighted hall, without hope and despairing. Large tears gathered into her eyes, and rolled over the wasted face; no violent emotion was manifest, all sorrow came to that unhappy woman, in the form of retribution; she thought upon her daughter, in her youth and loveliness, and oh! how gladly she would have laid down her own weary life, to have redeemed her from the grave.

"If I could but see her, if I could but look upon her once more—my child, my child!" murmured the miserable mother, and she buried her face in her hands. Long she held communion with her own breaking heart, and at length her resolve was taken, to appeal to Everard that she might see Leora ere she died. She ordered her carriage, wrapped herself in a mantle, veiled herself closely,

and drove to the mansion of the Everards. Nothing but despair could have prompted such an act, and love, the strong love that even guilt cannot conquer, of a mother. On reaching the house, she had enquired for Mr. Everard, and was shown into the library, as she had expressed a desire to see him alone. Everard entered soon after, and closing the door, begged to know whom he had the honour of receiving. His cold, ungracious manner, for the first time opened the eyes of Aline to the task before her. Leora had filled her mind with one image, that of death, she had no thought for herself, but that stern voice brought the memory of other days, with a stunning and heavy weight upon her.

"I have no right to intrude," she said faintly, "but I seek an act of mercy at your hands."

"You deal in mysteries," he said coldly, "and I fear I have not the time to bestow upon them."

He turned as if to leave the room, but she started up, and in a hurried, desperate voice exclaimed,

"Look upon me, ere you go!" She threw back the veil, and dropped the mantle from her person. Everard turned as she spoke: one look was enough; he reeled backward from that sudden and overwhelming shock, in horror and dismay; her voice had no tone of her youth, but the blasted wreck of what had once been his wife was too surely before him. Then the humbled woman knelt before him, and prayed that she might look upon her dying child. But the mention of Leora's name roused all the fury of his unrelenting nature.

"Let you look upon Leora!" said he, fiercely; let you pollute with your unholy presence one so pure and innocent. Miserable outcast! the curse of guilt is heavier than you can bear, without costing its dark shadow upon my child!"

"You do not refuse!" cried Aline, as she sprang to her feet. "Mercy! have mercy! you must ask it too; this once, Luis Everard, only this once! let me see my daughter!"

"Woman," said he bitterly, "how dare you ask mercy from me, or raise your voice in supplication to one you have so deeply wronged? Away! Out of my sight, for ever, ay, for ever!" and he gnashed his teeth as the words came hissing from between them, "lest I forget I am a man."

Aline shrunk back as he approached her, and trembled from head to foot, as she answered in anguish, "Curse me if you will, Everard; my life has been a long and living curse! For nineteen years I have never known one happy moment, till I saw Leora; I have watched her in secret, in disguise, and I have felt not utterly shut out from mercy, because I was her mother. Oh, I ask but one boon—to look upon her face, to hear her blessing, and to die! Miserable and guilty as I am, you will not deny me, let me see my child!" and she clasped her hands, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Have you done? If you have I will have pleasure in showing you the door."

"My child! my child! I must see her," cried Aline in sore agony, "she is dying, and I dare not go near her. It will drive me mad, if I do not receive her pardon for the past. Oh, Luis, Luis, stern you ever were, now have mercy; once, only once, let me look upon her. I will not even ask her blessing, or approach her, if you command me not, but let me see her."

"You count confidently on her pardon," said Everard, in scorn. "Come, she shall decide between us," and his thin lips curled in sneering mockery, as he thought of the bitter pang in store for the mother. He opened a door that led by a private staircase, through a long narrow passage directly to the chamber of Leora. Well did Everard know the effect of his early teaching upon the mind of his daughter, and in vengeance he took this method of silencing the importunity of Aline for ever. Leora, in reality, had been pronounced out of danger by the physician, but Everard gave no intimation of the truth to the mother. On reaching the door of Leora's chamber, Everard bade Aline remain without, and listen to the decision; she could not see, nor be seen, but the half-closed door enabled her to hear. Everard entered the room, the long dark hair had escaped from beneath the cap of the gentle girl, and a curl had strayed over her snowy cheek; it might have been the contrast, but Everard was struck with her exceeding paleness. "You are better, my dear Leora," and he spoke tenderly as ever he did, to this only earthly object of his love.

"Yes, I hope so," she answered sadly, "but I am very weak yet; slight things disturb me strangely; I thought as you entered some one was with you." Everard glanced uneasily at the door, his conscience smote him for the base selfishness he was guilty of. "It will not materially injure Leora," he thought, "and it will answer my purpose," and he resolved to go on.

"Your mind is weak, dearest, and is filled with strange fancies,