

LOVE'S GOLDEN THREAD

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"WITH A GLAD CRY BERNARD SPRANG TO HIS FEET." (p. 134)

LOVE'S GOLDEN THREAD

BY

EDITH C. KENYON

AUTHOR OF

"A GIRL IN A THOUSAND," "A QUEEN OF NINE DAYS,"

"SIR CLAUDE MANNERLEY," ETC. ETC.

Mark how there still has run, enwoven from above,
Through thy life's darkest woof, the golden thread of love.
ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

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WITH A GLAD CRY BERNARD SPRANG TO HIS FEET . . . *Frontispiece*

THE SHOCK OF LEARNING THE SAD NEWS WAS GREAT

SHE UTTERED AN EXCLAMATION OF SURPRISE

"GO! YOU CANNOT APPRECIATE SELF-DENIAL AND LOVE"

"READ IT," HE SAID, HANDING HER THE LETTER

DORIS CLUNG TO HER AT THE LAST. "YOU HAVE BEEN LIKE A DEAR SISTER TO ME"

LOVE'S GOLDEN THREAD.

CHAPTER I.
LOVE AND HOPE.

Little sweetheart, stand up strong,
Gird the armour on your knight;

* * * * *

There are battles to be fought,
There are victories to be won,
Righteous labours to be wrought,
Valiant races to be run:
Grievous wrongs to be retrieved,

Right and justice to be done:

* * * * *

Little sweetheart, stand up strong,
 Gird the armour on your knight:
 Sing your bravest, sing your song,
 Speak your word for truth and right.
 ANNIE L. MUZZEY.

"You know, Doris, to-morrow I shall be of age and shall come into my inheritance, the inheritance which my dear father left me," and the speaker sighed lightly, as his thoughts went back for an instant to the parent whose loving presence he still missed, although years had passed since he died.

"Yes, dear, I know," said Doris, lifting sweet sympathising eyes to his. "And, Bernard, it will be a trust from him; he knew you would use it well; you will feel almost as if you were a steward for him—for him and God," she added, almost inaudibly.

He gave her a quick nod of assent. "Money is a talent," he said, "and of course I shall do heaps of good with mine. But you know, dear, I've not got such a wise young head as yours. I shall be sure to make heaps of blunders, and, in short, do more harm than good unless you help me."

He looked at her very meaningly. But her eyes were fixed on the green grass of the hill on which they were sitting, and instead of answering she said, rather irrelevantly, "You will be a man to-morrow; quite legally a man. I'm thinking you'll have to form your own opinions then, and act upon your own responsibility."

"Well, yes. And one day does not make much difference. I *am* a man now." He held himself up rather proudly; but the next moment, as "self passed out of sight," he drew nearer to his companion, looking down into her sweet flushed face very wistfully.

"To-morrow will make a difference," she said lightly:

"The little more, and how much it is!
 And the little less, and what miles away!"

she quoted.

"I was thinking of those lines, too," said the youth, "but not in connection with my coming of age. Doris, dear, the day after to-morrow I shall return to Oxford." He hesitated.

"Yes, I am sorry you are going."

"Not half so sorry as I am to have to leave you!" he exclaimed. "However, it is my last term at Oxford. When I return next time it will be to stay." He hesitated a little, and then, summoning his courage, added hastily, "Doris, couldn't we become engaged?"

The girl looked up, startled, yet with love and happiness shining in her bright blue eyes. "Is it your wish?" she asked. "Is it really and truly your wish?"

Bernard assured her that it was, and moreover that he had loved her all his life, even when as children they played together at making mud-pies and building castles in the sand, on the rare and joyous occasions when their holidays were passed at the seaside.

"You see, dear," he proceeded, after a few blissful moments, while the autumn sunshine fell caressingly upon their bright young faces, "I am rather young and could not speak to you quite like this if it were not that to-morrow I shall be fairly well off. My money—oh, it seems caddish to speak of money just now!—is invested in Consols, therefore quite safe, and it will give me an income of £500 a year. We shall be able to live on that, Doris."

"Yes." The girl looked down shyly, her cheeks becoming pinker, and her blue eyes shining. She was only nineteen, and she loved him very dearly.

"Of course I shall have to assist my mother," continued Bernard. "She has very little money and will have to live with us when we marry. You won't mind that, dear; if we keep together there will be enough for us all."

"Yes, of course." But for the first time a shadow stole across the girl's face. She was rather afraid of Mrs. Cameron, who was the somewhat stern widow of a Wesleyan minister.

Bernard Cameron divined her thoughts. "Mother's sure to like you, Doris," he said. "She's a bit particular, you know. But you are *so good*. She cannot fail to approve of you. Ours will be a most suitable match in every way. Mother will be very pleased about it."

The shadow passed away from Doris's face, and she smiled. Bernard knew his mother much better than she, therefore he must be right. And her last misgiving vanishing, she gave herself up to the enjoyment of the present.

Time passed as they sat there on the pretty hill at Askern, where so many lovers have sat and walked, plighting their troth and building castles in the air; and it seemed as if these two, who were so young and ardent, would never tire of telling their version of the old, old story of the love of man for woman and woman for man. It was all so new to them that they would have been both startled and incredulous if any one had suggested that the same sort of thing had gone on continuously ever since Adam first saw Eve in the Garden of Eden.

However, everything comes to an end, and the best events always pass the quickest; and so it happened that, in an incredibly short time, the sun sank low

in the heavens and finally disappeared, leaving a radiance behind, which was soon swallowed up in twilight and the approaching shades of night. The girl first became uneasy at the lateness of the hour.

"We must go home," she said. "Mother will think I am lost. Oh, Bernard, I did not know it was so late."

"Never mind," said he, "we have been so happy. This has been the first—the very first of many happy times, darling."

"But I don't like annoying mother," said Doris penitently. "Oh, Bernard, let us hurry home!"

"All right, darling."

So they went down the hill and across the fields to the village of Moss, situated between Askern and Doncaster, where they lived; and as they walked they talked of the bright and happy future when they would be together always, helping and encouraging one another along the path of human life.

It was so fortunate for them, they considered, that Bernard Cameron's father had left him £25,000 safely invested. Doris's father, Mr. Anderson, a retired barrister, was one of Bernard's trustees, the other was a Mr. Hamilton, a minister, who knew little about business but had been an intimate friend of the late Mr. Cameron's. Mr. Hamilton was expected at Bernard's home on the day following, when both trustees would meet to hand over to the young man the securities of the money they held in trust for him. Mrs. Cameron would then cease to receive the income that had been allowed her for the maintenance of her son, and it would become Bernard's duty to supplement her slender resources in the way which seemed best to her and to him. There were people who blamed the late Mr. Cameron for leaving the bulk of his property to his son, instead of to his widow—that happened owing to an estrangement which had arisen between husband and wife during the last years of Mr. Cameron's life.

Bernard mourned still for the father of whom his mother never spoke; but he was attached to her also, for she was a good mother to him, and he meant to do his duty as her son. It was his intention after taking his degree to devote himself to tutorial work, as he was fond of boys. In fact he intended to keep a school, and he told Doris this as they walked home together, adding that he should realise part of his capital for the purpose of starting the school. He talked so convincingly of the number of boys he would have, the way in which he would manage them, the profits which would accrue from the school-keeping, and the enormous influence for good which he hoped the scheme would give him over the young and susceptible minds of his pupils, that Doris felt convinced that the enterprise would succeed, and admired his cleverness, business-like ability, and, above all, his wish to help others in the best and highest way.

Timidly, yet with a few well chosen words, she sought to deepen and

strengthen his purpose, assuring him that nothing could be nobler or more useful than to teach and train the young, and promising that she would do everything in her power to assist him.

CHAPTER II. A TERRIBLE WRONG.

All day and all night I can hear the jar
Of the loom of life, and near and far
It thrills with its deep and muffled sound
As the tireless wheels go round and round.

Busily, ceaselessly, goes the loom,
In the light of day and the midnight's gloom.
The wheels are turning, early and late,
And the woof is wound in warp of fate.

Click! Click! There's a thread of love wove in:
Click! Click! another of wrong and sin—
What a checkered thing will this life be
When we see it unrolled in eternity!
Anon.

It was late when Bernard Cameron left Doris at the garden-gate of her home—so late indeed that the girl hurried up the path to the house with not a few misgivings.

How angry her mother would be with her for staying out so late with Bernard! Doris was amazed that she had dared to linger with him so long; but time had sped by on magic wings, and it so quickly became late that evening. Well, she must make the best of it, beg pardon and promise not to offend in that way again. And perhaps when her mother knew what had been taking place, and that she and Bernard intended to marry when he had obtained his degree and was ready to launch out into his life-work, she would be pleased and would forgive everything. For Mrs. Anderson admired Bernard very much, and had

been heard to say that she almost envied Mrs. Cameron her son.

"He will be mother's son-in-law in time," thought Doris. "I am sure she will like that."

Doris had reached the hall door now. It was locked, and she hesitated about ringing the bell, being dismayed at the unusual darkness of the house. Why, it must be even later than she had imagined, for the servants appeared to have fastened up the house and gone to bed! The top windows which belonged to them were the only ones that were lighted. No one appeared to be sitting up for her, and, not liking to ring the bell, she went round to the French windows of the drawing-room, in the hope that she might be able to open one of them. But they were closed and in darkness. Then, going a little farther, Doris turned to see if the library window would admit her, and found, to her satisfaction, that a gleam of light from behind its curtains revealed the fact that it was an inch open and that some one was within.

The girl was about to open wide the window and enter the room, when her attention was arrested by hearing her father exclaim, in tones of agony:

"I am ruined! I am quite, *quite* ruined! And what's more I've speculated with Bernard's money—and it's all gone! It's all gone! And to-morrow they'll all know! Everything will come out—and I shall be arrested!"

"Oh, John! John! What shall we do!" It was her mother's voice, speaking in anguish.

Tremblingly poor Doris drew back, away from the window, feeling overwhelmed with horror and consternation. What had she heard? Bernard, her lover, ruined by her father! She felt quite stunned.

How long she stayed there in the dark, afraid to enter by the library window lest her appearance just then should grieve her parents, and uncertain what to do, she never knew; but at last she found herself standing under her own bedroom window.

There was a pear-tree against the wall. A boy would have thought nothing of climbing it and of entering the room through the window; Doris herself had often done that as a child, but now she hesitated, feeling so much older because she had received her first offer that day from the man whom she loved devotedly, and because, since then, great shame and pain had overwhelmed her in learning that it was against him—of all men in the world!—her father had sinned. Therefore she felt it impossible to climb that tree, as a child, or a light-hearted girl, might easily have done. So she stood beneath it, with bowed head, feeling stunned with misery and utterly incapable of effort.

Above her the stars looked down, and the lights of the village shone, here and there, at a little distance, while the night wind stirred the trees and shrubs close by, and gently swept the hair from off her brow. Just so had she often seen

and felt the sights and voices of the night from her bedroom window up above; but everything was different now. No longer a child, she was a girl engaged to marry Bernard Cameron, whom she had always loved, and whom her father had plundered of all that made his life pleasant and that was to make their marriage possible.

For a moment Doris felt angry with her parent, but only for a moment: he was too dear to her, and through her mind surged memories of his kindness in the past and of his pride and joy in her, his only child. It might have been that in speculating with Bernard's money he was animated by the thought of still further enriching the son of his old friend. At least Doris was quite certain that her father had not meant to do him such an injury.

"But oh, father, if only you had not done this thing," thought the poor girl distractedly, "how happy we should be! But now, what shall we do? What will poor Bernard do? And I, oh! what shall I do?"

For a little while she stood crying under the old pear-tree, and then a prayer ascended to the throne of Grace from her poor troubled heart.

CHAPTER III. THE PENCIL NOTE.

The winter blast is stern and cold,
Yet summer has its harvest gold.

Sorrow and gloom the soul may meet,
Yet love rings triumph over defeat.

The clouds may darken o'er the sun,
Yet rivers to the ocean run.

Earth brings the bitterness of pain,
Yet worth the crown of peace will gain.

The wind may roar amongst the trees,
Yet great ships sail the stormy seas.

THOS. S. COLLIER.

It was impossible for Doris to stay out in the garden all night, within reach of her comfortable bedroom, and presently she took courage to climb the tree and enter by the window.

The little room, with its snow-white bed and dainty furniture, including well-filled bookshelves and a pretty writing-table, looked different from of old; it did not seem to belong to Doris in the familiar way in which it had always hitherto belonged to her. Everything was changed. Or perhaps it was she who was changed and who saw everything with other eyes than of yore, and, recognising this, she sobbed, "It will never be the same again—never, never! I shall *never* be happy again."

And then, because she was so lonely and so much in need of help, she knelt down by her bedside, and poured out her full heart to Him who comforts those who mourn and who strengthens the weak and binds up the broken-hearted. After which, still sobbing, though more gently, she undressed and went to bed.

Thoroughly tired out in mind and body the poor girl slept heavily and dreamlessly for many hours, so many in fact that she did not awake until quite late the next morning.

Then, oh, the pain of that awaking, the pain and the shame! Would she ever forget it?

The maidservants came into her room one after another, the young housemaid and cook, and Susan Gaunt, the faithful old servant who acted as working-housekeeper; they were all in consternation, asking question after question of the poor distracted girl. Where were her parents? Would she tell them what she knew about them? When had she seen them last? What could have happened to them? and so on.

Doris asked what they meant? Were not her father and mother in the house? What had happened? What were they concealing from her? "Tell me everything?" she implored in piteous accents.

The servants, perceiving that she knew nothing of her parents' disappearance, began to answer all together, making a confusion of voices. Their master and mistress had gone away: they had vanished in the night. Their beds had not been slept in. No one knew where they had gone. And this was the day upon which Mr. Bernard Cameron was to come of age. Mr. Hamilton and the family lawyer were expected to lunch, and so were Mrs. Cameron and her son. What should they (the servants) do if the master and mistress were absent?

Doris, half stunned and wholly distracted, ordered every one to leave the room, and, turning her face towards the wall, shed a few bitter tears. That, then, was what her parents had done; they had run away and had left their unhappy daughter behind. "It's not right! They have not done the right thing!" Doris said to herself. "And they might have offered to take me with them," was the

next thought: though, upon reflection, she knew that she could not have borne to leave Bernard in such a way, and neither would she have consented to flee from justice with those who had wronged him, even though they were her own parents.

It was no use lying there crying, with her face turned towards the wall, and so she arose, and, having dressed, began to search for a letter or message which might have been left for her.

After a long search, by the accidental overturning of the mat by her bedroom door, she discovered a note which had been left under it and had thus escaped earlier recognition. It was from her mother.

Doris locked herself into her room in order to read the letter, which was blotched and blurred with the tears that had been shed over it:

”MY DARLING CHILD,—

”I am grieved to tell you that a very terrible thing has happened. Your father has unfortunately lost all Bernard Cameron’s money. He speculated with it as if it were his own, in the firm belief, he says, that he would be able to double the capital. However, he lost everything, and he is overwhelmed with grief and remorse, realising now, when it is too late, that he had no right to speculate with Bernard’s money. Indeed, a terrible penalty is attached to such a mistake—the law deems it a crime—as he has made. He dare not face Bernard and his mother, Mr. Hamilton and the lawyer to-morrow, and his only chance of escaping from a dreadful punishment is by flight. Doris darling, my heart is torn in two; I cannot let him go alone for *his heart is broken*—and something dreadful may happen if he is left to himself—so you will forgive me, darling, but I must go with him—*I must*. For twenty years we have been married, and I cannot leave his side, now that he is in despair. Oh, I know it would be better of him, and more manly and just, if he would stay and face the consequences of his sin, but I *cannot* persuade him to do it, though I have implored him with tears, and so, if it is wrong to flee, I share the wrong-doing, and may God forgive us! Now, my dear Doris, when we have gone you must tell Susan that she must give notice to our landlord that we give up our tenancy of the house; then she must arrange with an auctioneer to sell all the furniture; and tell her when that has been done, after paying the rent and taxes and the tradesmen’s bills, she must put the remainder of the money in the bank to your father’s account.

”And then, as for yourself, my dear child, it will be better for you to know nothing of our whereabouts, or our doings. You must go to London to my dear old friend Miss Earnshaw, and ask her *for my sake* to give you a home. I am sure

she will do that, for she is so good and loves me dearly. She lives at Earl's Court Square; and you must go to her at once, travelling by train to King's Cross, and then taking a hansom there.

"Once before, long years ago, Miss Earnshaw wanted to adopt you and make you her heiress, but your father and I could not give you up. Tell her we do so now, and consent that you shall take her name—which was the sole condition she made—it will, now, be more honourable than our own. Farewell, dear, my heart would break at parting from you thus were it not that what has happened has broken it already.

"Your loving Mother, "DOROTHY ANDERSON."

Doris read the letter over and over again before she could quite realise all that it meant. She was nineteen years old, had received a fairly good education, and now her parents had forsaken her, leaving her entirely to her own resources, except for the command that she should go to London to Mrs. Anderson's old friend, Miss Earnshaw.

Doris had never been to London, and she had never stayed with Miss Earnshaw, though the latter came to be at the hydro at Askern every year, and never left without visiting them for a few days. She was rich and generous, and Doris knew that she would be willing to give her a home.

"But oh," said the girl to herself, "it is hard to have to leave here in this way—never to return—under a cloud, too, a dreadfully black cloud!" And she sighed deeply, for it was difficult for her to understand how her father could possibly have speculated with money that was not his own. He was a reserved man, who had never spoken of business matters to her, and she was a child yet in knowledge of the world, and did not comprehend such things as speculating on the Stock Exchange; but she knew that he had done wrong—for had not her mother acknowledged that?—and realised, with the keenest pain, that Bernard Cameron, her lover, was ruined by it, absolutely ruined, for he could not continue his career at Oxford, and the capital with which he meant to start his school, afterwards, was all lost, too. Moreover, they could not marry, for he was penniless, and she a beggar, going now to beg for a home in London. All thoughts of a marriage between them must be over. It was a bright dream vanished, a castle in the air pulled down and shattered.

"I suppose we must prepare the luncheon, Miss Doris?" said Susan, when, at length, in answer to her persistent knocking at the door, Doris turned the key to admit her, and as she spoke the woman cast an inquiring glance toward the letter in Doris's hand.

"Lunch? Oh, yes, Susan! Mr. Hamilton, Mrs. Cameron, and the others will be coming—although—" The poor girl broke down and wept.

"Don't, Miss Doris! Don't cry so, dear!" said Susan, pityingly, wiping her own tears away as she spoke. "Master and mistress may return in time to sit down with their guests."

"No, they won't. They'll never come back!" exclaimed Doris, with another burst of sobs.

"What do they say in the letter?" asked the old servant.

"It's awful!" replied Doris. "Just see"—she passed the letter, with a trembling hand—"see what mother has written to me. *You* may read it, Susan, though no one else shall. There's a message for you in it about the house."

Susan adjusted her glasses and began to read the letter with some difficulty, for tears were in her eyes, and she had to take off her spectacles again and again in order to wipe them away.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she ejaculated more than once, as she read the letter. "That I should have lived to see this day! My poor mistress! What she must be suffering!"

"And father!" exclaimed Doris. "Oh, how miserable he must be! For it is his fault, you know, and the knowledge of that must be so dreadful."

"I cannot understand his doing it," said Susan, looking deeply pained. "Such a high-minded, honourable gentleman as he always seemed. Your poor mother! your poor mother!" she repeated. "What must she be feeling?"

"It's bad for me, too," said Doris, "to be deserted, to be left behind like this."

"Aye, dearie, it is," sighed the old servant, looking at her with great affection. "But you must remember, 'When my father and mother forsake me then the Lord taketh me up.'"

"I don't feel as if He takes *me* up," sobbed Doris, whose mind was too full of trouble to receive any comfort just then. "Father and mother *might* have kissed me and said good-bye! Oh, it was cruel, cruel to steal away when I was asleep!" And again she cried as if her heart would break.

Susan endeavoured to calm her, but for some time in vain. At last, however, the old servant, glancing at the small clock on the mantelpiece, exclaimed:

"We *must* prepare to meet the visitors who are coming! Miss Doris, rouse yourself, be brave; we have our work to do now—afterwards we can weep." Susan brushed away her own tears as she spoke, and, drawing herself up, added in her more usual, matter-of-fact tone, "I should like to have this letter, or at least the part of it containing that message to me, so that I may be able to show it to those who may question my right to sell the furniture, etc."

"I can't spare the letter," replied Doris, "but I will tear off the half sheet containing the message to you."

"Yes, do, dearie, and write your mother's name after it, and your own, too."

"Very well," said Doris, "I will write my own name beside mother's—then it will be seen that I have written hers for her." She did so, adding "pro" before writing her mother's, and then Susan took the half sheet and went to prepare for the coming guests.

An hour afterwards, as Doris was mechanically arranging the drawing-room in the way her mother always liked to have it when visitors were expected, Bernard Cameron entered unannounced.

"Doris!" he exclaimed, coming up to her with outstretched hands. "My dear Doris, what has happened? Crying? Why, darling, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Bernard! Bernard!" She could not tell him for her tears; but the touch of his cool, strong hand was comforting, and she clung to it for a moment.

He soothed her gently until she was able to speak and tell him what had happened since she parted from him the night before, then she allowed him to read her mother's letter.

It was a great blow to the young man full of bright anticipations and ambition, in the full tide of his Oxford career, on the eve of his engagement of marriage, and on the day of his coming-of-age, to learn that he was bereft of his entire fortune and rendered absolutely penniless by one who had undertaken to care for him and protect his rights; who was, moreover, the father of his beloved, with whom he intended to share all that he possessed. Small wonder was it that the young man drew back a little, covering his face with his hands, and uttering something between a boyish sob and a manly sigh.

The next minute he would have turned to Doris again, in order that he might say kind, reassuring words; for not for a moment was his love for her affected by her father's wrong-doing, but they were interrupted, Mr. Hamilton being announced.

The trustee looked worried. He came forward nervously, inquiring if Doris knew where her father was. It was evident that he had already heard from the servants of Mr. Anderson's absence.

Doris could not speak. She looked helplessly at the man, and then at Bernard, rose as if to leave the room, made a step or two forward, stumbled over a footstool, and would have fallen if Bernard had not caught hold of her.

"All this is too much for you," he said, in a quick, authoritative manner. "You must go and lie down. Mr. Hamilton, be so good as to touch the bell. Thank you. Doris does not know where her father is. That will do, Doris. No need to say any more at present. Susan," he continued, as the door opened, "help Miss Anderson to her room. She is ill."

He handed Doris over to the maid with care; but it seemed to the poor girl that he was only too anxious to get rid of her, now that he was aware of the

wrong her father had done him. She was, however, relieved to be able to go to her own room, and, under the plea of illness, escape the harassing questions which, otherwise, the coming guests might oblige her to answer. In sending her to her room Bernard was really doing the kindest thing. It never occurred to him that she could possibly imagine that he blamed her, or in any way felt his love for her diminished by her father's heinous conduct.

It was a pity, and the cause of much unhappiness, that he had not time to say one kind word to the poor girl, after the grievous disclosure she had made to him.

CHAPTER IV. A HARD WOMAN.

O for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!
LONGFELLOW.

"I have come to say a bit of my mind, Doris Anderson!"

The words were hard and uncompromising. Mrs. Cameron, who, in the twilight, had sought and obtained access to the bedroom of the missing trustee's daughter, stood over her with a gesture which was almost menacing. The difficulty she had met with in forcing her way upstairs against the wishes of Susan and the other frightened maidservants, in whose eyes she looked terrible in her wrath, had much increased her displeasure. She now longed to "have it out" with the only member of Mr. Anderson's family within her reach, or, as she expressed it to Doris, to give her a "bit of her mind."

It was not a nice mind, Doris knew, so far as gentleness, charity, and courtesy constitute niceness, and the poor girl shrank away from her visitor, burying her tear-stained face still deeper in the pillows. A pent-up sigh escaping as she did so might have appealed to a more tender-hearted woman, but only served to still further incense Mrs. Cameron, who, tossing her head with a muttered malediction, forthwith proceeded to disclose the real vulgarity and unkindness of her nature.

"It's no use sniffing and crying there, young woman," she said, "and it's not a bit of good your playing the innocent, and pretending you knew nothing of what was going on. Your father is a thief and a scoundrel! Now what is the use of your sitting up, with that white face, and pointing to the door like a tragedy queen? I shall say what I've come to say, and no power on earth shall stop me. John Anderson, your father, has stolen my poor boy's money, and wasted every penny of it! There is nothing left! Nothing! All has gone! Twenty-five thousand pounds were entrusted to your father by his dying friend Richard Cameron, my husband, who had unlimited faith in him, as had also Mr. Hamilton; and it's all gone! There is nothing left! Nothing! *Nothing!* My poor boy is ruined, absolutely ruined! Just at the starting of his life, when he is doing so well at Oxford, with all his ambition--"

She broke down for a moment, with something like a sob, but, suppressing it, frowned the more fiercely to hide the momentary weakness, "He has this blow hurled at him by one of the very men who, of all others, were appointed to protect his interests, and make everything smooth before him. It isn't as if your father wasn't paid for being acting executor, or trustee. My husband, who was always just"--Mrs. Cameron was one of those wives who abuse and quarrel with their husbands while they have them, but after their death wear perpetual mourning and lose no opportunity of sounding their praises--"left John Anderson a legacy of a hundred pounds, to repay him for any trouble the business of administering his estate might cause. Little did he think what a thief and rogue the man would turn out to be!"

"Leave the room!" gasped poor Doris, sitting up and waving her hand frantically towards the door. Whatever her father had done, she could not listen to such abuse of him.

"Leave the room, indeed!" cried Mrs. Cameron, sitting down on a bedroom chair, which trembled beneath her weight--she weighed at least twelve stone, being stout and tall--"I shall leave it when I choose, and when I've said what I have to say, and not before! And it doesn't become you, Doris," she cried--"it doesn't become you to speak saucily to me. You're as bad as John Anderson, no doubt. Like father, like daughter! You're all tarred with the same stick. If you didn't actually take my boy's money yourself, perhaps you used some of it; or, if you didn't, no doubt it was your extravagance and your mother's that made Anderson want money so badly that he took what was not his own. However," she went on inconsequently, "you are as bad as he if you defend him, and take sides against my poor boy, who never did anything to harm you in his life--"

"Oh, I don't!" interrupted Doris, distressed beyond measure at the idea of such a thing. "If you only knew how I esteem Bernard, and I--" She broke off with a saving instinct which told her that not by pleading her love for Bernard

would she soften his mother's heart.

"Esteem him, and yet take the part of the villain who has robbed him of everything?" cried the other indignantly.

"You forget"—almost soundlessly murmured Doris, her white lips only just parting for the words to escape—"you forget, the wrong-doer is my father. Yes, he has done wrong—I acknowledge it," she cried pathetically. "But still he is my father!" And the tears fell down her cheeks.

It was a sight to melt a heart of stone; but Mrs. Cameron was not looking. Though her eyes were fixed upon Doris, and her ears heard the faintly uttered words, she perceived nothing but her boy's wrongs and her own, the vanished £25,000, the stopping of Bernard's education at Oxford, the failure of her own tiny income to provide for their daily bread and the commonest clothes, the sinking of her son into a poor, subordinate sphere at the very commencement of his life, the slipping of herself into squalid, poverty-stricken surroundings, and a narrow, meagre old age. Another picture, too, presented itself the next moment, and that was the mental vision of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson enjoying themselves abroad, in the lap of luxury, eating and drinking at the best hotels, arrayed in handsome clothing, and laughing, yes, actually laughing together about the way in which they had lightened the Camerons pockets.

That being so, it was no wonder that Mrs. Cameron's next words were even harsher than those which had preceded them.

"Yes, you've a scoundrel for a father! You must never forget that!" she cried. "Never, never, for one moment! Wherever you are, whatever you may be doing, you must never forget that. You'll have to take a back seat in life, I can tell you. Not yours will be the lot of other girls. With a father who is a felon in the eyes of the law you can never marry into a respectable family without bringing into it such a load of disgrace as will do it a cruel wrong."

She fixed her eyes sharply on the girl's pale miserable face as she spoke, with more than a suspicion of a love affair between her and Bernard, which she determined to quash, cost what it might to Doris.

"If you marry," she continued harshly, "you will take your husband a dowry of disgrace—that, and nothing else!" She laughed harshly. "Why," she ejaculated the next minute, "why, the girl's not listening!" for she perceived Doris springing from her bed and beginning, in trembling haste, to dress herself.

To get away from that terrible voice, and the sound of those cruel words, was Doris's first determination; her second was to go where she could hide for ever and ever from Bernard Cameron, lest in his noble, disinterested love for her he should venture, in spite of what had occurred, to insist upon marrying her. The idea of bringing him a dowry of disgrace was so frightful that it over-balanced for the moment the poor, distraught mind of the suffering girl.

Mrs. Cameron was one of those women who, when wronged, are blind and deaf to all else; suffering acutely, they pour out torrents of words, unseeing, unheeding the mischief they may be doing to others. She, therefore, continued talking, in a loud, harsh voice, with unsparing bitterness, all the time Doris was dressing and putting on her plainest outdoor apparel; and the mother's mind having turned to the subject of marriage, and her wish being to destroy any thoughts Doris might have cherished of Bernard as a possible husband, she said:

"My son, though poor as a pauper now—thanks to your father—bears an unblemished name. Honourable as the day, he comes of a most honourable race of men. In time, when he has worked up some sort of position for himself, he may marry a girl with money, and thus, in a way, attain to something like the position he has lost. It is all a chance, of course, but it is the only chance he has. There are lots of girls with money. He is handsome and taking; he must marry one of them. Do you hear me, Doris? I say he must! It is the only chance he has. Are you not glad for him to have just that one little chance?"

Doris was silent.

"Ha! You do not answer? Can it be, can it possibly be," Mrs. Cameron's voice grew hysterical, in her fear and anxiety, "that from any foolish words the poor, ruined lad has said—such words as lads will say to giddy girls—you can possibly consider him at all, in any way, bound to you?"

The poor girl would not answer. She looked appealingly around. Was there no one who could save her from this woman? Where was Bernard? Why was he not at her side, to shield and protect her? The next moment she realised the impossibility of his being there in her bedroom; and again her eyes roved longingly round the limited space.

On the morrow no doubt pitying friends, hearing of her trouble, would rally round her: the clergyman's wife, the doctor's, the ladies to whose school she used to go, and others, acquaintances more or less intimate. There was not one of them who would not be kinder to her than this woman, who was goading her now beyond endurance. But they were absent—and Mrs. Cameron was so very, very present.

"Do you mean to say—do you mean to say—there is anything between you, the daughter of a criminal, who shall yet be brought to justice, if there be any power in the arm of the law, and my son—my stainless, innocent child? Will you answer me?"

The room, which was going round and round, in a cloud of darkness crossed by sparks of light, seemed to Doris to assume once more its ordinary appearance, as she came round out of a half-swoon. What to answer, however, she knew not. She could only dimly comprehend the question. Was there anything between her, overwhelmed as she was with disgrace, and Bernard, poor, defrauded, yet

honourable in the eyes of all men? Was there anything between them? Yes. There was something between them—there was love. But could she speak of that to a third person, and that third person one so aggressive as Mrs. Cameron? She felt she could not: therefore again she was silent, while the woman poured out on her the wrath which now completely over-mastered her.

"You bad girl!" she cried. "Not content with your father's having ruined my boy by stealing all his money, you are mean enough and wicked enough to deliberately determine to cut away his one remaining chance of rising in the world! 'Pon my word"—all the vulgarity of the woman was coming to the surface—"you would ruin him body and soul, if you could! All for your own ambition, that you, too, may rise in the world; you intend to cling to him as a limpet clings to a rock—and he won't be able to raise you, not he, poor lad! but you will drag him down into the mire, which will close over his head and then—then perhaps you will be content."

She waited for Doris to speak, but still the girl was unable to articulate a word. She was fastening her hat now, and putting the last touches to her veil and gloves; in a moment or two she would be able to escape into the open air, and into the night, now fast coming on.

"It is to his chivalry, doubtless, that you are trusting, to his generosity, his love, his charity, his magnanimity. By his virtues you would slay him, that is, I mean, debase him in the eyes of the world—the world we live in," continued the upbraiding voice.

Then Doris, stung beyond endurance and driven to bay, made answer, confronting Mrs. Cameron proudly, with her little head held high:

"You may keep your son. I will never marry him. He is nothing to me now—*nothing*."

"I can tell him that?"

"Tell him," cried Doris passionately, "tell him that I would not marry the son of such a mother for any consideration in the world! Tell him that I would *rather die*." She felt at that moment as if she would, for the woman's cruel words had dragged her heart far from its moorings.

The next moment Mrs. Cameron was alone, standing in the middle of the room, where she had so brow-beaten and insulted the innocent daughter of that unhappy house, listening to Doris's retreating footsteps on the stairs and in the

hall, and then the gentle closing of the outer door.

CHAPTER V. BERNARD SEARCHES FOR DORIS.

Life is so sad a thing, its measure
 Brimms over full with human tears;
 A blighted hope, a buried treasure,
 Infinite pain, delusive pleasure,
 Make sorrowful our years.

* * * * *

Heaven is so near, oh friend, 'tis yonder,
 God's word doth clear the uncertain way;
 His hand will bear thee, lest thou wander,
 His Spirit teach thee thoughts to ponder
 Till thou hast found the day.

LOLA MARSHALL DEANE.

Doris had gone. She had promised never to marry Bernard. The young people were parted for ever. Mrs. Cameron, though poor, had her son, her dear, if peniless, son all to herself. By a vigorous onslaught she had defeated and driven away the enemy, utterly routed and confounded. It was a moment of triumph for her, and yet she felt anything but triumphant; and it was with a cross and gloomy countenance that she proceeded downstairs in search of her son, whom she found at last closeted with Mr. Hamilton in the study.

"How is Doris?" asked Bernard, rising as his mother entered, and offering her a chair.

Mrs. Cameron sat down heavily, a little disconcerted by this interrogation.

"What does that matter?" she snapped. "The question is how are we, the wronged, defrauded, robbed?"

Her son looked at her impatiently. "After all, it is worse for Doris," he said, with great feeling.

"Worse?" ejaculated his mother.

"Worse?" echoed Mr. Hamilton. He was a long, lean man, remarkable for

his habitual silence and great learning.

"Yes, ten thousand times worse!" cried Bernard. "We have lost only our money, but she has lost her parents, her home, her money, and everything—that is, almost everything," correcting himself, as a smile flitted across his face, "at one stroke."

"Bernard is right—and the poor girl has the disgrace to bear as well," interjected Mr. Hamilton.

"Humph!" Mrs. Cameron tossed her head. "The Andersons deserve all that they have got," she was beginning, when Bernard stopped her hastily.

"Mother," he said, and his tone had lost its usual submissiveness in speaking to her, "Doris has nothing to do with the cause of our misfortunes. She knew nothing about all this until after it had happened."

"How do you know?" asked Mrs. Cameron sharply.

"Doris told me so."

"Doris told you so! And you believed her?"

"Yes, and always shall!" cried Bernard, his face glowing and his eyes flashing. "And I would have you understand, mother, that I will have no word said against Doris. She and I are engaged to be married. She is my promised wife."

There was a dead silence in the room when his clear, manly voice ceased speaking. His mother was too much astounded and disturbed to easily find words; she had not imagined things had gone quite so far as that between the young people. And Mr. Hamilton, not knowing what to say, shrank back into his habitual silence.

"She is my promised wife," said Bernard again, and there was even more pride and confidence in his young tones. A smile, joyous and brilliant, broke out all over his handsome face. Forgotten were the pecuniary troubles now, the broken career at Oxford, the school that would never be his. In their place was Doris, his beautiful beloved, who would more than make up to him for all and everything. To his mother's amazement and consternation he went on rapidly, "I shall marry her at once, then I shall have the right to protect her against every breath of calumny,—though indeed, if you will respect my wish, Mr. Hamilton," he added, turning to the minister, "and will not tell the police, or prosecute Mr. Anderson, the matter can be hushed up as far as possible, and her name will not be tarnished. But in any case, *in any case*," he repeated, "Doris is mine. I shall marry her and work for her. If the worst comes to the worst, I can get a clerkship, or a post as schoolmaster—and with Doris, with Doris," he concluded, "I shall be very, *very* happy."

His mother's words broke like a bombshell into the midst of his fond imaginings. "Doris has just been telling me," she said, in low, cruel tones, "that she will *never* marry you!"

"What? What are you saying?" exclaimed Bernard, agitatedly, the joy in his face giving place to an expression of great anxiety.

His mother said again, "Doris has just been saying to me that she will never, *never* marry you. She told me I was to tell you so."

"But this is most unaccountable!" cried Bernard, beginning to walk up and down the room. "This is most unaccountable," he repeated. "Why, she told me—" he broke off, beginning again, "Where is she? I must see her—must hear from her own lips the reason of this change."

"You cannot see her, Bernard," said his mother, in slow, icy tones. "You cannot see her. She is not in this house—"

"Not in this house? Not here? What do you mean?"

"She has gone away."

"But where? Where has she gone?"

"I do not know."

"But has she left no message for me?" he asked, with exceeding anxiousness.

"She left the message I have given you," answered his mother. "Tell Bernard," she said, "that I will never, *never* marry him!"

"That message I refuse to receive!" cried Bernard. "Poor Doris was in such trouble she did not know what she was saying—I am sure she did not mean that."

"I suppose you think I am telling you a lie?" began his mother hotly.

Bernard did not reply, indeed he did not apparently hear her words. He hurried out into the hall, got his hat, and then returned to the room to say to his mother:

"Have you no idea where Doris has gone?"

"Not the least!" snapped Mrs. Cameron.

"I shall find out. I shall follow her, wherever she has gone. You will not see me again till she is found!"

"Bernard! You silly lad!"

But he had gone. No use, Mrs. Cameron, in rushing after him into the hall, with all the arguments you can think of! No use in standing there, frowning and execrating his folly! The influence that draws him after Doris, in her poor distracted flight, is stronger than that which binds him to your warped and selfish nature. Love is spurring his footsteps onward, far, far away from you. If you wish to keep him by your side, you, too, must have some of its magic.

Bernard first went on his bicycle to Doncaster, to the railway station, where, after many inquiries and much futile questioning, he ascertained that a young lady answering to the description he gave of Miss Anderson had booked for King's Cross, London, and had set off to go there by the 7.34 train.

Without hesitation he determined to follow her by the next express, which

was to leave Doncaster at 11.18. It was then eight o'clock, so he had time to cycle back to Doris's home, there to question Susan Gaunt as to what relations or friends Miss Anderson had in London besides Miss Earnshaw, for he thought that in case Doris had not gone to her, as her mother had directed in the letter he had seen, she might be with other friends.

Susan was in a state of great distress and anxiety when she heard that her dear young lady had gone alone to London so late in the evening. "There will be no one to meet her when she arrives!" cried the good woman. "It will be night, and Miss Doris has never been to London before! She won't know what to do. There won't be any one to take care of her. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! what will she do?"

"Well, I'm going after her," said Bernard, "as fast as I can. And I intend to go straight to Miss Earnshaw's in Earl's Court Square. She will go there, I suppose?" And he looked searchingly into the old servant's face.

"Yes, sir. She will go there, for her mother told her to do so."

"But, in case she is not there when I arrive?" said the young man tentatively, "have you any idea of any other friends in London to whom she may go?"

"No, sir; no," answered Susan, shaking her head. "She knows no one in London except Miss Earnshaw. How should she when she has never been there? Oh, my poor young lady! My poor, dear young lady! God grant she may find Miss Earnshaw!"

Bernard left her in tears, and hurried off to his home, in order to pack a small bag which he could carry on his bicycle to Doncaster Station. Having trimmed his bicycle-lamp and eaten a little supper, without much appetite, he strapped his bag on his bicycle and again set off for Doncaster, arriving there in time for the first night express.

During the hours of that long, rapid journey south he was full of fears and doubts; fears for the welfare of the girl who had run away from her old home in such terrible grief, and despair and doubt as to his power to find, console, and persuade her to take back her promise not to marry him.

The hours of the night wore slowly away, until at 3.5 in the morning his train arrived at King's Cross. Nothing could be done at that hour, and, after making inquiries at the station as to whether any young lady had arrived by the train from Doncaster, which reached King's Cross at 10.45 P.M., without eliciting any satisfactory information, he lounged about for a couple of hours, and then went out in search of a coffee-house, and was glad to find one at last where he could obtain some hot, if muddy, coffee, and a little bread and butter.

The homely fare caused him to realise the state of his finances as nothing else would have done. This was what it meant to be bereft of fortune! For others would be the comforts and pleasant appointments of good hotels; for others

would be ease, culture, and luxuries: he himself would have to take a poor man's place in the world. He would have to be content with penny cups of coffee and halfpenny buns, with poor clothes and a little home—thankful indeed if he could secure that.

"But no matter," he said to himself, raising his head and smiling so brightly that several persons in the coffee-house turned to look at him. "No matter, if I win Doris for my wife. With her dear face near me, and her sweet and gentle words of encouragement sounding in my ears, I can bear all and everything. She will transform a plain little cottage into a palace by her presence, and will make a poor man rich. I can be content with anything, shall want nothing, when I have Doris." And afterwards, when he was walking about in the soft, misty rain, which seemed to him so black and cheerless, he said again to himself, "It doesn't matter. Nothing matters now that I am going to Doris."

For he felt confident that he would find her at Earl's Court Square when he arrived there. Of course she would have gone straight there in a cab, as it would be night-time when she arrived at King's Cross. There was nothing else that she could do.

He would follow her as soon as he possibly could. Dear little Doris! How glad she would be that he had not taken her at her word, if indeed she had sent him that cruel message! How devoted she would think him to follow her at once! How much comforted she would be to receive the protestations of unchanging, nay, more, increasing love!

Time seemed to drag with leaden wings, until what he thought a decent hour for calling upon Doris began to approach. Then he took a hansom in a hurry, bidding the cabman drive to Earl's Court Square as fast as he could.

It was scarcely ten o'clock when he stood at the great door of the house in Earl's Court Square, touching the electric button, and waiting in breathless suspense for the door to open. No one answered his summons for quite five minutes—which seemed an eternity to him—then the door slowly opened, and a lad in plain livery stood before him.

"Is Miss Anderson in?" inquired Bernard.

"Miss Anderson, sir?" asked the page slowly.

"Yes, Miss Anderson. Has she not arrived?"

"No, sir. I don't know whom you mean, sir. There is no one here of that name."

Then Doris had not arrived! It was a great blow to poor Bernard. "Can I see Miss Earnshaw?" he asked at length.

"No, sir. You can't, sir. She is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir. She died suddenly yesterday of heart disease. Very sudden it was,

sir.”

Dead! Miss Earnshaw! Then what had become of Doris? ”Are you quite sure that a young lady did not come here in the early hours of this morning?” asked Bernard, slipping a coin into the youth’s hand.

The touch of silver seemed to quicken the latter’s memory. ”I was in bed, sir. But if you wait here I will ask Mr. Giles, the butler,” he said, inviting Bernard into the hall and going in search of the information he needed.

Presently he returned with a deferential butler, who said to Bernard:

”There was a young lady came to this house in a hansom, sir, about one o’clock this morning. She wanted Miss Earnshaw, and seemed terribly cut up to find she was dead. She saw Mr. Earnshaw, Miss Earnshaw’s distant cousin, who inherits everything. But I think he couldn’t do anything for her, sir, for she went away in great trouble.”

”Where is Mr. Earnshaw?” demanded Bernard excitedly.

”He went off by an early train to Reigate, where he lives. He won’t return until the day of the funeral.”

”When will that be?”

”Day after to-morrow.”

”Give me his address. I must wire to him!” exclaimed Bernard. ”Did you observe whether the lady went away in a cab or walked?”

The butler had not noticed the manner of her departure, nor had any one else in the house. All the inquiries Bernard made—and they were many—resulted in nothing. Doris had vanished as completely as it was possible for any one to vanish in our great and crowded metropolis.

Bernard was in the greatest distress and anxiety about her, and sought for her in every possible way, by advertising, through the police, by telegraphing, and when he returned from Reigate by a personal interview with Mr. Earnshaw, who said that he had told her that any claim she, Miss Doris Anderson, had on Miss Earnshaw could not be considered at all by him, for he had nothing to do with it, and could not see his way to do anything to help her.

Bernard said strong words, and looked with exceeding anger upon the wealthy man who had just inherited the great house. But the warmth of his feelings only hastened his own departure, for Mr. Earnshaw requested his servant to show him out with all speed.

And nowhere in London could Bernard discover a trace of Doris Anderson, though he sought for her diligently and with care.

Bernard was a true Christian, possessing earnest faith, otherwise he would have been perfectly overwhelmed by these sad reverses of love and fortune; as it was, although he was very unhappy, hope never quite left him, and in this, his

darkest hour, he was able to trust in God and take courage.

CHAPTER VI. DORIS ALONE IN LONDON.

Most men in a brazen prison live
Where is the sun's lost eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning task, work give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.

But often in the world's most crowded streets,
And often in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Doris felt quite stunned when she found that her friend Miss Earnshaw was dead, and that Mr. Earnshaw, the heir, refused to recognise any obligation to be kind to one whom she had loved. Night though it was when Doris arrived in London she hurried to Earl's Court Square in a cab, for she knew not where else to go. It seemed to her most fortunate that Miss Earnshaw's house was lighted up, little knowing the reason for it. And then the shock of learning the sad news of the sudden decease of her old friend was great, and the cold and almost rude behaviour of Mr. Earnshaw, who would have nothing to do with one whom he looked upon as a protégée of his late cousin's, gave poignancy to her distress.

[image]

"THE SHOCK OF LEARNING THE SAD NEWS WAS GREAT."

Doris had very little money in her purse, and knew not what to do. Mechanically therefore she returned to the cab, whose driver she had not paid, and re-entered it.

"Where next, madam?" asked the cabman.

Not knowing what to say, Doris made no answer. Was there in all the world, she wondered, a being more deplorably hopeless, homeless, and overwhelmed with trouble than she? Where could she turn? What could she do? It was out of the question that she should return to Yorkshire, where there was now nothing but ruin and disgrace for an Anderson. She would not encounter Mrs. Cameron again if she could by any means avoid doing so, and she had promised never to marry her son. Bernard would be sorry for her now, she knew, yes, very sorry indeed. Still he had shrunk from her and looked very strange upon hearing of her father's misappropriation of his money and absconding, which was enough truly to seriously lessen his affection for her. Indeed, Doris thought he could no longer love her, in which case she had certainly lost him entirely.

Father, mother, lover, all gone; cut off from friends by a black cloud of disgrace and shame, penniless and alone, terribly alone in a world of which she knew so little, amidst dangers more vast than she, with her limited experience, could imagine, what could she do? Surely God as well as man had forsaken her! She turned quite sick and faint.

"Where to, lady?" asked the cabman again, and this time there was a note of compassion in his rough voice which appealed to Doris.

She burst into tears.

The man turned his head aside. He was one of nature's gentlemen, though only a poor cabman, and it was not for him to look upon a lady's tears. He stepped back to his horse the next minute, and pretended to busy himself with the harness.

Doris had time to recover. In a few minutes she was able to check her tears. Then she beckoned to the cabman to approach.

"I am in trouble," she said; "the friend to whose house you have driven me died suddenly yesterday--" She broke down pitifully.

The cabman nodded. "That's bad!" said he, looking down on the ground.

"I don't know what to do," added Doris in tones of despair.

"There'll be servants in this big house, won't they take you in for the remainder of the night, at least," suggested the man.

"I dare say they would if they were alone," answered Doris. "But there is a man in the house—I cannot call him a gentleman—who says everything is now his, and that I have no claim upon him, and he will do nothing for me."

The cabman muttered something strong, and then broke off to apologise for speaking so roughly. "You'll excuse me, miss," he added, "if I say I should like to punch the fellar's 'ead. May I go to the door and make 'em take you in if I can?" he asked finally.

"No, thank you," replied Doris. "I am poor and homeless"—her lips

quivered—"but I am too proud to intrude where I am not wanted." She turned her head on one side.

The horse started forward a step or two, and the cabman went to its head. A sudden gust of wind and rain swept over Doris through the open door, causing her to shiver. The man returned to her side.

"We can't stay here any longer, miss," he said.

"No"—Doris hesitated—"no, but—" she paused.

"Where shall I take you, lady?" asked the cabman.

"I don't know," replied Doris miserably.

The man stood waiting somewhat impatiently. All was silent in the square: there were no passers by, except one solitary policeman, who stood to look at them for a moment, and then passed on.

"Drive me to an hotel, please," said Doris at length.

"Yes, lady."

The cabman drove her to two or three hotels without avail; either they were closed for the night, or the night-porter on duty refused to admit a lady without any luggage.

Again the cabman came to Doris for orders. "What will you do?" he asked.

"I don't know," replied Doris, pitifully, with quivering lips. She felt terribly desolate and lonely.

Fortunately for her the cabman happened to be an honest man, who had a wife and children of his own, therefore seeing his "fare" so helpless, and so entirely ignorant of the great city, with its immense dangers for a young and solitary girl, stranded in its midst, in the night-time, he suggested, "You might go to a decent lodging, lady, until morning."

"Yes, I should be glad. But how can I find one? Do you know of one?" asked the girl desperately.

"There's my mother at King's Cross. She's poor, but respectable, and she lets lodgings and happens to have no one in them at present."

Doris looked at him as he spoke. Could she venture to go to his mother? He seemed an honest man. And what else could she do?

"Mother's house is clean," continued the cabman. "She lives in a quiet street a few doors from where I live with my wife and children. Mother's always been very particular about her lodgers: and she's so clean," he persisted. "Any one might eat off her floor, as they say."

The simple words appealed to Doris; they bore the stamp of sincerity, and so also did the honest kindly face of the poor man. But still she hesitated: her common sense told her she could not be too careful.

"Perhaps you'd look at this, miss," said the man, putting his hand in his breast pocket and producing a small New Testament. He opened it and pointed

to the inscription written on the fly-leaf, which Doris read by the light of the cab-lamp:

"Presented to Sam Austin by his friend and teacher the Rev. Charles Barnett, as a small acknowledgment of his valuable assistance in the St. Michael's Night School, London, N."

"How nice!" said Doris. "Thank you for showing that to me. I will go to your mother's. I am sure she must be a good woman."

"She is indeed, lady. A better woman never lived, though I say it."

"Drive me there, please," said Doris.

The man shut the door of the cab and returned to his seat.

An hour afterwards poor tired Doris found herself comfortably lodged in a small but respectable house near King's Cross, and before retiring to rest she thanked God for His providential care of her during the difficulties and dangers of the night.

Downstairs Mrs. Austin was giving her son a cup of cocoa and asking questions about the young lady he had brought to her.

"We don't know anything about her, Sam," she said cautiously. "There is of course no doubt about her being in trouble, and looking as good as an angel, too, but one can never tell. I'd rather she'd have had some luggage. Don't you think if she had come up from the country to stay with her friend, now, she'd have had some luggage?"

"Well, yes, so she would in an ordinary way—but we don't know all the circumstances. And it was a first-class big house in a fashionable square, and she went up to the door as boldly as if she expected a welcome—"

"Which she didn't get, and they wouldn't have anything to do with her there. That looks bad. For the rest you have only her own tale to go by."

"Mother, are you going to turn her out?" asked Sam, with reproach in his voice.

"No, Sam, I can't do that. But I shall keep my eyes open."

"You'll be good to her, mother, I know."

"Yes, of course." Mrs. Austin smiled, and her son knew that she would keep her word.

He went away then with his cab, and Mrs. Austin closed her house for the night and went upstairs to bed, pausing on the landing by her new lodger's door. Did the girl want anything, she wondered, and after a low knock she opened the door softly.

Doris was kneeling by her bed-side, and with a little nod of satisfaction Mrs. Austin withdrew.

Doris's sleep, when at last she sought her couch, was long, so that when she awoke it was afternoon and she found her landlady standing by her bedside,

with a little tray, on which was tea and toast.

"You are very good to me, Mrs. Austin," she said, gratefully, as she partook of the refreshing tea.

"I'm very pleased to have such a nice lodger, miss," said the widow, completely won over and forgetting all her misgivings, as her stout, good-humoured countenance expanded in a broad smile. "There are some who like gentlemen lodgers best, but I don't. 'Give me a nice young lady,' says I, 'and you may take all your gentlemen!'"

Doris smiled a little dolefully. "But I haven't very much money—" she began.

"Don't you worrit yourself about that, miss! The sovereign you gave me when you came in will see you through at least two weeks here, so far as lodging is concerned—of course the food will come to rather more—but it may be that you will find work, if it is work you are wanting, miss, though you do seem too much of a lady for that sort of thing."

"I shall have to work," said Doris, "because I have very little money, and no one to give me any more."

"Dear me, that's bad. Might I make so bold, miss, as to ask if you have been running away from home—from your parents, miss?"

Running away from her parents? How different the case really was! It was her parents who had run away from her! But she could not tell Mrs. Austin this. She therefore only shook her head, saying gently, "I lost my parents before leaving home. The—the reason I have no luggage is this, I—I was in great trouble when I came away, and so I forgot to pack any."

"Then can't you send for your luggage, miss?" asked the woman.

"No, no. There are reasons why the people I left, at least one of them, must not know where I am. So I can't send. Besides, I left in debt, and as I cannot pay the money, I want the people to have my clothes and jewellery."

Mrs. Austin's round eyes opened wider. It was queer, and her first feelings of compassion, which had been aroused by her lodger's pitiable situation, and by the fact that she had seen her on her knees, became mingled with doubts and suspicions. This young lady left the last place she stayed at in debt; it would behove her present landlady to be careful lest she, too, should be taken in. Miss Anderson was very young and innocent-looking, but it was wonderful how sharp those baby-faced girls could be!

"I shall have to buy a few things," said Doris, "and that will cost money. But I must look out for work immediately. The question is, what can I do?"

"I should think you can do a great many things, miss," said Mrs. Austin. "A young lady like you will almost have been taught everything."

Doris shook her head. "I know a smattering of many things," she said, "but

I doubt if I could earn money by any one of them.”

”Well, miss, time will show. I wouldn’t worry myself about it this evening, if I were you—I would just lie still and go to sleep. You’re worn out, that’s what you are.”

Doris took this good advice so far as to lie down again after she had her tea, with her face to the wall. But for some time she did not go to sleep, for her heart ached too much; yet she did not weep, though there was a pain at the back of her eyes which hurt more than tears, and did not give her the relief that they would have given. She felt keenly her changed circumstances. Two days ago she had a good home, kind parents, an ardent lover, and many friends and acquaintances; now she had lost all. She was homeless, her parents had forsaken her, she and her lover had parted for ever. She was without friends and without acquaintances, for they, too, were left behind. ”I am alone, quite alone,” she thought; and then remembered that the best Friend of all, her Heavenly Father, was still with her. That idea saved her from despair, and gave birth to the resolve that she would not allow herself to sink beneath her troubles, but would keep a brave heart and endeavour to live worthily. Her life would be different from of old; yes, but it need not be worse—rather, it should be better. Longfellow’s familiar words rose to her mind:

Not enjoyment and not sorrow
Is our destined end or way;
But to act that each to-morrow
Finds us further than to-day.

And she grasped the idea, even then, in that hour of bitter humiliation and despair, that the brave soul is not made by circumstances, and the environment which they bring, but, strengthened by Him who first trod the narrow way, it makes stepping-stones of what would otherwise deter and hinder it, pressing on to the prize of our high calling, the ”Well done, good and faithful servant!” of our Master.

So Doris said to herself, ”I will live to some purpose, and first of all I will set before myself one aim above all others. If I possibly can earn money enough, in some way or other, I will repay Bernard the money of which my father robbed him—yes, that shall be my ambition. To pay the debt—the debt my father owes him.”

Twenty-five thousand pounds! An immense sum truly! But immense are the courage and the hopefulness of youth, inexperienced, ignorant but magnificent with the rainbow hues of undaunted imagination.

When at last Doris fell asleep the last words she murmured to herself were

these:

To pay the debt.

And her last thought was that she would be honourable and true to the teaching of that Voice which is not far from any one of us, if only we have hearing ears and an understanding heart.

CHAPTER VII. FRIENDS IN NEED.

Like threads of silver seen through crystal beads
Let Love through good deeds show.
SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

This is a very hard world for those who, untrained for any special vocation, find themselves through stress of circumstances driven into the labour market, to oppose with unskilful hands and untrained brain the skilful and highly trained labour of professional workers.

Pretty golden-haired Doris, with her slender array of accomplishments and small amount of book learning, found herself at a great disadvantage as compared with girls who had received a sound Board School, or High School, education. As a teacher she could find no employment, having no certificates, and testimonials, or references to give. After answering many advertisements, which entailed much expenditure in bus and train fares, though she walked whenever she could, thereby saving her pennies at the cost of shoe leather, she was obliged to come to the conclusion that not by teaching would her money be earned. The same ill success attended her search for a situation as lady's companion. Her want of references alone debarred her from any chance of success in that direction.

One day, when passing down a well-known street in north London, she perceived a notice in a dress and milliner's shop window stating that young girls were much needed as junior assistants. She therefore went in to make inquiries, and found that if she liked to go there and sew from morning to night she would receive in payment a couple of meals a day and eighteenpence a week. It would

be impossible for her to be lodged also, the manageress said, as they had as many hands living in as they had beds for. Plenty of girls were to be had for that trifling wage, as they went there to get an insight into the business, hoping to pass on to better work and higher wages in due course.

As it was impossible for Doris to pay for a bedroom out of such a wage she was compelled to decline the work; and as the weeks passed by and nothing better turned up she at last found herself in a pawn shop, trying to raise a little money on her watch and chain, and undergoing a truly humiliating experience.

The day came, only too soon, when Doris was obliged to confess to her landlady that she could no longer pay for her week's lodging in advance. By that time, however, Mrs. Austin had conceived a real attachment to her young lady lodger. When, therefore, Doris stated her sad case, with tears in her eyes, the good woman's heart was touched.

"Now don't you take on about that, miss, don't!" she cried. "I shall not ask you for any more money till I am obliged, miss. I know you will pay me when you can."

"You may be quite sure I shall do that," said Doris. "I am only too distressed at the idea of your having to wait for the money."

Mrs. Austin went out of the room, to return, however, in a few minutes with what she thought might be a "helpful suggestion."

"If you can paint, miss," she said, "perhaps they may be willing to sell your pictures at some of the picture shops."

Doris's face brightened. Her little water-colour and oil paintings had been very much admired at home. But she sighed the next moment, as she said gently, "I have no paints here, or brushes, or canvas, or anything!"

"I have thought of that," said Mrs. Austin cheerfully. "Just you come upstairs with me."

She led the way up the narrow stairs to the back bedroom where she slept, and pointed to a chest of drawers with no little pride. "My Sam made that," she said, "when he was a joiner and cabinet maker, before he took to cab driving, which I wish sometimes he had not done. For it's a life of temptation. The fares so often give drinks to cabmen—'specially on cold nights. Sam says it's almost impossible sometimes to keep from taking too much; and his wife has cried more than once because he has come home 'with three sheets in the wind,' as they call it. And he's reckoned a sober man, for he's that naturally, only he lives in the way of temptation. But now, look here, miss!"

Opening a drawer Mrs. Austin displayed all sorts of painting materials heaped up within it. Water-colour paints, drawing blocks, palettes, oil-tubes, canvases, pencils, and chalks were all mixed up together.

"These belonged to my dear son Silas," said Mrs. Austin, wiping her eyes

with a corner of her apron. "He was never strong like Sam, he was always a delicate lad. He couldn't do hard work, with his poor thin hands and weakly legs. But he was a rare lad for a bit of colour. 'Mother, I'll be an artist,' he oft said to me. And I had him taught. He used to attend classes, and go to a School of Art—I was at a deal of expense—and now, now he's gone!" She broke down, sobbing bitterly, while Doris put her arms round her neck and kissed her poor red face, which was all she could do to comfort her. "He's gone," continued the widow pathetically, "to be an artist up above, if so be it's true that God permits people to carry on their work on high."

"On the earth the broken arcs, in the
Heaven a perfect round,"

quoted Doris softly.

"Ay, miss, I think so," said the poor woman, whom sorrow had taught much. "My Silas, he said to me when he lay dying, 'Mother, God is the Master Artist, He began me, just as I begin my pictures, and He never makes mistakes, or wastes His materials; He'll turn me into something good over there, as it isn't to be down here.'"

"He had beautiful faith," said Doris, "and I am sure it will be as he said."

"Oh, my dear young lady," cried the other, with great feeling, "I thank God that He sent you here! I do feel so comforted to have you here, and I do hope you will do me the favour to accept these painting things—every one of them, please. Then you can paint pictures and sell them, as my poor dear boy wanted to do."

Doris, however, was reluctant to accept so much, and only did so at last on the understanding that if she were so fortunate as to sell her pictures Mrs. Austin should have a percentage of the pay, for the use of the materials. That settled, it became necessary to arrange where the work should be done; for both Doris's bedroom and the little front parlour, where she sat and had her meals, were too dark for the purpose.

Mrs. Austin was equal to the occasion. "Why shouldn't you have the top attic, where my boy used to paint?" she said. "There's a sky-light, you know; and my Silas always said the light fell beautiful in his study, or studio, as he used to call it. Do come upstairs and see what it is like?"

Doris did so, and found a large attic lighted by a huge sky-light. Boxes and lumber littered the floor, an old square table was against the wall, and a rather decrepit easel stood under the sky-light; a few plaster casts, and big discoloured chalk drawings, were scattered about, or stuck on the walls with gum-paper, or sealing wax. The atmosphere of the attic was close and fusty, it having evidently been shut up for a long time.

"Why, this is the very place for me to paint in!" exclaimed Doris. "Will the skylight open? Oh, thanks!" as the landlady, opening it, let in a pleasant draught of fresh air. "That is charming!"

"I will clean and tidy up the place for you, miss, and bring a chair or two in, and scrub the table clean, and then you can begin as soon as you like."

Mrs. Austin was as good as her word, and when Doris returned to the attic in the afternoon quite a transformation had taken place, and, if not an ideal studio, it was certainly a light and extremely picturesque one. An old but clean rug had been found for the centre of the floor, an old-fashioned Windsor armchair and a three-legged stool were placed near the table, on which was spread a large old crimson cloth, while a little cheap art muslin of the colour of old gold was draped here and there as curtains to hide the unsightly lumber. The attic smelt rather strongly of soft soap and soda, but that, the landlady remarked succinctly, was "a good fault," and certainly through the open sky-light came remarkably good air for London.

Doris could not do anything that first day, as by the time she had put a few touches to the room and arranged her things it was too dark to paint. But there was gas laid on, so she sat at the table that evening, with pencil and paper before her, making little sketches from memory of places she had seen, which she intended to utilise for her paintings by daylight. And as she did so, for the first time since the dreadful night on which she had heard of her father's crime, something like happiness returned to her.

Great is the power of work to tide us over waves of trouble—waves strong enough, if we sit brooding over them, with idle hands clasped on our knees, to sink our little crafts in the sea of life, so that they will never reach the quieter waters where they can sail serenely. "Work hard at something, work hard," said the Philosopher of Labour, over and over again. "Idleness alone is worst: idleness alone is without hope." Work, he went on to say, cleared away the ill humours of the mind, making it ready to receive all sweet and gracious influences. And in Doris's case it was so for a while that evening; and day by day afterwards as she sat busily working in her attic, the cloud of shame—laid upon her innocent shoulders by her guilty father—lifted and disappeared; for she felt instinctively, as she worked, that she, at all events, had no part nor lot in that matter, but was doing her best—feebly enough, yet nevertheless her best—to destroy one of the consequences of his sin, which was certainly the right thing to do.

And as she worked Hope came, touching with rainbow hues the dreary outlines of her dismal thoughts, letting a little light in here and shutting a little dark out there, until the future began to look less drearily forlorn, and even became gradually endowed with pleasant happenings. She would sell her pictures, at first for low prices which would tempt purchasers; they would be liked, orders

would pour in, she would raise her prices, earning more and more money. Living on quietly where she was, with good, kind Mrs. Austin, she would save what was not actually needed for her simple wants; and thus would begin that secret hoard which, she hoped, would one day grow to such dimensions that she could pay part of the debt her father owed Bernard Cameron.

Then she grew happier every day, and as Mrs. Austin never failed to applaud loudly every little picture that was made she thought that others, too, would see some beauty in them. She knew, of course, that the good landlady was only an uncultivated, ignorant woman, and therefore one who could not be a judge of art, yet Doris fondly imagined that, having had a son who aspired to be an artist, Mrs. Austin must know more of such things than ordinary women of her class.

She was disillusioned only too soon. There came a day upon which, having half a dozen little pictures finished, she ventured out bravely for the purpose of offering them for sale. Sam Austin, who took a great interest in the project, had, at his mother's solicitation, written down for her the names and addresses of three or four picture-dealers, and, not content with doing that, he was most anxious to drive her to their shops in his cab, in order that she might make a good impression.

"It won't do, mother," he said, "to let them dealers imagine that she can hardly scrape together a living by her work. They would not think it very valuable in that case. Folks usually take us for what we appear to be in this world; and if we want to get on we must not let outsiders peep behind the scenes."

Doris would have preferred to go alone, in order that she might make her little venture unobserved even by the cabman's friendly eyes; but, not liking to grieve him and his mother, she accepted the offer of his cab, and was accordingly driven over to what she hoped would be the scenes of her triumph and success, but which proved instead to be those of bitter humiliation and disappointment.

Cheerful and brave she was when she stepped out of her cab and entered the first picture-dealer's shop, with her brown paper parcel in her hand, to return saddened, disheartened, and chagrined ten minutes later, with the same parcel rather less tidily wrapped up. The cabman, who hastily opened the cab-door for her, guessing the truth, regarded her very seriously, whereupon she endeavoured to smile; but the attempt was a failure, and only her pale face quivered as she bowed assent to his proposition that he should drive her on to the next dealer's. Here, as before, she was received with effusive politeness—for, coming up, as she did, in a cab, the driver of which hurried down from his seat to open the door for her, touching his cap most deferentially as he did so, the shopkeeper expected that at least her parcel contained some valuable picture which they were to frame for her. But when it turned out that she was only offering them what

one or two men rudely termed "amateur daubs" for sale, their manner changed with extraordinary rapidity. It appeared that they did not want any pictures to sell, either in oils or water-colours. They had more of that sort of "stuff" than they could do with. Young ladies supplied them with any amount for a nominal payment, and did the paintings better, too, than those which were being offered. "Even if we bought yours," said one dealer, "and I tell you they are not good enough for us, we should only offer you a price which would scarcely pay for your materials."

It was plain to poor Doris at length that there was no market at all for her wares, and Sam waxed furious as he read the truth in her pitiful face. As he drove her homeward he was divided in his mind as to two lines of conduct. Should he go back and give these dealers a bit of his mind, or should he try to speak words of comfort to the poor young lady as he left her at his mother's door? Finally he decided to do the latter, and therefore as he opened the carriage door for her to alight he ventured:

"I ought to have told you, miss, that it's terrible hard for any one without a connection to get a footing in the business world. Dealers always know people who can do work for them if they require it, and outsiders have but little chance." This was a long speech for Sam to make to a lady, and he only got through it by looking into his hat steadily all the time he was speaking.

"Yes," said Doris, "I suppose so. I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Austin," she added gratefully. "I am sure," she continued, her pale face lighting up with a smile, "if these picture-dealers were more like you they would be much improved."

"If I was a picture-dealer," said Sam to himself, as he drove off with his empty cab, thinking over this compliment, "I'd buy the whole bloomin' lot of pictures at a price that would ruin me rather than bring tears to the eyes of that blessed little angel. It's horsewhipping, or else shooting, them dealers want, and I'd give it them if I was the Government, I would, as sure as my name is Sam Austin."

CHAPTER VIII.

NEW WORK FOR DORIS.

Have hope, though clouds environ now,

And gladness hides her face in scorn:
 Put thou the sadness from thy brow,
 No night but hath its morn.
 SCHILLER.

That was a dark time with Doris. Long afterwards she looked back upon it as the hour of her deepest humiliation, when the tide of her life was at its lowest ebb, and Giant Despair held out claw-like hands to seize her for his own.

She was unsuccessful: the pictures she had thought so pretty were of no commercial value, her only hope of making a living for herself, not to mention her magnificent project of repaying Bernard Cameron some of the money of which her father had robbed him, was completely destroyed. She had no gift by means of which she could

Breast the blows of circumstance
 And grapple with her evil star,
 And make by force her merit known.

And she was friendless, except for the Austins, and alone in London; moreover, she was absolutely penniless, nay, worse than that, she was in debt, not having paid for her food and lodging for at least three weeks.

Going upstairs as quickly as possible, in order that she might escape Mrs. Austin's questions and even her sympathy, which just then she could not bear, Doris entered her little room, and, locking the door, flung herself on her knees by her bedside.

She had no words with which to beseech the intervention of the All-Powerful; but words were not needed, her very attitude was a prayer, her want of words a confession of the extremity of her need. It was impossible for her to do anything more for herself. She knelt there and waited for assistance.

Now it happened that Mrs. Austin, on an errand to her grocer's, meeting her son Sam, as he was driving away with his empty cab, learnt the truth about Doris's failure from him, greatly to her disappointment.

"Oh, poor dear young lady!" she cried, "what will she do now? Whatever will she do now? Painting was the only thing she could do?"

"Well, she'll have to do something else," said Sam, "since those picture-dealers won't 'ave her work."

"But what else can she do?" ejaculated Mrs. Austin in consternation.

Sam did not know; but he was obliged to drive on, having spent more time than he could afford on Miss Anderson's business that morning. Mrs. Austin

returned home, and, by way of comforting Doris, set the kettle on, and began to prepare a little meal for her. As she was thus busily engaged the door-latch was raised, and a youth entered dressed as a shop-boy and bearing a family resemblance to the Austins.

"Good afternoon, aunt," he said, looking round the room with sharp eyes that noted everything.

"Good afternoon. I suppose you are in want of a bite or a sup?" she remarked sagaciously.

"Well, I do feel a bit of a sinking here," and he made a rapid gesture indicative of hunger.

"Sit you down then; I'm just making a little dinner ready, and a cup of tea for my lady-lodger, and you shall have some too, Sandy, if you'll wait."

"All right, I'll wait," and so saying he sat down and watched his aunt as she boiled a couple of eggs and made tea in a little brown teapot which had seen many days.

As she worked Mrs. Austin talked, and, because her mind was full of Doris she spoke most of her, not exactly revealing her artistic efforts and subsequent failure to effect a sale of her pictures, but still graphically portraying her need of remunerative work.

Sandy listened with scanty attention. He was much more interested in the egg and large cup of tea which his aunt placed before him, and it seemed as if he were the last person in the world to do Doris any good. Indeed, Mrs. Austin suddenly perceived that her words were absolutely wasted, and therefore pulled herself up short, with the exclamation, "I declare, I might as well talk to this lampshade as to you!" She glanced as she spoke at the pretty crimson shade over the gas-light. It was made of crinkled paper, tied together with a narrow ribbon.

"You never have an idea in your head, Sandy," she added.

Sandy grinned. "Who made that lampshade?" he asked, as he cut the top off his egg.

"What shade? Oh? the gas-shade! Miss Anderson, my lodger, you know, made that for me one evening, with a bit of crinkled paper that only cost 2-½*d*. Very handy she is with her fingers."

Sandy made no further remark until he had finished eating and drinking everything that was placed before him. "There," he said, at last, "I've done! Now then for a look at this shade," rising to look at the pretty lamp-shade, tied with a knot of crimson ribbon, which Doris had made in a few minutes with her clever fingers, as a small thank-offering for her landlady.

"Well, what do you think? Isn't it pretty?" asked Mrs. Austin.

"Pretty? Yes, well, it's pretty. I reckon if your lady-lodger made some of these for our shop they'd sell."

"Would they now?" There was eagerness in the question. Could this possibly prove to be a chance of work for poor Miss Anderson?

"Yes. We sell lots of flimsy silk lampshades that cost heaps of money. And we're often asked for something cheaper. Our manager might be inclined to buy some like this."

"Would he indeed? Oh, Sandy, Sandy!" In her eagerness the good woman caught hold of his arm. "Poor dear Miss Anderson does not know where to turn for a penny. Could you get her this work to do, for good pay, do you think?"

Sandy grinned again. "You said I never have an idea in my head," he began teasingly.

"I did. Yes, I did, but I won't say so again. I won't if you'll get my dear young lady some work that will keep the wolf from her door."

"The wolf? What wolf?" Sandy looked round with an assumed air of alarm.

"The wolf of hunger."

"I shouldn't have thought you would have allowed him to come near a lodger of yours."

"Get out with you!" Mrs. Austin pushed him towards the door. "Run and see if there is a chance for Miss Anderson."

"A chance? Oh, I see what you mean. Just ask her first if she would be willing to do the work at a fair price."

"Willing? She'd jump at it. But I tell you what, Sandy, we must not have her disappointed again. I won't say anything to her about it until we know whether she can have the work and on what terms."

"But the manager will want to see a specimen," protested Sandy. "He's a big man. You can't rush before him with nothing. He'd order me off at once for fooling round in that way."

"Specimen? Oh, well, if you want one, take this," said Mrs. Austin, carefully taking down the pretty shade Doris had made, blowing the dust from it, and wrapping it lightly up in a huge newspaper. "Now you must hold it in this way not to crush it," she said, "and make as good terms as you can for my young lady; tell your manager she is a real lady, who won't do things for nothing."

"All right!" Sandy darted off with the shade, and Mrs. Austin went upstairs with her tea-tray.

Doris opened the door slowly. Her eyes were red with weeping, and her hair was dishevelled and dress untidy. "Oh, Mrs. Austin," she said, "I've been so unfortunate! No one will have my pictures. They are not good enough to sell—"

"Nay, nay. That's not it. But there's no market for such pretty things. I know all about it, my dear young lady. I met Sam and he told me. He is so sorry, he has a feeling heart, has Sam. But there, there, don't you take on so! Don't cry, dearie!" She was crying herself, with sympathy.

Doris had burst into tears, and sat down weeping as if her heart would break.

"Come! come! we mustn't give way. It's always the darkest hour before the dawn," said the good woman soothingly.

"If only I hadn't wasted all this time, and used your painting materials! And now what shall I do? What shall I do?" cried Doris.

Mrs. Austin's resolve not to tell her about the lamp-shade making until Sandy returned with good news vanished in the stress of this necessity, and she hastily related to Doris that her nephew had thought of some paying work which she might be able to do.

The girl was startled at the idea of such work. It was very different from what she had been attempting; but her downfall was too real for her to be able to indulge in her former hopes, and her need of money was too great for her to be fastidious, she therefore brightened up a little, and began to talk about the new project. At all events this might provide her with sufficient money for food and lodgings until she could procure something better.

The two went on discussing the matter whilst Doris drank her tea and ate her egg and bread and butter; and then Mrs. Austin took the tray down, and waited impatiently for the return of her nephew.

At last he came in, bringing the manager's compliments to Miss Anderson, and he begged her to call upon him the next day.

Doris, therefore, went to the ironmonger's shop in the morning, was duly shown into the manager's room, and, after remaining there, some little time talking over the matter with him, the result was that she was engaged to work at lamp-shade making for the firm, in a little room behind the shop, for eight hours a day, at a salary commencing at sixteen shillings a week.

This arrangement Doris thought a more desirable one than another which would necessitate her providing her own materials, making the shades in her attic, and receiving so much a dozen for them. She stipulated, however, that if the shades sold well her salary should be increased in proportion.

Weeks and months of pretty, if monotonous work followed for Doris. Her candle- and lamp-shades were a decided success, and sold quickly at low prices. One window of the shop was given up for a display of them, and they made a "feature," or a "speciality," which attracted customers. The head of the firm, Mr. Boothby, sent for Doris one day, praised her handiwork, and raised her salary to a pound a week.

Doris was very thankful for the additional money, as it enabled her gradually to pay her kind landlady all she owed, and still have fifteen shillings a week for her board and lodging. More than this the good woman would not take, and as for Sam, he stoutly refused to be paid anything for the use of his cab on the

picture business. One favour only he begged, and that was that Miss Anderson would give him one of the little pictures he had endeavoured to assist her to sell.

Doris chose one of the best, and wrote his name on the back of it, much to his delight.

She became contented, if not happy, as time went on, knowing that she could earn her living by work which was not too hard for her strength; but her old dream of partially repaying Bernard Cameron was no nearer fulfilment, for what could she do with only a few shillings a week for dress and personal expenditure? Sometimes, as her fingers worked busily, her thoughts were turning over new schemes for earning money, which might in the future develop into something greater and more lucrative than what she had in hand just then; and on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday, when walking or sitting in Regent's Park, or more occasionally in Hyde Park, or even at Richmond or Kew Gardens, her thoughts would fly to those who loved her, and she would long to see again her mother and father, and look once more on the beloved face of Bernard Cameron.

Did they ever think of her? she wondered. Would she ever meet them again? They could have no possible clue to her whereabouts. She, buried in a little back room at the ironmonger's shop for eight hours a day, had small chance of being seen by any one except workpeople and shop assistants. And even if she were out-of-doors more, walking about in those North London streets, or in the parks, or mingling with the "madding crowd" within the City, what likelihood was there that she would run across any of the three who, in spite of the sad separation from her, yet occupied the largest share of her heart of hearts? Where were they now? Probably her parents were hiding away somewhere abroad, perhaps in America or Australia, banished for ever from England by her father's sin and fear of the penalty of the laws which he had broken. It was wretched to think of them in their self-imposed, compulsory exile. Her mother's words, "Farewell, my child: my heart would break at parting from you, were it not that what has happened has broken it already!" recurred to her, to fill her eyes with tears, and make her heart ache painfully.

Scarcely less painful was it to think of Bernard, and of his tender love, because that was followed by his shrinking back from her when she last saw him, and by his mother's upbraiding and harsh cry, "If you marry, you will take your husband a dowry of shame." And again, "Do you mean to say that there is anything between you, the daughter of a criminal who shall yet be brought to justice if there be any power in the arm of the law, and my son, my stainless, innocent child?" and then her excited denunciation:

"You bad girl! Not content with your father having ruined my boy by stealing all his money, you are mean enough and wicked enough to deliberately determine to cut away his one remaining chance of rising in the world! You would

ruin him ... you intend to cling to him as a limpet clings to a rock ... he won't be able to raise you, poor lad, but you will drag him down into the mire, which will close over his head!"

Well, she had given him up; goaded by those words, following his obvious shrinking from her, she had left him a message which, if he loved her still, would sting him to the quick, and, in any case, had sufficed to sever them for ever.

It was done now. She must not brood; that would do no good, it would only unfit her for her daily work. Perhaps in time the feelings which racked her heart when she thought of these things would grow blunt, the hand of Time would still the pain, and her Heavenly Father would send angels down to whisper to her words of peace and consolation.

CHAPTER IX.

ALICE SINCLAIR'S POT-BOILERS.

Yet gold is not all that doth golden seeme.

SPENSER.

"Good-morning! Some one has told me that you have a garret to let in this house." The speaker, a merry girl a little over twenty, stood in Mrs. Austin's doorway, smiling up at her, one hot day in summer.

"A garret, miss. Who for?" asked Mrs. Austin, smiling back at her visitor.

"Well, for me," answered the girl, quite gaily.

"For you, miss?" exclaimed Mrs. Austin, in surprise. "Why, you don't look like one who would sleep in a garret!"

"Well, no. I don't think I should like to sleep in a garret, unless it were a very pretty one. But I want to rent one, if I can find one with a good skylight. I want it for artistic work."

"Oh, indeed, miss! Are you an artist?"

There was respect, and even awe, in Mrs. Austin's tone. She had not imagined that such a merry-looking lady could be one of the elect.

"Well, yes, in a way I am; and I want to do something—paint some pictures, you know—in a quiet, respectable garret, where I shall not be interrupted. Is it true that you have one to let?"

"Yes, miss. I have one to let. I had an artist son once who used to use it. He's gone"—Mrs. Austin wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron—"and since then," she continued, "I let my young lady lodger have the use of it for her painting. Not that she uses it now,—poor dear!—still, it's supposed to be hers."

"If she does not use it, would she object to my having it?"

"I don't know, miss. I'll just run over to Boothby & Barton's shop, in the next street, and ask her. It is there she works."

"Tell her I shall be immensely obliged if she will give up the garret to me—that is, if it suits me—as I particularly want to have a garret with a good skylight, and I should like you to be my landlady." The young lady smiled again in Mrs. Austin's face.

"Well, miss, you are flattering!" Mrs. Austin caught up an old bonnet and proceeded to put it on. She looked doubtfully at her visitor as she did so. Would it be safe to ask her to sit down in the house until she returned? She thought so, and yet, "One never knows who strangers are," she said to herself. She, therefore, closed the door, locked it, and put the key in her pocket, saying, "Perhaps you'll step along with me, miss, then you'll know sooner if you can have it."

"Very well. And now," the girl continued, as they walked down the street, "I must tell you my name. I am Miss Sinclair."

"Oh, indeed! And I am Mrs. Austin."

"How much a week shall I have to pay you for your attic, if I take it?"

"Well, miss, there is not very much furniture in it."

"All the better. I shall require a good deal of room for my own things."

"Shall you require much attendance?"

"Oh, no, very little! But people will come to see me sometimes, and they will bring things and take them away—there will be a little wear and tear of your stair carpets."

"I see, miss. Would six shillings a week be too much for you to pay?"

"No, I can pay that." The girl's face brightened; she had feared the rent would be heavier. "And I can give you a month's pay in advance."

Mrs. Austin looked pleased. When they reached Messrs. Boothby & Barton's she went in alone to see Doris, and speedily returned, saying Miss Anderson had readily consented to the arrangement. She would remove her few things out of the garret that evening, and then it would be quite ready for Miss Sinclair.

"That is very kind of her. She must be very pleasant," said Miss Sinclair. "I have been wondering," she continued, "what work a lady who paints can find to do in a shop like this?"

Mrs. Austin told her, for Doris made no secret of her employment, and the stranger was greatly interested, and could easily understand the difficulty she had experienced in trying to sell her paintings. "The fact is, too many people

paint," Miss Sinclair said. "There are nearly as many amateur artists as there are people to look at their productions. Your lodger is quite right in taking a more practical line. I'm doing that sort of thing myself."

"Indeed, miss! What may you be doing?"

Miss Sinclair did not answer, but went upstairs to look at Mrs. Austin's garret when they got to the house, and, expressing herself as very well satisfied, engaged it at once, saying she would begin to use it on the morrow.

Accordingly, the following day, just after Doris had gone to her work, Miss Sinclair arrived early, together with a couple of boys bearing great packages, canvas frames, and millboards. The boys went to and fro a great many times, bringing pots of paint, sheets of gelatine, etc.

Mrs. Austin's eyes opened wide with astonishment at some of the things which were carried up her stairs that day, but she did not interfere. Her new lodger made the boys assist her to prepare the garret for her purposes and arrange her work. Then she sent them away, and remained alone in the attic for two or three hours. When at last she left it she locked the door, saying to Mrs. Austin, as she passed her on the stairs, "You may have another key for the garret, but please do not allow any one to enter it, or even look in. I know I can trust you." She put her hand in the widow's as she spoke.

Mrs. Austin rose to the occasion. "No one shall enter or look in, miss," she said. "You have paid for the garret for a month, and it is yours."

When Doris returned home in the evening, however, Mrs. Austin confided to her that she thought Miss Sinclair must be a funny sort of artist, if indeed she was one at all.

Doris felt a little curious, too, about the girl who painted with such odd materials. But as she came after Doris went to her work in the mornings, and had usually gone before Doris returned in the evenings, several weeks passed before their first meeting. As time went on Mrs. Austin told Doris tales of beautiful oil-paintings being carried out of the garret and downstairs by men who came for them.

"I only just catch a glimpse of them sometimes," she said, "and they fairly stagger me, they are so gorgeous. Mountains and lakes, cattle and running streams, pretty girls and laughing children, animals of all sorts and I don't know what besides! Miss Sinclair must be a popular artist."

Doris felt a little sceptical. A young girl like Miss Sinclair to do such great things all alone, and so quickly, too! It seemed very strange.

"I wonder if they are real paintings?" she said.

"You might almost think she is a magician, or a fairy godmother, or something or other," said Mrs. Austin. "Oh, yes, they are saleable goods, for she gets lots of money for them—I know she does. She told me she was getting on so well

that she could give me half a crown a week more for the garret, and would be glad to do that, for she liked it so much."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Doris kindly. "You deserve every penny, dear Mrs. Austin."

"Eh! dear, there's no one like you, Miss Anderson. I am well off to have two such lodgers—one that pays so much, and the other that upholds me with good words."

Another evening she said to Doris, "Do you know, miss, I heard a dealer saying to Miss Sinclair to-day, 'Well, I'll buy as many dozens of that picture as you can do for me.'"

"Dozens of that picture!" Doris opened her eyes widely. *Dozens?* What was this artist who painted dozens of paintings all alike?

"I'm afraid, miss," continued Mrs. Austin, reading her thoughts, "that although the paintings do seem really beautiful to me when I get a glimpse of them from the garret door, or pass them as they are being carried out of the house, they are not what may be called genuine works of art. Still, they're very pretty: and they bring in lots of money!—and what more do you want?"

What indeed? Dealers would not buy the painstaking efforts of amateur artists, and yet they flocked to a garret to purchase dozens of pictures, which, to put it mildly, could not be called genuine works of art. The public must buy these things, or the dealers would not want them.

"What a strange girl Miss Sinclair must be!" thought Doris, "to work away at that sort of thing all alone. And she must be clever, too. I wonder how she does it, and why she does it?"

Doris was soon to know. Her work grew slack at the ironmonger's shop. A rival firm in the same street had started selling tissue paper lamp-shades, which were prettier than those Doris made, and cheaper also. Messrs. Boothby & Barton tried to do it as cheaply but failed, although they reduced Doris's wages and bought commoner tissue paper for less money. Doris tried to improve her shades, or at least copy those in the rival shop, but could do neither well, and, disheartened and dissatisfied, her work grew irksome to her.

It was then extremely hot weather, and Doris, drooping in her little close workroom, grew pale and thin. She needed change of air and scene, rest and freedom from anxiety as to ways and means, and she could get none of these things. A presentiment that she would lose her employment weighed heavily upon her mind: and one night she returned home in such low spirits that Mrs. Austin discovered the whole state of affairs.

The good landlady endeavoured to comfort Doris as best she could, declaring that if she lost her work something better would turn up.

"And in any case, my dear," she said in her motherly way, "you must put

your trust in the Lord and He will provide." And when at last she left Doris it was with the words, "Don't lose heart. You have at least one friend in the world who, although only a poor woman, will share her last crust with you."

The next morning, when Miss Sinclair was working hard in her garret, with her door locked as usual, Mrs. Austin stood outside, knocking for admittance.

"If you please, miss, might I speak with you?" she asked through the key-hole.

The worker within uttered an impatient exclamation, but opened the door, saying, with a little sigh, "Well, come in. I thought it would come to this sooner or later."

[image]

"SHE UTTERED AN EXCLAMATION OF SURPRISE."

"I'm very sorry to disturb you, miss," began Mrs. Austin. Then she uttered an exclamation of surprise, as she looked round on the oil paintings propped up on the table, against the walls, on the old easel, and indeed everywhere about the room. Three or four were duplicates of the same picture, and the colours were very vivid and brilliant. Most of them were landscapes; but there were one or two ladies in ball-dresses, and a couple of gaily dressed lovers.

"What do you think of them?" asked Alice Sinclair, who stood by the easel, a slight, tired girl in a huge, paint-smearred apron that completely covered her dress, which fell open at the throat, revealing a pretty white neck.

"Well, I'm sure!" ejaculated the landlady. "I never saw such pictures! Have you done them, miss?"

"Yes, I have painted them—that is, I mean, I have coloured them. Do you like them, Mrs. Austin?"

The landlady thought of her son Silas, and the pretty sketches Doris had taken such pains over, and her answer came slowly, "They'd just suit some people. Now, my son Sam, who was never satisfied with his brother's paintings, would go wild over these."

"Is Mr. Sam an artist?"

"No, he's a cab-driver."

Alice began to laugh rather hysterically, and, turning playfully to Mrs. Austin, she pushed her gently into the Windsor armchair. "Sit there," she said, "and listen to me. I like you because you speak the truth! I'm a bit of a sham, you know, and so are my pictures, and you have found me out."

"I'm sure I beg pardon, miss."

"No, it is I who must beg your pardon for using your garret for such a purpose."

"The garret's no worse for it, miss. And there'll be lots and lots of people who will be that pleased with your pictures!"

"Yes, there are more Sams in the world than Silases!" said Alice, with a little sigh. "And I give people what they want for their money."

"Yes, of course, miss. When my boys were little 'uns they used to spend their pennies over humbugs. The money soon went, and so did the humbugs. But they were quite satisfied, having had their humbugs."

"Just so—and my pictures are like the humbugs, only they don't vanish, they stay. I'm a bit of a humbug myself," continued Alice ruefully. "I must say this, however," she added, "what I do I do from a good motive—"

"And the motive's everything," interposed the widow.

"Mine is to make money—and I succeed in making heaps."

"Oh, but, miss, surely to get money isn't a very high motive, if I may say so."

"But I did not tell you what I want money for. It is in order that I may be able to support and maintain one of the greatest of God's artists, whilst he works at his heaven-sent tasks. He would have been starved to death by now, or would have had to abandon his work, if it had not been for this!" She waved her hand towards the pictures. "I hate the work. I loathe it," she went on, with a little stamp of her foot, "and never more so than now—for, to tell you the truth, I am feeling ill and overworked—yet I am obliged to go on, as my artist has only half finished his picture. *I must go on.*"

"But not to kill yourself," interrupted Mrs. Austin, whose opinion of her lodger had gone through various stages since she entered the garret. At first she disapproved of Miss Sinclair's work, then greatly admired the noble, self-sacrificing spirit of the worker, and now the latter's ill looks appealed to her motherly heart.

"Oh, it does not matter about me," said Alice, with a little tired smile; "but I must not waste any more time in talking. A man will be here for these pictures in a couple of hours, and I haven't quite finished them off. Why did you come? I mean, what did you come for?"

"Bless me! I'm forgetting. I came to ask you if you could help poor dear Miss Anderson, who is in trouble. Her wages have been reduced, and she has reason to think she will lose her employment."

"I should think she is about tired of it," said Alice.

"She will have no means of livelihood if she loses her work," continued the landlady. "She is very poor, and gets very anxious about the future. She looks so thin and pale. I made so bold, miss, as to think that perhaps you would allow her

to assist you, or even that you would suggest to her that she could do so in time."

Alice smiled, and, taking the good woman's hands in both hers, cried:

"You dear old soul! Here am I, ill through overwork, and earning lots of money, and you ask me to help a girl who is ill from want of work and want of money! Of course I must help her. That belongs to the fitness of things. You must go now. I will stay a little longer than usual to-day, and when Miss Anderson comes in ask her, please, to step up to my garret."

"Oh, thank you, miss. Thank you very much."

"But remember," said Alice finally, "that I don't expect Miss Anderson will like the idea of joining me in my work. She will think that I am a sham and that my pictures are sham pictures, and will have nothing to do with me, but will leave me to make my pot-boilers all alone."

"She won't do that! Not if you tell her what you've told me," continued Mrs. Austin.

"Perhaps you had better tell her about that—I don't think I could tell the tale a second time," said Alice, with a little wan smile. "Tell her everything, dear Mrs. Austin, and then if she cares to come to me—"

"She will—she will," and so saying the good woman hurried downstairs.

That evening, as Alice knelt on her garret floor, sand-papering the edges of her pictures, in order that the paper on the boards might not be detected, there was a little knock at the garret door, and in answer to her "Come in" Doris entered.

The two girls looked at each other: one from her lowly position, flushed with exertion, the other standing just inside the doorway, with outstretched hand and a smile on her beautiful face.

"I have come," said Doris. "Will you let me help you?"

Alice rose from her knees, and took the outstretched hand in hers. "Do you know everything? Has Mrs. Austin told you everything?" she asked.

"Yes. I honour you. And the work that is good enough for you is good enough for me. Besides I—I have been dismissed from my employment. My lamp-shade work has failed, at last—" Doris broke down a little, remembering her despair, but clung to the proffered hands.

"Poor dear!" Alice kissed her, and from that moment they were friends.

CHAPTER X.

DORIS AND ALICE WORK TOGETHER.

He that is thy friend indeed,
He will help thee at thy need.
Old Proverb.

A very beautiful thing is true friendship. History and mythology give us many notable examples—for instance, David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, Orestes and Pylades, and so on. Man was not meant to live alone. All cannot marry, but no one need be without a friend. Our Lord Himself loved one disciple more than all the others, and made him a friend. "Friendship is love without wings," says a German proverb, and certainly it is often more stable and more enduring.

The friendship between Doris Anderson and Alice Sinclair began warmly, and gave promise of growing apace. They were both young and comparatively friendless, they had both seen much trouble, and both were compelled to work hard and continuously. In some respects alike, their characters were in others dissimilar: in fact, they were complementary to each other. Doris was gentle and good-tempered, affectionate and reserved, painstaking and conscientious: in fact, truly religious. Alice, on the other hand, was lively, almost boisterous, sometimes passionate, yet loving withal, and frank, clever and enterprising, but not very scrupulous, and though religious extremely reserved about it.

"I must tell you exactly how I came to make imitation oil-paintings," said Alice candidly, as she sat on the three-legged stool in her garret that first evening, with Doris in the Windsor chair beside her. "I was forced into it by necessity. I am an orphan, you must know, and I live with my dear elder brother Norman. He is an artist—a real gifted, talented artist: he can paint such glorious pictures! But they don't sell yet. The fact is, the British public is so foolish!" She tossed her curly head as she spoke. "It—it prefers these," waving her hand towards the artificial oil paintings. "And meantime," she continued, "meantime, Norman and I have come to the end of our resources. He doesn't know. He is such a dear old muddle-head about business matters that he thinks the ten pounds he gave me last Christmas is still unfinished!"

She laughed—it was characteristic of her, Doris found, to laugh when others would cry. "And I had been so puzzled," Alice continued, "as to how I should be able to find the means of subsistence for us both. For I had long known Norman hadn't another five-pound-note that he could put his hands upon. I looked in his purse often, when he was asleep, and in the secret drawer of his writing-table, which he uses as a cash-box, and which he fondly imagines no one can open except himself. Don't look so shocked! Motive is everything, and I don't pry about from curiosity, but simply to keep the dear old fellow alive and myself incidentally. Oh, where was I?" she paused for a moment in order to recover

breath, for she talked with great rapidity. "Oh, I know, I was saying we had come to the end of our resources. I had sold my watch and my hair—oh, yes, I didn't mind that. It is much less trouble now it is short, though I have to put it up in curlers at night, which makes it rather spiky to sleep upon. However, I am always so tired that I can sleep on anything. And, to cut a long story short, I sold everything I could lay my hands upon that Norman would not be likely to miss. Then I saw in a magazine, in the Answers to Correspondents, that very striking imitation oil paintings could be made in a certain way, which would sell well amongst ignorant, uncultured people, and, knowing what numbers of such folk there are, I determined to try to make them." She paused for breath.

Doris said nothing. Her blue eyes were fixed upon the other's face and she was reading it, and reading also between the lines of her story as she listened to her talk.

"I practised the work at home first," said Alice, "until I could do it properly, and had secured a few customers. But I was nearly found out, for that dear old stupid brother of mine must needs take it into his head that a very old engraving he wanted was in the attic—it wasn't, Doris! Pity me! I had turned it into one of my oil-paintings, and it had been sold for five shillings! Norman went to search in the attic, and was amazed to find lots of my things, pot-paint, and so on, about the place, which made him almost suspicious for a time. But, happily, his painting absorbed him again, and he forgot about the queer things in the attic. However, I thought it would be better to avoid such a risk in the future, and so went, one morning, to search for a garret which I could rent, and in which I should be able to work by day. When I had fixed upon this one, and it was settled that I should have it, I had to make some excuse to Norman for my long absences from home—don't ask me what I said; I mean to tell him the whole truth one day, and then, perhaps, he'll despise me! I cannot help that. It doesn't matter about me." She tossed her head, as if dismissing the idea at once. "What does matter," she continued very earnestly, "is, that I am maintaining my dear old Norman, while he is painting his beautiful picture. He will live, and his picture will be painted—and only I shall be in disgrace. I don't care!" but tears were in her eyes.

"Disgrace!" Doris leaned forward and caught hold of the small hands, hard and discoloured with work and paint. "Disgrace! I should think he will honour you, for your love and cleverness and self-sacrifice. He will say you have made him. He will thank God for such a sister."

But the other shook her head. "You don't know Norman," she said. "He would not mind dying, and he could give up finishing his picture sooner than endure the thought that I had 'gulled' that poor, stupid, credulous British Public—at least the uneducated section of it. He has a great reverence for truth and sincerity, and he hates and abhors a lie and a sham."

"Why do you do it, then?"

"I am forced," returned Alice plaintively. "We *must* live. And I want him to finish his picture, yes, and others. I hope he will have more than one in the Academy next year. I want him to be great—a great artist, recognised by all the world."

"How you must love him!" exclaimed Doris. "And what faith you have in his gift for painting!"

"I have no one except him," said Alice, simply. "He is father, mother, and brother to me. And he has a great gift. I believe he will win fame, and be one of the celebrities of the age—if I can keep him alive meanwhile with my pot-boilers. But now about yourself, will you help me?"

"Certainly. Only too gladly. I also have a most excellent reason for earning money."

"What is it? Have you any one depending upon you? A parent perhaps? Or a brother or sister?"

"No, I have no one like that. I stand alone!" Doris sighed deeply. When Alice was talking of her brother she had said to herself, "If I had only a relation to work for like that how happy I should be!"

"Poor Doris!—you will allow me to call you Doris, won't you?—you shall never stand alone any more. I will be your friend."

"Will you? But perhaps you wouldn't, if you knew all. I am under a cloud, and I cannot—cannot tell you everything."

Alice looked quickly and searchingly at her, as the unhappy words fell slowly, tremulously from her lips; and there was that in Doris's expression which reassured the artist's sister.

"Tell me nothing if you prefer," she said, "but come and work with me every day here. You shall be well paid, and you will have my friendship—"

"Which will be worth more than the pay!" cried Doris delightedly. "Oh, how glad I am! How very glad I am! I thank you a thousand times!" In the intensity of her gratitude she raised the other's hand to her lips.

Deeply touched, Alice threw her arms round her neck and kissed her. "Now we are friends," she said, "and chums! We shall get through lots of work together."

When they were a little calmer Doris explained the process, as she called it, by which her "pot-boilers" were made. She bought prints, both plain and coloured, and mounted them on stretched canvas frames, or on thick mill-boards, being very careful to exclude all air bubbles from between the board and the paper. Then she carefully rubbed the edges with sandpaper, in order to conceal the edge of paper; and afterwards the surface was covered with a solution of prepared gelatine, upon which the picture was easily coloured with paint, and made to look as much as possible like a genuine oil-painting. The coloured prints were

less trouble, because they had simply to be painted as they really were underneath the gelatine. The plain prints, on the other hand, required taste and judgment in the selection of colour and its arrangement.

Doris was able to do this last extremely well, as she knew how to paint much better than Alice, who had never attempted anything of the sort before she embarked on her present undertaking. For Alice had only watched her brother painting, and his method was widely different from hers. The dealers who bought her pictures paid £2 a dozen for them, and took them away to frame and sell for at least fifteen shillings or £1 each. That the sale of them was good was evidenced by the dealers' quick return to the garret with further orders.

As for the business arrangement between the girls, Alice began by giving Doris a weekly salary for assisting her; but as they prospered more and more, the arrangement was altered, and Doris received a third of all the profits they made—more she would not take, for, as she said, she brought no capital into the business, nor connection, as did Alice.

Weeks and months passed away, whilst the two who worked together in Mrs. Austin's garret became sincerely and devotedly attached to each other. Alice often talked freely to Doris of her beloved artist brother, and told how when one beautiful picture was finished, he began another, in the hope that he would have two or three ready for the Royal Academy the next year. But Doris never told her secret, for her dread lest Alice should turn from her if she knew of her father's crime was always sufficient to close her mouth about the past; and neither could she tell of the great aim of her life which was to make at least some little reparation to Bernard Cameron, as to do so would necessitate the sad disclosure of how he had been robbed. She was therefore very reticent, which sometimes chafed and irritated Alice, who was, as we have seen, so very frank.

But the quarrels of lovers are the renewal of love. And after every little coolness the two became more devoted to each other than ever.

CHAPTER XI. AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Have hope, though clouds environ now,
And gladness hides her face in scorn;
Put thou the shadow from thy brow,

No night but hath its morn.
SCHILLER.

It was a dull Sunday in November, cold, too, and damp and comfortless. Grey was the prevailing colour out-of-doors; the clouds were grey, so, too, were the leafless trees and bushes in Kew Gardens,—a dirty, brownish grey. And grey appeared the pale-faced Londoners, who sought in the nation's gardens for recreation and beauty.

In the Palm House certainly there was vivid, beautiful green in the fine trees and tropical plants collected there. It was very warm, too, and over the faces of those who entered tinges of colour spread and stayed, whilst smiles broke out, like sunshine illuminating all around. But it was too enervating to remain there long, and Bernard Cameron, who had wandered alone through the place, not excepting the high galleries, hurried out of the house at last, and breathed more freely when once more outside in the damp greyness of the gardens.

"It is a heated, unnatural, artificial life in there," he said to himself, "and does not appeal to me as does the beauty of the Temperate House, with its healthy green in trees and plants, and, at this time of the year, its masses of brightly coloured chrysanthemums."

He walked off quickly in the direction of the Temperate House, looking closely at all those he met or passed upon the way. "I never see Doris," he said to himself. "I never, never see her! She is not among the workers in London, so far as I can find out—though certainly the field is so vast that I have scarcely touched it in my search for her—neither is she in any pleasure resort. Sometimes I think she must have left London, and that she may have returned to Yorkshire. But I, having obtained a situation at a school at Richmond, must remain here for the present. Oh, Doris! Doris! Why did you leave me? Could you not have trusted my love for you? Why, oh, why did you send me that cruel message? No doubt mother had irritated you, yet I had given you nothing but love!" The greyness of the day seemed concentrated in his despairing face as he said this. He looked ten years older than he did on that bright, glad evening—his last happy day—when he proposed to Doris upon the hill at Askern Spa. His clothes were a little worn and untidy. He had grown thin, and there were sharp lines indicative of care and anxiety upon his face. His dark brown hair was longer, too, than he used to wear it, and he had all the appearance of one who had come down in the world after having had an unusually sharp tussle with fortune.

He had been wandering about for hours that Sunday, having a day's leave of absence from the school, and he felt tired and disheartened, for wherever he went he looked for Doris, and nowhere could he find her. He was, therefore, glad

when, upon entering the Temperate House, he was able to find a vacant seat, where he could rest undisturbed. It was most people's luncheon time, and there were not many in the House just then—the other seats were occupied, certainly, but they were a little distance off. Bernard felt the comparative seclusion very pleasant; he closed his eyes in order to rest them, although, indeed, the green around was very refreshing to look upon, and, once again, he fell into a reverie—a sad one now, for he was thinking of his mother, who was so hard and bitter about Doris and her parents. Terrible had been the scene when, in spite of Mrs. Cameron's earnest request that he should do so, Bernard refused to prosecute John Anderson.

"Then you will be as bad as he!" cried the incensed woman. "You will be compounding a felony," she went on wildly. "You will be breaking the law of the land."

"Nay, nay, mother. Come," he answered, "look at the matter reasonably. My prosecuting Mr. Anderson will not restore the money to me."

"But it will cause him to be punished," she exclaimed. "That is what we want—we want him to be made to suffer."

"I do not want him to surfer."

"You're so foolish, Bernard, so very foolish!" screamed Mrs. Cameron, scarcely knowing what she said. "It's that daughter of his you are thinking about. I know it is. You are perfectly infatuated with her."

"Will you please keep her out of this discussion?" asked Bernard.

But his mother was unreasonable, and would drag Doris in, time after time, telling him that she was a chip of the same block as John Anderson, saying, "Like father, like daughter," and declaring that she would never consent to his marrying Doris if there were not another woman in the kingdom.

Bernard was as patient as he could possibly be, but at length, finding it impossible to endure any more such talk, he caught up his hat and went out, with his mother's parting words ringing in his ears.

"Unless you prosecute that rogue, John Anderson, and give me your promise that you will never marry his daughter, my house shall be your home no longer: you shall not sleep another night under my roof!"

Hard words! stinging words! They seemed to ring in Bernard's ears again, as, sitting there on a seat in the central walk of the Temperate House in Kew Gardens under the shade of a fine Norfolk Island pine, he thought about them sadly. No wonder was it that when they were uttered they drove him immediately—and he thought for ever—from his mother's house. Since then he had come to London and obtained an ill-paid assistant mastership in a suburban school, and now he spent all his time searching for Doris, yet in vain. "I have lost her," he said to himself, "I have lost her in this huge metropolis. Yet I forbore to prosecute her

father for her sake: and for her sake I am an outcast from home, a mere usher in a school, earning my daily bread in the outskirts of this city!"

A great longing to see the girl he loved once more filled his whole heart; he longed to see her inexpressibly.

And just then she came. Talk about telepathy, about magnetism, about the hypnotism of will as people may, can anyone explain how it is that immediately before a longed-for person, or a longed-for letter arrives, that person or that letter is prominently present in the yearning mind? The same thing is seen intensified in answers to prayers. The one who prays longs unutterably for the boon he asks. It is given; and he thanks God and knows that he has received an answer to prayer. And it may also be that He Who alone knows the heart of man, is continually answering the unspoken prayers of those others who long unutterably for those things which yet they do not ask in words.

So Doris came, walking straight down the central path in the Temperate House, talking to Alice Sinclair, or rather listening, whilst Alice prattled to her about the trees and flowers.

"Look! See, there is a poor tired Londoner asleep," said the merry voice. "He has been somebody's darling once," she added in a lower tone, which Bernard could just hear.

"Hush! He will hear you. Why—oh!—" Doris opened her eyes wide, a look of apprehension came into them, and she reeled as if she would have fallen.

"Doris! Doris!" With a glad cry Bernard sprang to his feet, holding out his hands. "Doris!"

The girl recovered her presence of mind first. She touched Bernard's hands for a moment, and then, releasing them, observed to Alice, with forced calmness, "This gentleman is an old acquaintance of mine from Yorkshire."

"An acquaintance! Oh, Doris!" Bernard's voice expressed his chagrin, nay, more, his consternation. He had found Doris at last. But she was changed: she was no longer his Doris. He had slipped out of her life, and she had adapted herself to the altered circumstances. Glancing at her quickly, sharply, he perceived that she looked well, and even happy. The unwonted exercise and the fresh air of Kew had done her good and brought a pretty colour into her cheeks. She was with her dear friend Alice, and the delightfulness of mutual sympathy and love had caused her eyes to sparkle and her step to regain its buoyancy. Besides, the meeting with her lover, calmly though she appeared to take it, had brought back a tide of young life in her veins and imparted to her a sweet womanliness. Altogether she looked quite unlike the drooping, heartbroken Doris whom Bernard had last seen, and whom he had been picturing to himself as unchanged.

"Allow me to introduce you to my friend, Miss Sinclair," said Doris, disregarding his protest. "Mr. Cameron, Miss Sinclair," she said, adding, "Mr.

Cameron comes from Yorkshire.”

Alice bowed and held out her hand, in her usual good-natured way.

”We thought you were a poor, tired Londoner,” she remarked with a smile, ”and lo! you come from the North.”

”I live in Richmond now,” Bernard remarked quietly. ”I have a—position in a school there.”

”Indeed?” Alice was regarding him critically. He was a gentleman, handsome, too, and he looked good. But he was also rather shabby: there was no doubt about that; and she did not think Doris looked particularly pleased to see him. There was an expression of apprehension in her eyes which Alice had never seen there before.

”Do you live here?” Bernard asked Doris.

”No, no. We have only come over for the day.”

”Where are you living?”

Doris made no reply. She stopped the answer Alice was about to make by a beseeching look.

”We have not any time to spare for visitors,” she said, rather lamely.

”Will you allow me to walk with you a little way?” he asked. ”Or perhaps,” he hesitated, looking at Alice uneasily—”perhaps you will sit here with me a little while? There is—is—room for three on this seat.”

Alice good-naturedly came to his assistance. ”Doris,” she said, in her brisk, businesslike way, ”sit down and have a chat with your friend while I go over there to the chrysanthemum house to look at the flowers. I do so love chrysanthemums.”

”And so do I,” said Doris quickly. ”I will come too.”

”Doris!” Bernard’s exclamation was pitiful.

Alice felt for him, but concluding Doris did not wish to be left, she said briskly, ”We will all go there. Come on.”

Accordingly they all went to look at the chrysanthemums, amongst which they talked mere commonplaces for a little while.

Bernard was miserably disappointed. Doris was uncomfortable and frightened—the shadow of her father’s sin seemed to rest over her, filling her with shame. She did not know whether Bernard was prosecuting her father or not, and feared that he might say something which would betray the wretched secret to Alice. Even if he regretted the way he shrank from her when hearing of her father’s misappropriation of his money, or if he wished, as seemed evident, to renew their former relations, she could not and would not ruin his life, as his mother had said she would ruin it by marrying him. Poor he was, and shabby. Not a detail of this escaped her—his worn clothes and baggy trousers touched her deeply; but at least he bore an unblemished and honourable name. Was she to

smirch it? Was she to bring to him, as his mother had said, a dowry of shame? No, no. His mother's words were still ringing in her ears.

Stung beyond endurance by the remembrance, Doris raised her head and confronted Bernard proudly.

"Mr. Cameron," she said, "you must see—I mean, do you think that it is quite right to—accompany us—when—"

"When I am not wanted," he suggested, bitterly.

"I did not say that exactly. But—"

"You meant it." Bernard's eyes flashed. He, too, was stung now. "I will say 'Good-bye,'" he said, raising his hat.

The girls bowed, and, turning away, walked quietly out of the great house, leaving Bernard to return to his seat a crushed and miserable man.

He thought that it was all over between him and Doris. His mother had spoken the truth in saying the girl had declared she would never marry him. He need not have grieved his mother by refusing to prosecute her father: he need not have lost his home for that. Doris no longer loved him; she no longer loved him at all. He had lost his money, and he had lost Doris. That was the worst blow that had ever befallen him; nothing mattered now, nothing at all: he was in despair. It was far worse to have met Doris and found her altogether estranged from him than not to have met her at all.

"She wasn't like Doris," he said to himself, miserably. "She wasn't like my Doris at all. It might have been another girl; it might have been another girl altogether." The hot tears came into his eyes, and he buried his face in his hands that others might not see them.

"Oh, don't, don't be so unhappy!" said a voice in his ear, suddenly. "Didn't you notice that her manner was forced—unnatural?"

"Oh!" Bernard rose, and stood looking wonderingly into Alice Sinclair's face. It was full of kindness, and seemed to him, then, one of the sweetest faces he had ever seen.

"I have returned," she said in a low, confidential tone, "ostensibly to find a glove I dropped somewhere, but really in order to tell you our address. For I think—that is, I imagine, you might call to see her one of these days."

"Oh, can I? Do you think it is possible?"

"Certainly. This is a free country. Call by all means. Doris was awfully sad a few minutes after we left you. I am sure she was repenting her harshness to you. She was crying, actually crying. And you looked so miserable when we left you, so I thought I might try to help you both."

"You are good!" cried Bernard, taking one of her hands in his, and pressing it warmly.

The next minute he was alone, with an envelope in his hand, upon which

was written, "Miss Sinclair, c/o. Mrs. Austin, 3, Haverstock Road, King's Cross, London, N."

"How good she is!" Bernard thought. "And what a difference there is now!—I am no longer in despair." He looked round. What a change had come over everything! The huge conservatory in which he stood was a vast palace of beauty: birds—robins mostly—were hopping about and singing a few notes here and there. The visitors looked very happy, and through the glass he could see gardens that were dreams of loveliness. It was not a dull, grey world now: oh, no, but a very pleasant place, full of boundless possibilities!

CHAPTER XII. AN ARTIST'S WRATH.

A man may buy gold too dear.

Proverb.

"What does this mean, Alice? Is it here you work? What are you doing?"

"Oh, Norman! You here? Oh, dear!" Alice looked up in dismay from her work on the floor of the garret to the tall figure standing in the doorway, with head bent to prevent its being scalped by the low top. "You shouldn't have come, dear," she faltered.

"Shouldn't have come! I think it is time I did come! Great Scott! What are you murdering here?" He had reached the middle of the room with two strides, and was stooping over a brilliantly limned "oil-painting" Alice had just finished, looking at it with eyes blazing with wrath. "Did you do this?" he demanded. "Did you do this atrocious thing?"

"Yes—yes, Norman, I did," faltered his sister.

"Then I'm ashamed of you! Here, let me put it on the fire-back." Lifting the picture, he strode towards the fireplace with it.

"Don't, Norman! Don't! You must not! It—it is *sold!*"

"Sold!" cried the artist. "What do you mean? Can any one be so debased as to have bought a thing like that?" he demanded.

Alice began to laugh a little wildly. "Oh, Norman, how innocent you are!" she cried. "Don't you know that some one has said that the population of this is—"

land consists of men, women, and children, mostly fools? There are a great many more who admire and buy 'works of art' like mine than there are to appreciate such paintings as yours!"

"You little goose!" he exclaimed, impatiently. "Are you content to cater for simpletons, aye, and in the worst way possible, by pandering to their foolish, insensate tastes?"

Alice was silent a moment, and then she said, rather lamely, "It pays me to do so."

Her brother would not deign to notice that. He began to walk up and down the room, with long strides and a frown on his face. He was above the average height of men and broad in proportion, and his irregular features were redeemed from plainness by the beauty of his expression and his smile, which was by no means frequent.

Doris was painting at her easel on one side of the room, but the visitor did not appear to see her; his mind was absorbed with the distasteful idea of his sister demeaning herself to cater for the uneducated masses.

"It isn't as if you were trying to raise them," he burst out again. "You are not teaching them what beauty is—you are pandering to their faults! Leading them astray. Making them believe good is bad and bad is good! For, don't you know"—he stopped short by his sister's side, and laid a heavy hand on her shoulder—"don't you know that every time you make them admire a false thing—a thing that ought not to be admired—you rob them of the power to appreciate what is truly great and beautiful? It is a crime—a crime you are committing in the sight of God and man!" He gave her another frown, and began again to walk up and down quite savagely.

Alice looked wistfully towards Doris, but the latter was painting steadily on, with heightened colour and hands that trembled, in spite of the effort she was making to control herself.

Norman then began to examine the pictures standing about in the room in varying stages of completion.

"Ha! I see!" he said, scoffingly. "The way you get your drawings is to buy prints, and stick them on mill-boards. Yes, and then you smear them over with gelatine and colour them with this wretched paint. How is it you are not found out?" he continued, looking sharply at her, and then turning to examine the edges of one of the pictures. "Ha! I see! Sandpaper! So you rub the edges smooth with that! You little cheat! You defraud your purchasers! I really—you must give up this work at once. Do you hear? You must give it up forthwith—*immediately!*"

"I cannot, Norman!"

"Why not?"

"It pays so well. Sometimes we get eight or nine pounds a week by it."

"Pays well! Eight or nine pounds a week!" There was intense scorn in the artist's tones. "So, for money—mere money—you will sell your soul!"

"Nonsense! We must live. I pay for food—your food and mine—and our clothes, yes, and rent, gas, coal, and the servant's wages, with this money."

He stared at her. "I gave you money for those things," he said. "I'm sure I gave you ten pounds not so very long since."

"Last Christmas! Nearly twelve months ago! You are so impracticable, Norman. That ten pounds was used in a few days, to pay bills that were owing."

"You never asked me for more."

"Could you have given it me if I had?"

A dusky red stole over the artist's face. He became conscious of the presence of a stranger. "This lady must pardon us," he said to his sister, with a glance at Doris, "for speaking of our private affairs before her."

"Oh, she does not mind, I'm sure," said Alice. "May I introduce my brother to you, Doris?"

Doris bowed coldly. She went on with her painting, begging them not to mind her being there. "It is most important that the work should be finished to-night," she said, "and I must work the harder because Alice is being hindered."

"I fear I am the cause of that," rejoined the artist, quite meekly. "But I have had some difficulty in finding the place where my sister works, and now that I am here I must say what I think."

Doris made no rejoinder, and, having cast an admiring glance at her winsome face and pretty figure, he turned to Alice again, saying, "No consideration of mere money should prevent your instantly ceasing this disgraceful work."

Alice began to pout. "It's all very fine talking like that, Norman," she said, "but how do you propose to keep us if—I abandon this?" She looked from him to her work.

"How did we live before? I suppose we can exist in the same way."

"We cannot! I have nothing more to sell, or—pawn."

"If only my paintings would sell!" He began to walk up and down again. He was thinking now, with huge disgust, that he had been living for many months upon the proceeds of sham oil-paintings. It was a bitter thought. "Better to have died," he muttered, "than to have lived so!" Aloud he said, "But I must insist upon your giving up this work. It is wicked, positively wicked work! You must not do it."

"I cannot give it up. I must do it."

"You must not! You shall not! I really— Upon my word, if you do such things you shall not live with me!" He was in great anger now, the veins upon his temples stood out like cords; he could scarcely refrain from rending into pieces the hateful "frauds" upon which he was looking.

A cry of pain escaped from his sister's lips. She was pale as death. Her brother had never been angry with her before. Their love for each other had been ideal.

Then Doris spoke, turning from her easel and looking up at the artist with flashing eyes.

"There are vipers," she said, "which sting the hands that feed them. Alice, dear," she added, with a complete change of tone and manner, "come to me." She held out her arms, and Alice flew into them, clinging to her and crying as if her heart would break. "Go!" said Doris to the artist, pointing to the door. "Go, and live alone with your works of art. You cannot recognise or appreciate the self-denial and love which is in the heart of one of the noblest sisters in the world!"

[image]

"GO! YOU CANNOT APPRECIATE SELF-DENIAL AND LOVE."

Norman Sinclair went out of the room as meekly as a lamb, all his wrath leaving him as he did so. Indeed, to tell the truth, he felt very small and despicable, as he mentally looked at himself with Doris Anderson's eyes, and saw a man, who had been fed for many months by the hard, if mistaken, toil of his young sister, threatening her with the loss of her home in his house if she would not abandon her only source of income.

CHAPTER XIII. CONSCIENCE MONEY.

No one should act so as to take advantage of the ignorance of his neighbours.—CICERO.

After Norman Sinclair went away Doris comforted Alice as well as she could, and then both girls set to work to finish the pictures which a dealer would send for that evening. Alice, however, performed her part half-heartedly. Through her ears were still ringing her brother's fierce denunciation of her employment. It was a crime; she was a cheat, defrauding the ignorant, making them believe bad was good and good was bad; for money she was selling her soul. Oh, it was

terrible to remember! Her tears fell down and smeared the brilliant greens and yellows, blues and reds, upon her mill-boards.

Doris, seeing what was going on, felt extremely uncomfortable. She imagined that Alice was fretting because her brother had practically turned her out of his house, and her wrath against him increased. But for some time she could not stop working in order to give utterance to her feelings; the men would come soon for the pictures which must be ready for them, and they had to be finished off, or the way they were made would be detected. So the work went on until evening came, and with it the men from the dealers, who packed up the sham oil-paintings and carried them off.

Mrs. Austin had been upstairs more than once, to see if her young ladies, as she called them, were ready for tea—which, in those days they usually took together in the sitting-room before Alice went home—and the landlady’s impertinence caused them both to leave the garret at length and descend to the sitting-room.

”Now, darling, you shall have some tea,” said Doris, affectionately. ”Sit there in the armchair. I will bring you a cup.”

She did so, and then, pouring out one for herself, sat down on the stiff horse-hair sofa, and began to make plans for the future.

”You and I, Alice,” she said, ”shall always live together.”

”Yes,” said Alice, slowly, and with a little hesitation, which the other did not appear to notice.

”Your brother has, by his own act and deed”—that sounded legal and therefore businesslike, so Doris repeated it—”by his own act and deed, forfeited his claim to you. Instead of honouring you, as I honour you, darling”—she caught up Alice’s hand and kissed it—”for your bravery and cleverness and industry, he has actually dared to blame you in most unwarrantable, most uncalled-for language, and in the presence of a third person—which makes his conduct far more heinous—”

”Isn’t that a little strong?” interposed Alice. ”Doris, I love you for your love, but you must remember he is my brother. He has a right to say what he likes to me, for I am his sister, and—and I cannot bear even you to blame him.”

”I beg to apologise!” said Doris, instantly. ”It isn’t right of me to speak against him to you. And, now I think of it, I was wrong in ordering him out of our—your—garret—”

”Well, yes, dear, a little—”

”I was wrong,” said Doris, ”and perhaps one day I will apologise. But however wrong I was, that does not make him right. He has behaved abominably.”

”Now, there you are again! You must not blame him to me, dear.”

”I beg your pardon!” Then Doris was silent a minute or two. It was hard to

be pulled up at every point. Still, Alice was right, therefore her sense of justice caused her to refrain from taking offence. "But, Alice," she said, at length, "the fact remains, that he will not consent for you to remain in his house if you carry on your work here."

"He is an autocrat!" Alice burst out. "A martinet! A tyrant! I must carry on my work. I must. I have nothing else to sell. I have nothing else to do. Either I must continue what I am doing, or we must starve, or go into the workhouse. We cannot live on air." She paused, breathless. It was like her fervent, inconsequent way of reasoning to speak so strongly against her brother, whom she had just been chiding Doris for blaming. However, we are all apt to say things about our relations which we would not tolerate from other people. It is like blaming ourselves, or hearing others blame us. A man may call himself most foolish, yet if any one else were to say so it would be unpardonable.

Doris was silent, and in that she showed wisdom. Left to herself, Alice would say all that Doris had been about to utter, and would act upon it as the latter wished her to do.

"I cannot return to his house," said Alice, with a little sob. "He has indeed turned me out; for I cannot give up my means of livelihood. Who will give me an income if I throw away the one I have? No one. No one. The world is a world of adamant to those who have no coin."

"It is indeed!" said Doris, tears filling her eyes as she thought of her own struggles.

"But where shall I live?" continued Alice. "Will you let me live with you, Doris?"

"Yes, darling, of course I will! I love you, darling, as you know; and we will live together, and be like sisters—only—only perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?"

"Perhaps you wouldn't let me if you knew what a cloud of disgrace hangs over me—"

Doris broke down weeping. Was that cruel disgrace always to balk her every time she saw a prospect of happiness?

"Disgrace! How you talk! It is I who am in disgrace." Alice flung her arms round her friend, and their tears mingled as they wept together.

Mrs. Austin, coming in to see if they wanted any more tea, was quite affected by the sight and beat a hasty retreat into the kitchen. "It all comes of that horrid Mr. Sinclair forcing his way up to their garret," she said to herself, mentally determining to admit no more visitors to her young ladies without first acquainting them with their names.

When they were calmer the two girls discussed the feasibility of their living together, as well as working together, with the result that they agreed to try the

plan. Accordingly, when night came, they withdrew to Doris's room, and lay down side by side in Doris's bed, which happened to be a rather large one.

Tired out, Doris slept so heavily that she did not hear her more wakeful companion's sighs and sobs, nor did she see her slip out of bed in the early morning, dress hurriedly, and then go downstairs.

When at last Doris awoke, Mrs. Austin was standing by her side, looking very grave and with a letter in her hand.

"What is the matter?" asked Doris, sleepily. "Have I overslept? Oh!" She looked round for Alice. "Where is Miss Sinclair?" she asked.

"Gone!" cried Mrs. Austin, tragically.

"Gone? When? Where?" cried Doris, in alarm.

"I don't know, miss. She went before I came down. When I came down this morning I could see that some one had gone out at the front door, for only the French latch was down. And there was this letter for you on the sitting-room table, and Miss Sinclair's boots had been taken from the kitchen, so I felt sure she must have gone."

"You should have awoke me at once."

"I came upstairs to do so, miss, but you were in such a beautiful sleep, I really hadn't the heart to disturb you. But now it is getting late, and I have brought your hot water."

Doris opened the note when Mrs. Austin had left the room. It was short and to the point.

"DORIS DARLING,—

"You are *sweet* to want me to live with you, and I should love it. But I have been thinking how kind Norman used to be when I had the toothache, and that he gave me such a nice copy of Tennyson on my last birthday,—and—the fact is, no one can make his coffee as he likes it in the morning but me—so I must go and look after him. Poor old Norman! He has no one else to look after his little comforts. And he will starve, *absolutely starve* if left to himself. I shall always remember, darling, how you wanted me to live with you.

"Yours lovingly, "ALICE.

"P.S.—I make you a present of the business. Perhaps when we are starving, you will fling us a crust. Norman can't object to my receiving charity, although he will not allow me to do the only work I am fit for.

"A.S."

Doris sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes. What a child Alice was, after all! And how impracticable and unbusinesslike! The head of the firm, she had given up her position in favour of her junior partner without demanding any compensation! "However, she knew she could trust me," said Doris to herself. "I shall make her take half, or at least a third, of the proceeds. But it will be hard on me to have to do all the work alone, and I shall miss my dear partner. I hope she will come to see me sometimes."

After breakfast Doris went to the garret, and all day she worked hard, scarcely leaving off to eat or rest for a few minutes. A dealer came with a large order, and, after expressing his surprise at finding her alone, advised her to engage a boy or two to do the rough work and to assist her generally. In the evening she was almost too weary to eat her supper, and when Mrs. Austin was lamenting the fact, she told her what the dealer had suggested.

"Well, now, how that does fit in, to be sure!" said the landlady. "It was only this afternoon that my nephew Sandy came here, to tell me that he and another nice lad, his friend, had lost their situations through Messrs. Boothby & Barton's bankruptcy. They would be rare and glad to work for you till such time as they could get another place."

"I think I should be very glad to have them," said Doris, after a little consideration. "Your nephew did me a kindness about the lamp-shades, and I shall be pleased to offer him work now that he is out of a place."

So the next day the two boys came up to the garret, and set to work manfully to assist the young lady. They could soon do most of the work really better than she could herself, and she found it a great relief to confine her energies to the mere colouring. It was, however, not nearly so pleasant for her working with the two lads as it had been with her dear friend Alice, whom she missed at every turn.

On the Wednesday morning she received a little note from Alice, saying that at present she was forbidden to go to Mrs. Austin's, but hoped later on to be able to do so. "My brother is angry yet about the 'oil-paintings,'" wrote Alice, "but he is very glad to have me back; and, by the way, Doris, he would give worlds, if he had them, to make you sit for a picture of Rosalind in her character of Ganymede in *As You Like It*. Don't you think you could give him that gratification, dear? But I know these are early days to speak of such a kindness as that. And you would never have the time, even if you could forgive poor, blundering old Norman."

Then she referred to the letter Doris had sent her, in which the former stated that half the money earned would still be set aside for Alice. "It is lovely

of you to say that about the money, dear," wrote Alice; "but Norman declares I am not to touch what he is pleased to call ill-gotten gains. Lest I should do so, he declares he will not eat anything I buy, and in consequence he is living upon oatmeal porridge and lentil soup! Oh, and the oatmeal is nearly finished! I have been thinking that if you would kindly send a five-pound-note now and then, anonymously, to him—mind, to him, not to me—and just put inside the envelope that it is 'Conscience Money'—that would be quite true, you know; for if you had not a conscience you would keep what I have thrust into your hands—he might use it, thinking it was the repayment of some old debt. For he has lent lots of money, in the old days, to people who have never let him have it back again. I hope you can see your way, as the dealers say, to do this. We must live, you know. It is so miserable to starve, and it's worse for the housekeeper, as the fault seems to be hers."

"I don't like complying with her request," thought Doris. "Her brother is an honest man, a most awkwardly honest man, and it is a shame to deceive him. Yet the money is Alice's. It is a point of conscience with me, as she says, to give it her. But I wish it could be done in some other way. It seems such a shame to make him eat food which his very soul would revolt from, if he knew everything."

She thought over the matter as she was working, and the more she thought about it the less she liked it. But when a dealer came in that afternoon, and paid her ten pounds that was owing to the firm, in two five-pound notes, she immediately posted one of them to Norman Sinclair, Esq., at his address in Hampstead, writing inside the envelope the words "Conscience Money."

That done, she felt more comfortable about Alice, for at least she would not starve when that money arrived. Doris still missed Alice, however, exceedingly; and though turning to her painting with fresh energy, alas! she felt for it more distaste than ever. For Doris could not forget—it was impossible for her to forget—that an honest man had called her work wicked, and declared that it was a crime in the sight of God and man. If that were true, and it was a crime, then she was a criminal just as her father was! Hereditary? Yes, the criminality must be hereditary. In her thoughts she had been hard upon her father. Was she any better herself?

CHAPTER XIV.

BERNARD CAMERON VISITS DORIS.

Patience and abnegation of self and devotion to others,
This was the lesson a life of trial and sorrow had taught her.
LONGFELLOW.

It was on Saturday afternoon that Bernard Cameron called. Doris had been through a particularly trying morning. It began with a letter from Alice, evidently written at her brother's instigation, advising her to give up the business of making sham oil-paintings and thus defrauding the public. "Better to be poor and honest and honourable," wrote Alice, virtuously. Doris read between the lines that her brother wished her to say these words, and that annoyed her extremely.

"What business is it of his?" she said to herself, resenting his interference.

When she went upstairs to the garret, to begin work for the day, she accidentally overheard Sandy saying to his fellow-worker, "Ain't folks simple to buy these for genuine oil-paintings? I know a chap who gave three pounds for a pair of them at a shop. And, says he, them's real oil-paintings. As proud as a peacock he was!"

"He shouldn't have been so green," said the other youth.

"The Government is down on folks who sell margarine for butter; it can't be done now-a-days, but there don't seem to be no penalty for this sort of thing!" He tapped one of the pictures meaningly.

Doris entered, and the conversation ceased; but all the morning her assistants' words and Alice's letter rankled in her mind. No doubt the business was not by any means a high-class one, but no one would buy her genuine paintings, she therefore told herself she was driven to make what she could sell: and now she had quite a nice little sum already in hand, to form the nucleus of what she would require to pay the debt to Bernard Cameron.

However, it was rather too much for her, when, as she was snatching a hasty lunch in the little sitting-room, she overheard Sam Austin saying to his mother in the kitchen, "Mother, I used to think them pictures Miss Anderson made so fast were really beautiful, and my wife went and bought one at a shop, but when the Vicar was in our house the other day, and she was showing it to him, he says, 'My good woman, that's no more a work of art than that stocking you are knitting, and it isn't half so useful! Don't you waste your money over such stuff!' says he. I felt so ashamed-like, mother, that our young lady's work should be so spoken of. And the Vicar is a gentleman who knows what's what."

"Hush, Sam! Miss Anderson is in the room, and she might hear. I am sure she thinks they are all right and worth the money, or she would not do them."

When the good landlady entered the room, a few minutes afterwards, she

was dismayed to find the door ajar, and not closed, as she had imagined. This caused her to turn very red. But Doris did not refer to what she had overheard, for in truth she did not know what to say. Later she might refund Mrs. Sam her money, and have that off her conscience; but what about all the other people who had purchased her pictures? She felt sick at heart, and quite unable to do her work as usual. However, it had to be done, and she went upstairs slowly and heavily. "What shall I do?" she thought. "I cannot earn my living unless I do it in this way, which is not honest—I see that now; at first I thought it was, but I know Alice's brother is quite right. I'm a cheat and a fraud, a humbug and a thief; for I take money out of people's pockets, and make them no adequate return for it, although I make them think I do."

And then Bernard called. He was dressed in his worn clothes, and looked tired and harassed, but "every inch a gentleman," as Mrs. Austin said when she gave his name to Doris, asking if she would come downstairs to see him.

At first Doris thought she ought to send word that she was engaged. But she could not do it. She was so miserable and so hopeless; and the very thought of Bernard's presence there in the house caused hope and joy to spring up in her heart, and was like new life to her. She, therefore, took off her painting-apron, washed her hands, and went down to the sitting-room.

"Doris"—Bernard spoke very quietly, holding out his hand exactly as any other visitor might have done—"Doris, I have called to see you. It is very kind of you to come down. I—I will not detain you long."

"It is kind of you to call," said Doris, rather lamely, noticing all at once how thin and worn he looked, "and I haven't much time to spare, but I could not—could not refuse." Her voice trembled and broke; tears filled her eyes. It was hard, very hard to have to speak thus to one she still loved dearly.

"Oh, Doris," he cried, hope springing up in his heart by leaps and bounds at the sight of her downcast face, "Doris, darling, I cannot bear to see you looking so sad, and to know that you are alone here except for your friend—"

"She has left me!" interrupted Doris, crying now. "I am quite alone."

"Left you! You are alone! Oh, my darling!" He put his arms round her slim waist. "You are not alone! You need never be alone again, for *I* am here. Nay, don't send me away, dearest," he pleaded; "hear me, I beg. I love you, Doris. I love you with all my heart. The loss of my money—ah! forgive my mentioning it—it is as nothing to the grief of losing you. Ah, you don't know what I have suffered! Without you this world is to me a howling wilderness." He drew her to him. "Darling," he continued, low in her ear, "*never* send me away again."

The girl was powerfully tempted to surrender her determination and submit her weaker will to his stronger one. Her inclination, her heart was on his side; but what she thought was duty, and her sense of right, held her frail bark

to its moorings. She therefore drew herself away, and with a little gesture waved him back, and then, to make her position more secure, she feigned anger.

"Don't! Don't!" she exclaimed sharply. "You go too fast, Mr. Cameron, much too fast! What we might have been to each other in happier times, events have rendered impossible now. You know they have--"

"No, no, not impossible!" he cried.

"I say impossible," insisted Doris. "My father appropriated your fortune. He stole from you your birthright."

"What of that? I forget it. I have forgotten it."

"You think so now. In your magnanimity you choose to think so; but supposing I were to trust to that, and we were to marry, do you think you could live with me day by day, in poverty, remember—for we should be very poor—without remembering that my father—mine—stole from you all the money your father left you?"

"I shouldn't think of it, or, if I did, I would say to myself that you have, by giving me your hand"—he took hers in his as he spoke—"and promising to be my wife," he added, "righted the wrong, paid the debt, made me rich indeed with what is worth far more than money, yes, infinitely more." Raising her hand to his lips, he kissed it.

"Don't!" She drew her hand away. "And there is another side to the question," she continued. "Could I be happy seeing you poor, and knowing what was the cause of it? Don't you think that daily, hourly, I should realise with pain that my father's crime was blighting your life?"

"Nonsense! Mine would be a poor life indeed, if the loss of money—mere money—could blight it!"

"It has a very stupefying effect on one to have no money," said Doris, with a little sigh, thinking of her past experience. "Don't you know the song—

Dollars and dimes! Dollars and dimes!
To be without cash is the worst of crimes!

It gets one into disgrace, anyway," she added.

"Poor child! I am afraid you have been hard up since--"

"Well," she interrupted, "it takes the courage out of one to have no money. You know that verse—

Whereunto is money good?
Who has it not wants hardihood;
Who has it has much trouble and care,
Who does not have it has despair."

"I shall have despair if I have not you!" he declared, moodily.

"No, you will not. You will find some one else to love—some one who has heaps and heaps of money. Then you will marry—will marry her." Doris's voice shook a little, but she waved him back when he would have drawn her to him again. "You will marry a girl with lots of money," she continued, more firmly now. "That is what your mother wants you to do. It is your one chance, she says, of retrieving your fortune."

"Did she say that to you, Doris?" His voice was hoarse, he looked very pale.

"She did."

"And that caused you to send me that dreadful message?" he asked.

"What message?"

"That you would never, *never* marry me."

"Yes."

"Ah! I understand it now." He passed his hand wearily across his brow—"I understand. But I can't help it, and she is my mother!" Again he was silent, struggling to control himself. "Do you know," he said, "she turned me out of my home?"

"She did? Why?"

"Because I would not prosecute your father."

"Ah! You have not attempted to prosecute him?"

"Doris! Did you think that I *could*?"

"Forgive me," she said. "But after your shrinking from me, as you did, when you heard what my father had done—"

"Shrinking from you! Shrinking! Surely you did not think that I could ever have done that?"

"But you did, Bernard. You did. It was that which broke my heart."

"My darling, you must be mistaken!"

"Indeed I am not. You shrank away from me. And then, your mother came and said those dreadful things—so I gave you up entirely, and I said that I would never marry you."

"But now that you know that I never intentionally shrank from you—and indeed I think that it must have been your fancy, darling—surely you will unsay those cruel words?"

Doris looked at him, at the love in his eyes, and his earnest face as he pleaded thus, and she softened considerably.

"I'll just tell you how it is, Bernard," she said, and now her tone was kinder, and there was a light in her blue eyes corresponding with the glow in his. "I'll just tell you how it is, Bernard, exactly. I feel that, because my father robbed you, I have had a share in the crime, and so I am going to work hard, in order to make

you some little reparation—though of course I can never repay you all the money. Do you understand?” and she looked up earnestly into his face.

”To make some little reparation? To repay money? What do you mean?”

”Twenty-five thousand pounds is so large a sum!” she said. ”I can only repay a small part of it. But I’m doing my best; I’m putting by four or five pounds a week, and I have already saved forty pounds. You can have that forty pounds now if you like. It’s yours.”

”Forty pounds! My dear Doris, what are you talking about?”

”I’m going to earn as much money as I possibly can for you, Bernard,” said the girl firmly, ”in order to repay you at least some of the money my father took from you.”

”You earn money for me? Your little hands”—he looked down admiringly on them—”your little hands earn money for me?”

”Of course I must. It is my bounden duty. And I’m getting on splendidly as regards money: only they say, do you know, Bernard,” and her tones were troubled, ”they say that I ought not to earn it in the way I do. However,” she broke off, and began again, ”I mean to earn you a lot of money, that you may have part at least of that which is your very own.”

”The idea!” he exclaimed; ”the very idea of your earning money with these hands, these little hands,” he repeated, ”for me! Why, if only you would give me your hand in marriage, I should be more than repaid for all and everything?” He spoke eagerly.

”Bernard, I shall not marry you until I have done all that I possibly can to pay the debt.”

In vain the young man protested, pleaded, and expostulated. Doris was firm: the utmost that she would concede was that he might visit her occasionally and see how she was getting on.

When that matter was quite settled she gave him some tea, and then explained to him about her work, which he was astonished to find so remunerative. He did not think it wrong of her to make those poor imitation oil-paintings. He said that people could not expect to obtain real oil-paintings for such small sums.

”You do not call them oil-paintings,” he said, ”you call them pictures; and if people think them oil-paintings that is their fault: it is because they are ignorant that they make the mistake. You are not answerable for that. The case of margarine and butter is different. It was because margarine used to be called butter that it was made illegal to sell it as such. Margarine is still sold, but it is called margarine.”

”How very sensible you are, Bernard!” said Doris. ”I wish—”

”What do you wish?” he asked earnestly, for he longed to serve her.

”I wish you would convince the artist, my friend Alice’s brother, that he is

wrong in thinking it so wicked to make those pictures and sell them."

"Does it matter what he thinks?" asked Bernard, full of a new alarm. "Is the man anything to you, Doris?"

"Anything to me? No, I have only seen him once."

"Yet you would like to stand high in his opinion?"

"Well, yes. There is something grand—heroic, about him. He would die for the truth. The man is made of the sort of stuff of which the old martyrs used to be made." Doris spoke with great enthusiasm.

Bernard's alarm increased by leaps and bounds. "Oh, Doris, darling, don't have anything to do with him!" he exclaimed passionately.

"Why not?" She looked startled. The flush which had risen to her face as she spoke so earnestly of Sinclair deepened into a very warm colour.

"Because I do not wish you to know him."

"Why not?" she repeated.

"My instinct tells me that he has impressed you strongly and that you think a great deal of him, and if you get to care for him, this hero whom you admire so much, you won't care for your poor Bernard any more!" He ended in doleful tones.

"You foolish boy!" Doris cried, with complete change of voice. "You know very well that although our engagement has been broken off and I have vowed that I will never, never marry you—that is, unless some of the debt is paid—I shall never love anybody in all the world as I love you," she ended with a little sob, and buried her face in her hands, lest he should see the tears which filled her eyes.

It was impossible for him to refrain from kissing her then; but she only suffered him to touch her hands, and then, starting up, waved him aside.

"No, no! You must not," she exclaimed. "I shall not go back on my word. I shall stick to my purpose. You may come to see me sometimes if you like, but I shall promise nothing."

He looked despairingly at her as she stood there, tall, erect, a very queen of beauty, with brilliantly coloured cheeks, shining blue eyes, and golden hair like an aureole above her small beautifully shaped head.

"Oh, my dear, you cannot earn money for me!" he cried; "I would never touch it. Do dismiss the idea from your mind! What I want is *you*, to be my own darling wife. We might be ever so happy—even if we are poor."

"I don't want you to be poor, Bernard," she rejoined. "If you are it will be my father who has made you so, and I could not endure to see it. Now, don't let us waste time in arguing about that again. I shall continue my work here: for you have made it plain to me that it is all right. You may come to see me occasionally, as I said—"

"What do you think if I were to throw up my tutorship—it is badly paid—

and come daily to assist you with your work? It would be awfully jolly working together, and I could see that your lads did their share, instead of wasting their time in chattering about what they do not understand."

But Doris would not hear of that arrangement being made. The work might do for her, but she revolted mentally from the idea of her Bernard pursuing a calling which the artist had declared to be so utterly and radically wrong: and it was like her inconsequent, girlish way of reasoning not to see that what was right for one was right for the other, and *vice versa*.

However, when Bernard went away, she felt ever so much happier than she did when he arrived. He loved her and she loved him: that was the chief thing; all else was of secondary consideration. He approved of, and saw no harm in her occupation—could he by any possibility see any harm in anything that she did?—and that was healing balm to her hurt, despondent feelings.

"He is very nice and sensible, is Bernard," she said to herself, last thing that night, as she laid her head on her pillow; "he is very different from poor Alice's despotical brother. Now, I like a man I can convince even against his will—and Bernard does love me in spite of everything." She fell asleep thinking about him, and dreamt that they were again in the Temperate House, looking at the chrysanthemums, and she was not trying to send him away as she did before, but, on the contrary, her hand rested within his arm, which held it tightly.

CHAPTER XV. ANOTHER VISITOR FOR DORIS.

Shun evil, follow good, hold sway
Over thyself. This is the way.
SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

After Bernard's visit and his approval of her work, Doris went on with it doggedly, disregarding all doubts that arose, and justifying her doings to herself by thinking of Bernard's opinion of the rightfulness of her occupation—exactly as men and women have sheltered themselves behind the views of others ever since the day when Adam screened himself behind his wife's, and she behind the serpent's.

The business prospered, so that the girl's little store of money increased, and she began to anticipate a not very distant time when there would be one hundred pounds saved wherewith to make her first payment to Bernard. She determined to begin by paying him one hundred pounds at once, and wondered if the time would ever come when she would have so much as one thousand pounds to hand over to him. The girl had a very brave spirit, but it was often daunted by the herculean task she had set herself.

One day, when she was very busy with her assistants in the garret, Mrs. Austin knocked at the door and asked her to be so good as to come outside to speak to her.

"That gentleman's come again," she said. "He who frightened away Miss Sinclair. It's you he's after now, I'm thinking. But oh, Miss Anderson, don't see him! He's got an awful look on his face, as if we kept a gambling-place at least! Don't see him! For, oh, my dear, you must live! What is to become of you if you give up such a good business as you have got? Remember what a hard world this is for those who have no money, and how difficult you found it to get dealers even to look at those genuine little paintings you took so much trouble over!"

"Mr. Sinclair might have saved himself the trouble, if he has come to try to persuade me to give up the business," said Doris, rather hotly. "I wonder what business it is of his, by the bye! No, I will not see him."

"Ah, forgive me, I followed your landlady upstairs! I beg a thousand pardons for the intrusion." The artist stood behind Mrs. Austin, towering above her. He spoke very humbly, but there was an air of determination, if not of censure, about him which displeased Doris.

"I am engaged," she said, shortly. "I was just sending you word that I could not see you."

"But I bring you a message from my sister," he observed, after a moment's pause. "Surely you will receive it?"

He looked at her as he spoke, and again Doris felt the dominating power of his strong will. She was vexed with herself for yielding, and yet could scarcely avoid it. Slowly and with reluctance the words fell from her lips, "I cannot hear it here," as she looked significantly at her assistants, who, busy though they appeared to be, were listening to what was being said; "we will go downstairs."

In the room below they stood and looked at each other—he tall, broad-shouldered, vigorous; she slim and slight, but beautiful as a dream. The girl did not ask him to be seated, nor did she look at the chair he offered her with a gesture which was almost compelling.

For a moment or two there was silence. Then Doris spoke.

"You have come between your sister and me," she said. "You have drawn her away and prevented my visiting her, and yet you have"—she paused—

"condescended," she hazarded, "to bring me a message from her!"

"I have. Alice wants you to give up this—this business—"

"If that is all," interrupted Doris, hotly, "you might have saved yourself the trouble of coming here."

"Don't say that! Listen to me. No doubt you are angry because I come here, as I came before to express my disapproval of the whole affair. I feel it my duty to do so. It is a prostitution of Art—a robbery in her name—"

"Stay!" interrupted Doris, passionately. "I know what you think it, and I know also what I think of your speaking to me like this! You may lecture your sister and do what you please with her, but is it any business of yours—I mean, what right have you to come here to find fault with *my* work? As I was saying to Mrs. Austin when you—"

"Intruded," he suggested, bitterly.

"Yes, intruded," she went on, with severity, "upstairs, it is no business of yours."

"I think it is," he said, more gently. "You are Alice's friend, and I do not wish my sister to associate intimately with one who—"

"If I am not fit for your sister's society—" began Doris, furiously.

"Don't you think it is a pity for us to quarrel in this way?" Mr. Sinclair said, in a calm manner. "Please sit down, and let us talk calmly and reasonably." He again waved his hand towards the chair which he had placed for her.

Doris sat down rather helplessly. How he dominated her! She felt as if she were a little child, who did not know what to say in the presence of a grown-up person.

"My sister is extremely attached to you," said the artist, his rich voice full of feeling and his grey eyes shining as they looked straight into Doris's, as if they would read her soul. "She thinks that no one in the world is like her friend. Nothing that one can say—I mean that one can do—that is, that can be done—has any power to shake her loyalty to you—"

"Ah! You have been trying to estrange her from me—"

"I will not deny your charge," said the other, "for there is some truth in it. I do not wish my sister to see much of one who, for money—mere money—is content to do that which is wrong. The love of money is the root of all evil."

"And you think," exclaimed Doris, "you think *I* love money? You think that for money I am content to do wrong?"

"What else can I think?"

"You are exceedingly uncharitable," cried the girl, bitterly, "to beg the question in this way! Let me say that, in the first place, I do not love money. That I want to earn as much of it as possible is true; but I do not want the money for myself. It is to help to pay a debt, a debt of honour so large that it is not possible

for me to pay it all; but if I can in time pay a few hundreds of pounds, I shall be very glad."

"A debt of honour! A few hundreds! My child, you cannot earn all that by such trashy work as this that you are doing!" In spite of himself, Norman regarded her with great admiration.

"The word cannot is not in my dictionary," said Doris, rather grandiloquently. "It must be done!"

"Impossible!" he ejaculated.

"And as for the work being wrong," continued Doris, "I do not know that it is wrong."

"Not know that it is wrong!" exclaimed the other. "When every one of your oil-paintings is a sin against truth. You know it; surely this must appeal to your honour!"

"I do not *call* them oil-paintings," said Doris, proceeding to repeat rapidly Bernard Cameron's arguments, and ending with the words, uttered very meaningfully, "What is truth? We can but obey it as it appears to us. You judge of my pictures from such a different standpoint. They are untrue to all your canons of high art. But I know nothing comparatively of art: I only try to make pictures which will please people, and be worth the trifling sums of money they give for them. Such people could not see any beauty in great works of art; but they say, 'That's pretty! That's very pretty!' when they see mine."

The artist was silent. It was true. What beauty could Jack Hodge and his cousins Dick, Tom, and Harry, see in the Old Masters, or in the new ones either? Yet they were the people who paid their shillings, and even pounds for such pictures as this young girl provided for them.

"Believe me," continued Doris, "there is room in the world for workers of all sort. The birds cannot all be nightingales; the flowers are not all roses; and the human beings who entertain mankind are not all the best and highest of their kind. But there is a place for the homely sparrow, the little daisy, and the poor picture-maker to fill; and it is not—not generous of those more gifted to come and find fault with them!"

Her voice trembled and shook as she concluded; and, feeling that she was about to break down, she bowed slightly to her visitor and left the room.

Mr. Sinclair sprang up as if to stop her, yet did not do so. He opened his mouth to speak, yet no word fell from his lips, and so he allowed her to pass out.

"What a wonderful girl!" he muttered aloud, when she was gone, closing the door softly behind her. "I admire her exceedingly! And I have hurt her feelings! She has gone away to cry! What a stupid blunderer I am! How brutal of me to wound her so! I'm sure I'm very sorry. I'll write her a message." He looked round for pen, ink, and paper, and, having found some, wrote one line only:

"Forgive me, I cannot forgive myself. Norman Sinclair."

Having folded the paper, he addressed it to Miss Anderson, and laid it conspicuously upon the table, and then very quietly left the house.

CHAPTER XVI. THE GREAT RENUNCIATION.

And things can never go badly wrong
If the heart be true and the love be strong;
For the mist, if it comes, and the weeping rain
Will be changed by the love into sunshine again.

G. MACDONALD.

Doris was quite touched when, on coming down to tea, she found Mr. Sinclair's communication upon the table. He could scarcely have written anything which appealed to her more. If he had given in to her arguments, and had said she was right and he was wrong, her feelings about him would have been contemptuous; and if, on the other hand, he had persisted in condemning her work she would have considered him unreasonable. As it was, however, she could not feel either contempt or anger for the man who simply asked for her forgiveness; and she thought better of him for showing in that way that he was sorry for the pain his arguments, and indeed his whole visit had caused her.

She sat and thought about him a long time. How different he was from Bernard! Not so loving and lovable, not nearly so loving and lovable, and yet there was a grandeur about him, and an air of distinction which Bernard did not possess. "I wish I could see his paintings!" she said to herself. "Alice used to rave about them. But I did not take much notice. I thought her simply infatuated with her brother; she thought no one was his equal. Perhaps if I had a brother I might have felt like that about him." And so, on and on went her thoughts, always about Norman Sinclair, except when they flew for a moment or two to Bernard, though always reverting quickly again to the artist. Mr. Sinclair was the greater man of the two, there was no doubt about that, and her first feeling of annoyance at its being so had changed into esteem for him; yet she loved Bernard all the more because he did not stand on a pedestal, he was on her own level—or it might be

even a little lower—which gave her such a delicious sense of motherhood towards him. The latter feeling no doubt made her so determined that he should have his own again, even if she had to wear herself out in winning it for him. Bernard should not suffer loss, if by any exertion on her part it could be averted.

"I do hope, miss," said Mrs. Austin, coming in at last, unbidden, to clear away the tea-things, "I do hope that gentleman hasn't gone and worried you with his tall talk! It is all very fine to tell other folks to give up their businesses, but would he give up his own, I wonder? And will he ensure your having a good income if you throw away the one you are earning?"

Doris rose.

"Mrs. Austin," she said, laying one hand on the good woman's shoulder, and smiling kindly into her anxious face, "I am afraid I cannot discuss Mr. Sinclair even with you. He is good and honourable, but I—I do not see things quite as he does; and you may trust me not to be such a child as to lightly throw away my good business."

With that Mrs. Austin had to be content. But she distrusted the stranger's influence over the young lady, and never willingly admitted him into her little house when he called—as he did call—time after time to see Miss Anderson.

"I would rather see the other gentleman, Mr. Cameron," said the landlady to herself many a time. But Bernard was not well, he had taken a severe cold, and the mists rising continually in the Thames Valley caused him to have chest troubles. He could therefore only write to Doris, now and then, expressing hope that he would soon be better in health and able to call upon her again, and regretting deeply the delay.

Left alone, Doris quite looked forward to the artist's visits. He never stayed long, and the short time he was with her was such a pleasant break in the monotony of the girl's daily life. She was too unsophisticated to scruple to receive him in her little sitting-room, and he was altogether too great a Bohemian to hesitate to go there alone. To his mind Doris stood on an entirely different plane from other girls. The concern with which he had seen her making her poor pictures had become merged in admiration for her bravery in attempting to earn a few hundreds of pounds with which to pay part of a debt of honour. How could it have been contracted, he wondered, by one so guileless? *She* could not have lost the money by gambling. It was impossible that such an innocent girl could know anything about gambling. And yet in what other way could she have become indebted to such an extent? He was soon to know, for as his influence over her increased, she became possessed with a restless longing to stand well in his opinion, and it seemed to her untruthful to conceal from him the cloud of disgrace which hung over her family, although she had thought it right to keep the matter from Alice.

She therefore told him, one day when he lingered with her a little longer than usual, and the early twilight favoured confidences, softening as it did the austere lines in the artist's face and revealing only the good expression of his countenance.

He listened in amazement and distress, having had no idea of the tragedy in her young life.

Simply and as briefly as possible she related the story of her father's appropriation of his young ward's money, and his subsequent flight, with her mother, in the dead of night. She was a little tired and dispirited that day, and her voice broke now and again as she recounted the wretched happenings of that woeful time, and then not allowing herself to break down, or shed a tear, went on bravely to relate about the letter her mother left for her, with its scanty information and command to her to proceed to London, there to live with their good friend Miss Earnshaw.

But when Doris proceeded to relate how Mrs. Cameron came into her room in order to upbraid her in her misfortunes, being overcome by the recollection, she completely broke down and wept.

Norman Sinclair was deeply moved. The tears were in his own eyes as he waited in silence, without venturing to touch, or speak to her, lest any move on his part should check her confidence.

Presently she continued, "You must know I was just becoming engaged to Bernard Cameron when all these things happened—"

"Engaged?" interrupted the other, in dismay.

"Yes. Bernard and I had loved each other long. But she—his mother, you know—made me vow that I would not marry him—to bring disgrace upon him."

"Disgrace?"

"Yes," Doris said. "The only thing my father had left him, Mrs. Cameron told me, was his honourable name, which would be sullied if I married him, and also, she said, the only hope for his being able to retrieve his position was for him to marry some one who had money. I therefore declared that I would never, never marry him, and I ran away at once that I might not see him again."

"Ran away? Alone?"

"Yes," and then Doris told about her travelling to London and upon arriving at Earl's Court Square in the night finding her friend Miss Earnshaw dead, so that there was another person in possession of the house, who was unkind and inhospitable.

"My child, what did you do?" The words escaped involuntarily from Norman's lips.

Doris told him of the compassionate cabman, who most fortunately being a good and honest man, took her to his mother, who proved to be a good Samaritan

to her in her poverty and need. Then she spoke rather shyly of her abortive attempts to paint pictures which would sell, and the work she found at last of lamp-shade making, which supported her for a time, until, upon its failing her, she joined Alice Sinclair's more remunerative business.

"You spoilt our partnership," she said in conclusion, "but I am getting on all right now, and have saved nearly one hundred pounds for Bernard. In time I hope to let him have much more."

"You consider yourself so greatly in his debt?" queried the artist, in amazement.

"Certainly. My father robbed him of much money. I must try to pay some back."

"But the man cannot legally claim a farthing from you. A girl—under age, too—cannot be made to pay a debt."

"You don't understand. It is a debt of honour. Ah!" she smiled sadly, "you thought I acted dishonourably about the pictures, so you cannot understand my being honourable about anything else."

"You could not be dishonourable," exclaimed Norman, quite hotly, "or anything else except most honourable. About the pictures you hold a mistaken view, that is all. For the rest, your taking upon yourself this debt is *noble*. I only know one other girl who would have attempted it." He smiled grimly.

"Alice?"

"Yes."

"Ah, she would have done it. How I wish you would let her come to me! I have not many friends," Doris's lips trembled. There were times when she yearned for Alice's bright young face and loving words.

"You have not lost her love—she is always wanting to come to you. But I really—" he hesitated, seeking a word.

"You think I am not good enough to associate with Alice—that I should contaminate her if she came here—"

"Not good enough? Contaminate her?" Sinclair cried excitedly. "Oh, if you knew what I think of you, how I esteem and admire you!"

"Hush! hush! please," said Doris. "You are speaking excitedly—you do not consider what you say. The fact remains that you think my work altogether wrong. 'A crime,' you have called it, 'in the sight of God and man.' And you have forbidden your sister to come here. That shows you have not changed your opinion."

"I have forbidden my sister to come here lest she should have a relapse into her former views, and insist upon joining you again at the business."

"You would not allow her?"

"Most certainly I should not allow her."

His tone was emphatic.

"Then you still think it wrong of me to do it, in spite of what I have said?"

"I think you are mistaken. I am sure you would not knowingly do wrong."

After he had gone, for he went soon afterwards, not being able to trust himself to stay there any longer, Doris sat a long time thinking over what had passed. His evident admiration and indeed love for herself—which she had discouraged, because if she belonged to any one it was to Bernard—only heightened the effect of the uncompromising way in which he regarded her employment. It was, then, in the eyes of an honest man a fraud which even the exigency of her need of money wherewith to pay Bernard his own again could by no means exonerate.

"It certainly is wrong to do evil that good may come," she said to herself. "And oh! my heart tells me that I have known in its depths for a long time, in spite of what Bernard said, and in spite of my sheltering behind his opinion, that mine is very questionable work, leading, as I fear it often does, to poor and ignorant people giving their money for what is of no real value. If the shops would sell my pictures for a few shillings it would not be so bad; but though the dealers only give me a few shillings for each, they sell many of them for as much as a pound or thirty shillings each. I should not like any one I loved to pay such a price for them—and it isn't fair to cheat other people's loved ones. Every one is the loved one of the Lover of mankind," was the next thought, "and He said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'"

The solemnity of the thought was great. "Unto Him!" she murmured. "Do I treat Him like that? Can I possibly do it to Him?" She thought over the essential points of her religion; over what He had done for her, and then asked herself how could she make Him such a return?

The fire sank low in the grate. Sounds of the little house being locked up for the night, and the footsteps of Mrs. Austin going upstairs to bed fell unheeded on her ears, as she sat there still absorbed in these reflections.

The business was wrong; she must get out of it, must give it up. But, could she? Would she have strength of mind and will sufficient for the task? It would be a hard thing to do. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee." Yes, she would do it. For conscience' sake, she would strip herself of this really lucrative business which was so wrong, and would commence in some other way to toil for the money which was required to pay some of the debt to Bernard. With a capital of a hundred pounds she might start some business, she thought, which would enable her to earn money rapidly.

Having made up her mind for what she called "The great renunciation," she lost no time in setting about it.

And first of all, before going to bed, she ascertained from her books what

sum of money was due to Alice—for all this time she had regularly forwarded to her ex-partner's brother one third of all profits made in the business—then placing the amount in notes, in a sealed envelope, in the inside of which she wrote "Conscience Money," she went out and slipped it into the nearest pillar-box. "I cannot bother to register it this time," she said to herself, "it will get there all right." Then, quickly re-entering the house, she locked and bolted the door, and went upstairs to her bed-room. But not to sleep. For hours she lay awake, pondering over ways and means. Should she hand over to Bernard the hundred pounds there would be altogether, after she had sold the last remaining pictures, and the paint, mill-boards, etc., she had in the garret? Or should she trade with the hundred pounds in some way, with the view to making it bring forth a hundredfold? But in what way could that be done? And, supposing she were to lose it? Bernard might never have even that hundred pounds restored to him.

She fell asleep at last, her thoughts running to the tune of the hundred pounds, and awoke about seven o'clock, still with the problem unsolved. But the post brought her a letter from Bernard, saying that he was ill and in trouble. He had lost his situation through ill health, and was alone, helplessly ill, in his lodgings at Richmond.

That morning Doris left her assistants to pack up her stock-in-trade, while she went to Richmond to see Bernard, whom she found in a small, dingy house in Jocelyn Road. He was not in bed, but lying on a couch, looking ill and unhappy. His unhappiness, however, quickly disappeared when he perceived her.

"You here!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Doris, does my sight deceive me? Are you really standing before me?"

"Yes. It is I," replied Doris, and then, laying her cool hand upon his burning brow, she added, "Why, how hot you are! What is the matter?"

"The doctor calls it influenza, but I think they call everything influenza in these days. I know I have been ill a horribly long time, and I can't get better. I have written to my mother, Doris. I have been obliged to write to her. Perhaps if I could go home a little—quite away from this wretched place—my native air might restore me. But mother has not replied. I think she will have nothing more to do with me. The old idea of the prodigal son's being welcomed back with best robes and rings and fatted calf is exploded. Parents are not like that in these days!" He spoke bitterly.

"But you have not been a prodigal son," said Doris. "Perhaps if you had been, your mother would have proved more merciful. It is the fact that you have acted more nobly than she about not proceeding against my father which stings and humiliates her. Don't you know, dear, that the higher we raise our standard the more it seems to reflect upon those who allow theirs to drag in the mire?"

Your mother cannot forgive you for being better than she."

There was silence for a few moments in the little room. Bernard could have said several things, but he did not wish to speak against his mother. Presently, however, he remarked,

"I don't feel as if I could get well here. These are such nasty, fusty rooms—so depressing—such a want of air and light—so different from dear old Yorkshire and the breezes to be had on Askern Hill. Do you remember Askern Hill, Doris?"

Did she remember? The colour returned into her pale cheeks, and the light into her eyes, as she remembered the last happy occasion upon which she and Bernard trod that hill.

"Oh, Bernard, you ought to go back there!" she said. "My poor boy, you would get well and strong if you were there again."

"You also," he rejoined, with a look of yearning love. "Oh, Doris, if we could return together!"

"If wishes were horses beggars would ride," she said, lightly. "Look here!" she spread a little heap of bank-notes before his astonished eyes. "Count them. There are ninety pounds," she said, for she had brought with her the money she had saved.

"Ninety pounds!" exclaimed he.

"Yes. Ninety pounds. It is yours. I repay that much of our debt to you to-day."

"Ninety pounds! You repay! Debt!" cried he, in bewilderment and indignation. "What nonsense! I cannot take your money."

"You must! I insist upon it! I have earned it for you. See. It is all yours," and, gathering up the money, she tried to put it into his hand.

But he would not take it. He was no cad that he should take money from a girl. And he seized the opportunity to show her practically that it was quite impossible for him to accept any payment at all from her.

The little contest made him so ill and feverish that Doris had to call in his doctor, who, after giving him a draught, insisted upon his going home to Yorkshire forthwith, while he was still able to travel.

Doris went to the telegraph office, to wire to his mother to say that he was returning home ill, and afterwards while she was packing up for him the reply telegram arrived. It was short, but to the point:

"Shall be glad to see you. Come immediately."

In the afternoon, Doris and Bernard went to King's Cross in a cab, and there the girl saw him off in an express for Doncaster.

He urged her to accompany him, but this she declined to do.

"Well, of course, if you won't marry me at once, dear," he said, "it would be a pity for you to leave your good, paying business."

Doris had not told him that she was relinquishing the work, and he departed in the belief that she still retained her remunerative employment.

But the girl returned slowly to Mrs. Austin's, to sell the tools of her trade, which she no longer required, and thus complete the renunciation of her business.

And if the thought of that strong man, the champion of truth and honour, Norman Sinclair, was a help and support to her in this difficult crisis of her life, who can wonder at it?

Bernard was ill and far away, and the artist had powerfully influenced her.

CHAPTER XVII. IN POVERTY.

Give me neither poverty nor riches.

The Prayer of Agar.

Doris realised ten pounds by the sale of her stock-in-trade, the materials and the pictures which had not been paid for previously, and then, having altogether one hundred pounds in hand, she imagined herself fairly well off, and with means sufficient to maintain herself in comfort until she could find some other employment.

And now she bought newspapers and frequented public reading-rooms, in order to search through the columns of advertisements in papers and ladies' journals for some post which she could hope to obtain. Her idea of paying back even a small portion of her father's debt to Bernard being now exploded, she hoped to obtain a comfortable home and small salary as lady's companion, or governess, or secretary; and many were the applications for such places that she made personally, or by letter, but always in vain. Having no better reference to give than poor Mrs. Austin, and having had no experience of the work, she was so unfortunate as to meet with refusals everywhere. She was too pretty for some mistresses to tolerate the idea of having her in their homes, and she was

too reticent about her parents and home to suit others.

It would have been better for her had she written to some of her old friends in Yorkshire asking if they would allow her to refer people to them, but a mistaken idea that the knowledge of her father's crime might prevent their vouching for his daughter's rectitude prevented her. Since she left Askern she had written only once or twice to Susan Gaunt, and then had given no address but the vague one "London," which caused poor Susan to wring her hands in dismay, and complain that Miss Doris couldn't want to hear from her. Perhaps Mrs. Cameron's insistence on the shame which attached to her as being her father's daughter unduly influenced the girl's mind, for she felt an intense shrinking from renewing her former relations with her old friends.

So it came about that, as weeks and months passed by, Doris found that her money was rapidly diminishing, while her prospects did not brighten. Bernard only wrote once after the first brief note saying that he had arrived at home and received a kind welcome from his mother, and no more letters coming Doris understood that Mrs. Cameron would not permit the correspondence, and therefore she ceased writing.

Mrs. Austin, who had deeply lamented the termination of the picture-business and had even suggested its resuscitation, was loud in expressions of grief and concern.

"To think," she said,—"to think that you, who could earn ever so many pounds a week, cannot now earn as many shillings! It all comes of that Mr. Sinclair's coming here unsettling you! But there, I won't say any more about him, Miss Anderson dear, since you don't like me to do so."

"Thank you," said Doris, gently. "But now for business," she added, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "I cannot pay you for this nice bedroom much longer"—they were in her bedroom, and she looked round at its cosy little appointments as she spoke—"you must try to let it to some one else."

"What? And part with you? Not if I know it!" cried Mrs. Austin, throwing up both her hands to emphasise her words.

"You need not part with me," said Doris, putting her arms round the good woman's neck, and speaking with real affection. "Dear Mrs. Austin, I should be homeless indeed if I left your roof! What I want is this: Let me have the garret—only the garret; make me up a nice little bed there, and let me have my food—anything that you happen to be having—for a moderate charge."

The widow began to protest vehemently, but Doris cut short her vociferations by declaring that if her proposal was not agreed to she would have to seek a lodging elsewhere, for she could not use the bedroom when it was quite impossible to pay for it.

Accordingly, that very day, a notice that a bedroom and sitting-room were

to let was put up in the front window, and when at length they were let Doris carried up all her belongings to the garret, which Mrs. Austin made as comfortable as she possibly could.

Then Doris continued her weary search for work, even applying at shops for a post as cashier or shop-assistant. But her lack of knowledge of book-keeping precluded her from the one—even if she could have given better references than the poor Austins'—and her want of experience and of testimonials caused her failure as an applicant for the other. Every evening she returned to her garret worn out with the futile attempt to obtain employment, and every evening Mrs. Austin brought her up a nice little hot supper, in spite of her protestations and declaration that she was not at all hungry. That was true enough, alas! for she lost her appetite and grew thin and worn during those days; and there were times when she doubted her wisdom in having given up the sham oil-painting business. "One must live," she said to herself, "and I had nothing else. But at least—at least I have cast into God's treasury all that I have. Will He bless me for it, I wonder? It does not seem like it at present; but I suppose I must have faith, only I feel too weary to have faith in these days."

Such thoughts often came at nights, and she wept as she lay on her poor garret bed, so that sleep forsook her, and she arose in the morning unrefreshed and weary still.

The artist called several times when she was out, and not being liked by Mrs. Austin, he found the good woman taciturn and uncommunicative, so that he did not hear anything about Doris's business having been given up, and was in total ignorance upon that point. But Alice had heard the news from Doris: for the latter was obliged to mention it in giving a reason for the money remittances having ceased. To tell the truth, Alice was dismayed, and very sorry that Doris, too, felt it to be her duty to abandon the work. Though Alice, under her brother's compulsion, had once requested Doris to give it up, she had not really wished her to do so, for Alice was essentially practical, having, moreover, the responsibility of keeping her artist brother alive until he won his spurs as a Royal Academician. Sometimes Alice thought of acquainting her brother with the fact that Doris, too, had given up the work he abhorred, but as they had nearly quarrelled about Doris more than once—owing to Norman's forbidding Alice to visit her—each was very reticent about the girl. Alice did not know of the artist's visiting Doris; and he did not know that she and Doris corresponded regularly.

"Oh, you poor, dear darling!" wrote Alice to Doris, "what an awfully inconvenient thing it is to have a conscience! And an appetite for food, with a conscience which prevents one from having the means to satisfy it, is a piling on of the agony! With Norman on his high horse, so that he will not allow me to do this and that, and you with a conscience which prevents your sending me any

more money, truly I am in a fix. But I won't be beaten. I must find grist for the mill somewhere and somehow, if I have to sing in the street, or be a flower-girl. My dear old Norman shan't starve to death while I have any wits left at all. As for you, if you were not too proud, there are artists who would pay much for the privilege of painting your lovely face. I know Norman would be charmed to have it for his picture of 'Ganymede.' Indeed, he is painting her astonishingly like you, although an ordinary model is sitting for it. Your face is your fortune, darling, when all is said and done. And you'll marry a duke, no doubt, in the end, while I shall be only an insignificant nobody, perhaps mentioned in the 'Life of Norman Sinclair, R.A.' as having fed the lion when he was oblivious of such mundane things as pounds, shillings and pence. Good night. When I have thought of what I will do, I'll send you word. Then maybe you will join me in doing it: and we won't let anybody come between us ever again.

"Thine, "ALICE."

Another day, when Doris was despairing of ever getting anything to do, she received a second letter from her friend, which was short and to the point.

"Eureka! I have found it," wrote Alice, "now at last our woes will be all over. Our work will be honourable of its sort, and it will pay a little—enough to feed the lion and our humble selves, although we shall not be able to save money. Oh, dear no. But we must be thankful for small mercies in these days. Meet me to-morrow at twelve o'clock at the Park Square entrance to the Broad Walk in Regent's Park; then we will have a walk and talk about it.

"Thine, "ALICE."

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEW EMPLOYMENT FOR DORIS.

No soul can be quite separate,
However set aside by fate,

However cold or dull or shy
 Or shrinking from the public eye.
 The world is common to the race,
 And nowhere is a hiding-place:
 Behind, before, with rhythmic beat,
 Is heard the tread of marching feet.

* * * * *

And as we meet and touch each day,
 The many travellers on our way,
 Let every such brief contact be
 A glorious, helpful ministry:
 The contact of the soil and seed,
 Each giving to the other's need,
 Each helping on the other's best,
 And blessing, each, as well as blest.

SUSAN COOLIDGE.

"Oh, my dear Doris, isn't it lovely to be out here in the fresh air and sunshine, with you, too, at last? At last!" Alice's feet almost danced over the ground, as with a smiling face she drew her friend along the Broad Walk in Regent's Park. "Oh, I have so much to tell you! We have been parted ages—ages!" she cried.

"Ages indeed!" sighed Doris. "It does seem such a long, *long* time: and yet I suppose it is barely four months since you left me."

"Months? Four months did you say? It seems like *years*! Why, it was the depth of winter then, and now it is spring, though the trees are bare yet," and Alice glanced up at the fine chestnut trees on both sides of the walk.

"I am afraid I cannot walk so fast as this if I am to talk as well," panted Doris, as she was being hurried along.

"Why, what is the matter with you? You dear thing, what is the matter? You are pale. You are ill?" Alice was looking at her now with great concern.

"Not at all. I'm all right, only I cannot walk so quickly. You walk very fast."

"How worn your clothes are!" cried Alice, scrutinising her closely. "And how thin you are! Doris, I believe you are *starving*."

"Nothing of the sort." A bright colour had come into Doris's face now, making it look more beautiful than ever, although it was so thin.

"Have you had a good breakfast?" questioned practical Alice.

"Yes. Mrs. Austin saw to that. She is very good to me."

"Oh, Doris!" Alice read between the lines. Her friend had been suffering want; indeed, was suffering it now.

"I am all right," declared Doris again. "Come, tell me, dear, what is the work you have found for me to do?"

"Well, it is honest work, at all events, and although it isn't at all romantic, it is interesting enough. I tried to get into several other things first, but found them all so difficult without a special training, and time is the commodity in which we are deficient: for what we want is immediate money—cash *down*" and Alice gave a little stamp with her foot to emphasise "down."

"It is, indeed," cried Doris. "Go on quickly, please. Tell me what you have found for us to do?" It was a matter of vital importance to her, for she had reached her last coin that day, and her only hope was in Alice's promised work.

"It is account collecting. You know, calling at people's houses for the money they are owing."

"Oh!" Doris's "Oh!" was rather dubious. Such work seemed indeed most unattractive.

"It was my grocer who gave me the idea," Alice went on briskly. "I was apologising for not paying him at once, and he said that he wished every one was as honest. Upon which I remarked that I was looking out for work, and should have more cash in hand when I obtained it. He seemed quite sorry for me. 'It is only temporary, of course, this want of yours,' he said, oh, so kindly; and then I was such a goose, I couldn't help the tears coming into my eyes, upon which he jumped up, went into an inner room, and presently returned to invite me in. Then he asked if I would like to collect his outstanding debts, the debts people owed him, you know, and he offered me from 5 per cent. to 10 per cent. on all the money I got in for him. 'Young ladies do such work,' said he, 'and if you are successful, Miss Sinclair, I will recommend my friends to employ you also. I know one or two lady-collectors,' he added, 'who make from £50 to £100 a year by this sort of thing.' Beggars cannot be choosers; therefore I accepted the work, and began at once."

"How clever of you!"

"It was a bit rough on me at first, you know. People very rarely indeed pay their debts pleasantly. Most people who greeted me with smiles when I went to their houses, looked considerably less amiable when they found out that I wanted some of their money; and then going about in all weathers—for the money has often to be collected weekly—is not nice. Nevertheless, I am getting on. I earned a pound a week at first, and now it is usually nearer two pounds a week than one. And, best of all," Alice gave a little laugh, "dear old Norman hasn't found out about it yet; and—and," she could scarcely speak for laughing, although there was a little choke in her voice, "he swallows the fruits of my toil beautifully!"

"Alice," exclaimed Doris, with immense admiration, "what a brave girl you are! A sister in a thousand!"

"And now I have more work than I can do," went on Alice earnestly, "and I thought you would assist me, dear. If I could hand over some of the surplus work to you, why, it would prevent my overworking, and it might help you."

"It certainly would!" exclaimed Doris. "But before taking up the work I ought to have good references to give you and your employers, and who--"

"I should be responsible, of course," interrupted Alice. "You will simply act as my assistant. I will give you your work to do, and you will have a percentage of all the money you collect. It will be all right. You will simply act for me."

Doris could not do otherwise than gratefully accept this kind offer. Indeed, there was nothing for her between it and starvation, unless she would be a helpless burden upon poor Mrs. Austin. Alice explained to Doris fully about the work, arranged where they should meet daily, and went thoroughly into every detail connected with the new employment. Moreover, she thoughtfully advanced ten shillings, that Doris might be able to buy herself a new hat, veil, and a pair of gloves, also a note-book and pencil.

When that matter was settled, the girls sat down under one of the chestnut trees, enjoying to the full the sights and sounds of spring about them, the fresh green of the grass, the blue sky, and the sunshine resting over all and everything--not to mention the singing and twittering of the birds, the barking of dogs, the rolling of the carriages, and the bright appearance of the ladies walking or driving by.

Presently Alice ventured to ask after Bernard Cameron. Upon which Doris, with her heart lightened from carking care and warmed by her friend's affection, for the first time took her entirely into her confidence, by relating how matters stood between her and the young man, together with a full statement of the manner in which his money had been lost. She could trust Alice completely, and, moreover, felt that, as the latter was about to be responsible for her honesty in dealing with other people's money, no detail of the cloud of disgrace resting over the Andersons should be concealed.

"But it does not make the slightest difference about you, darling," cried Alice, looking tenderly into Doris's downcast face. "It is very sweet of you to tell me all about it. And I think, dear, that you take rather too serious a view of your father's fault--"

"Say, *sin*," corrected Doris, gravely. "Let us call things by their right names--"

"Well, *sin*," conceded Alice. "But in my opinion it was not so bad as you think. When he speculated with Bernard Cameron's money, of course he thought it quite safe to do so, and anticipated a big profit, which no doubt he intended to hand over to Bernard. If things had 'panned out,' as the Americans say, successfully, no one would have blamed him. Indeed, people would have thought

he acted very cleverly and with rare discrimination. It seems to me that it was the mere accident of non-success, instead of success, which made his conduct reprehensible and not praiseworthy."

Doris took no little comfort from this view of the matter, and wished she had confided in Alice before.

"How very sensible you are, Alice, dear!" she cried. "Oh, I am fortunate in having such a friend!"

"And I am fortunate in having you for a friend, darling!" returned the other, adding, in her most matter-of-fact tone, "When an outsider brings eyes that haven't been saddened by grief to look at a trouble, of course the vision is clearer. And I must say, also, that I like Bernard for not accepting that money from you."

"Oh, but I did want him to take it," said Doris. "Though, really," she added, "I don't know what I should have done without it. He does not know that I have given up my lucrative business," she said in conclusion. "He thought it all right."

"Have you heard from him lately?" asked Alice.

"Not very lately. He wrote to tell me of his safe arrival in Yorkshire, and that his mother was very kind in nursing him. And then he wrote again, to tell me he had been very ill, and mentioned that his mother worried him considerably by endeavouring to induce him to do things which were utterly distasteful to him. 'But this is a free country,' he wrote, 'and I shall do as I please.' Since then," Doris continued, "I have heard nothing; indeed, I have not written much lately."

The two girls sat there talking for some time, and then went to get some lunch at Alice's expense.

On the day following, Doris commenced work as Alice's assistant account-collector. But, being thoroughly run down and out of health, she found her duties extremely arduous and fatiguing. She was not adapted for the work, and it was to her most irksome and unpleasant to have to ask people for money. She would rather have given it to them. When they were disagreeable—and, as Alice had said, it was rarely indeed that people could be pleasant when they were asked for money by an account-collector—Doris had the most absurd inclination to apologise and hurry away. In fact, she did that more than once, and had to be severely scolded by Alice for neglecting her duties. It was in vain, however, that Alice lectured and coached her; Doris was much too tender-hearted to make a good collector. When people began to make excuses for not paying their debts it was only with difficulty she could refrain from assisting them to do so; her sympathy was always on their side, consequently she did not earn much of a percentage.

Alice paid her liberally, as liberally indeed as she could afford to do, for she had her "Lion" to keep, and her means were limited; but Doris earned barely enough money to pay her rent for the garret and for the food with which Mrs.

Austin supplied her, and, in consequence, her clothes grew shabbier and her health became worse every day. She did not hear from Bernard, and was often despondent and hopeless about the future. How could she possibly pay him back any money out of the trifling sums she was earning? And he would not take it if she could. He would rather remain poor, and there could never be any marriage between her and Bernard Cameron.

CHAPTER XIX.

A POWERFUL TEMPTATION.

When shall this wonderful web be done!
 In a thousand years, perhaps, or one—
 Or to-morrow: who knoweth? Not you or I,
 But the wheels turn on and the shuttles fly.

Ah, sad-eyed weaver, the years are slow,
 But each one is nearer the end, we know:
 And some day the last thread shall be woven in,
 God grant it be love, instead of sin!

Then are we spinners of wool for this life-web—say?
 Do we furnish the weaver a web each day?
 It were better then, O kind friend, to spin
 A beautiful thread—not a thread of sin.

Anon.

"Is Miss Anderson in?"

"Well, yes, sir, she is, but—"

"Be so good as to announce me!"

"I don't know about that, sir. Miss Anderson is not very well; and I think—I think it might be better for her not to see visitors."

"Visitors? I am not visitors. Be so good as to show me in."

Mrs. Austin reluctantly led the way to her sitting-room—a small one at the back of the house—where Doris was reclining on an old-fashioned sofa. She

started up on perceiving Mr. Sinclair, and would have risen, but he put her gently back again.

"Don't let me disturb you, I beg," he entreated. "I shall have to go away if you don't lie still. And I want to see you very much," he pleaded. "It is so long since I had that pleasure."

As of old, his strong will dominated hers, and she fell back against the soft pillows Mrs. Austin had placed for her head, and looked at him in silence. Her blue eyes seemed bigger than ever, and her complexion was more clear and waxen; but her cheeks were too thin for beauty, and her mouth drooped pathetically.

"My dear child, what have you been doing with yourself?" Norman's tone was more fatherly than loverlike now: he took Doris's hands in his and held them gently.

Overcome with emotion, and unable to command herself, she burst into tears. What had she been doing? Much, much that he little suspected. She had visited a pawn-broker's shop more than once, for the purpose of raising money on articles of dress. That was because her earnings were not sufficient for her maintenance; and then she disliked her work exceedingly. There were all sorts of annoyances connected with it. More than one irate householder, on learning that her visit was for money owing, had treated her with rudeness and disrespect, shutting the door in her face. She had also been affronted with coarse jests and familiarities, which terrified and wounded her more than unkind words. Sleepless nights and unsuccessful, ill-feel days combined to rob her of health and strength, while uneasiness about Bernard's lengthened silence and anxiety about ways and means harassed her mind continually.

They were alone in the little room, Mrs. Austin having returned upstairs. Norman Sinclair's heart ached for the poor girl's distress, although he by no means knew what occasioned it. He soothed and comforted her as best he could, and then, bit by bit, as she became calmer, drew from her the history of those last months since he had seen her.

Doris could not keep anything back. Now, as ever, the strong will of the man compelled her to reveal her very soul, with all its doings, yearnings, and despair, even in regard to Bernard Cameron.

When all was told there was silence in the little room, save for the ticking of the eight-day clock and the purring of the cat upon the hearth. Doris had said everything there was to say: she could add nothing, but only waited for the artist to speak. She looked at him to see why he did not begin.

His head was averted, as if he were trying to conceal the emotion which caused his strong features to work convulsively. Then he turned towards her, and the love revealed in his eyes and in his whole expressive countenance blinded and

dazzled her.

Suddenly, with a swift movement, he took her hands, saying in tones full of deep feeling, "You must come to me. You are totally unfitted to contend with this wicked world. Will you not be my wife?" he pleaded.

"I am to be Bernard's," she faltered, releasing her hands with gentle dignity.

Sinclair frowned a little. He did not think that Bernard Cameron loved her; from what Alice had told him he was inclined to think the young man was treating her rather badly.

"Are you quite sure that he loves you?" asked Norman Sinclair drily.

Doubts born of Bernard's long silence recurred to the girl's mind. If he loved her, surely he would have written, in spite of his mother's prohibition.

"I have given him time," persisted Norman, "but he has apparently deserted you, whilst I am— Oh, Doris, you little know how much I love you! Will you not be my wife?"

"Oh, hush! Hush, please!" said Doris. "I am *so sorry!* You have been such a dear, good friend—I have thought so much of your advice—you know it was that mainly which caused me to give up my business, and sink—sink into poverty."

"It was very brave of you to do it."

"I have thought so much of your advice," she repeated, "and have looked up to you so much. Do not spoil it all."

His face fell. Where was his power over her. She seemed to be receding from him.

"Doris," he urged, "will you marry me?"

"I cannot," she replied, very earnestly. "Indeed I cannot!"

"You cannot?" There was a great disappointment in his tone.

"I cannot," she repeated.

For a minute or two after she said that, the artist sat motionless and silent. Then he began to speak rapidly and with deep feeling.

In a few well-chosen words he described graphically the loneliness and hardship of his orphan boyhood, when Alice was a baby and therefore unable to give him even sympathy; and then he spoke of the dawning of ambition within him and of his boyhood's dreams that one day he would become an artist worthy of the name, and went on to relate the story of his striving to acquire the necessary skill and culture, and to mount one by one the golden stairs. Tremendous difficulties had to be overcome, indomitable, unfaltering resolution and untiring industry had to be displayed by him: perseverance under many adverse circumstances became almost his second nature, until at last, gradually, success came nearer. Then he spoke of his hard work more recently, and of the pictures he had painted that last year, two of which had now been accepted and hung in the Royal Academy. Only quite incidentally did he mention that he and Alice would have

actually wanted bread sometimes if it had not been for mysterious bank-notes arriving anonymously, labelled "Conscience Money," which made him think they came from one or another to whom he had formerly lent cash which could ill be spared. In conclusion he said quietly, "However, thank God, all that is ended, for, through the death of a rather distant relation, I have quite unexpectedly inherited a fortune of one hundred thousand pounds. As soon as I was absolutely certain that there was no mistake about the matter, I said to myself, 'I will go to Doris. If she will share my life and help me to do some good with the money, ah, then I shall be happy.' So, Doris dear, I came."

The girl was silent. She was deeply touched. He came to her as soon as the cloud of poverty had lifted and he was able to offer her a home and plenty.

"You came to me," she faltered at length, without daring to lift her eyes to his, lest he should see the tears which filled them—"you came to me—a beggar girl—a pauper—"

"No," he said, "a brave, hard-working, honourable girl! Doris, you have suffered, are suffering now; but by marrying me you will be lifted at once out of all difficulties. Think, dear, how easy and pleasant your life would be, and how useful, too, for you would help me to do much good with our riches."

But Doris shook her head. She could not accept his offer.

Sinclair went away presently, disappointed for the time being, but determined to try again. The next day he sent his sister to visit Doris, and Alice brought her useful presents of chickens, jelly, cream, and cakes.

"It's so delightful to be rich," she said. "You've no idea how pleasant it is to be able to buy everything we want! Wouldn't you like to be rich, too, Doris?" she asked.

"Yes," said Doris. "Yes, I should. I hate poverty. It is so belittling—so sordid to have to think so much of ways and means! I should like to forget what things cost, and accept everything as unconsciously as we accept the air we breathe."

"And yet you won't be rich," said Alice, with meaning.

Doris coloured a little. "How can I?" she asked, "when there is Bernard?"

"Perhaps he would like to be rich, too?" suggested Alice.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, *do* you think it would be best for him to marry you, and plunge both himself and you into poverty?" asked Alice.

"You talk as his mother did," sighed Doris.

"After all, there was commonsense in her view of the matter," persisted Alice. "What is the use of two young people marrying, and living in poverty ever after, when they may both be rich and happy if they will?"

"Riches and happiness do not always go together."

"I don't think poverty and happiness do," said Alice, curtly.

Doris felt a little shaken. Would it really be better for Bernard and she to be true to each other, when their marriage would only mean poverty and anxiety?

Norman came again that afternoon when Alice had gone.

"Doris," he said, when they were conversing in Mrs. Austin's back parlour, "perhaps, as Cameron has been so long in writing, he may have ceased to care for you."

"Perhaps so indeed!" rejoined Doris, with a sigh.

"Couldn't you ascertain whether it is so?" suggested the other.

"Yes—if he will answer me; but—I don't know how it is—I receive no answer to my letters," faltered the girl.

"Is there no one else to whom you can write in Yorkshire—I mean, so that you can get to know his feeling about you?"

"There's only Susan Gaunt, our old servant, I might write to her; but I scarcely think that she can do anything, though she has known him since he was a boy, and he is always nice to her, and talks to her quite freely."

"Well, ask her about him. And write to him, too, once more, asking him straight out if he has changed towards you."

"I think I will," said Doris. "It can do no harm."

She accordingly wrote that evening both to Susan and to Bernard.

The old servant answered immediately. Her letter was as follows:

"MY PRECIOUS MISS DORIS,

"At last you send me your address, and I hasten to write these few lines to ask if you are well, as this doesn't leave me so at present.

"My heart is very bad, dearie, and the doctor says I may die quite suddenly any time. Well, I've always liked that verse—

Sudden as thought is the death I would die—
 I would suddenly lay these shackles by,
 Nor feel a single pang at parting,
 Or see the tear of sorrow starting,
 Nor feel the hands of love that hold me,
 Nor hear the trembling words that bless me;
 So would I die,
 Not slain, but caught up, as it were,
 To meet my Captain in the air.
 So would I die
 All joy without a pang to cloud it;

All bliss without a pain to spoil it,
 Even so, I long to go:
 These parting hours how sad and slow!

But I would like to see you once more, my precious young lady, before I go. I have cried about you often and often, and I always pray for you day and night—I did so specially that first night when you went away—that God would guard and protect you. And He did, didn't He, or you would not now be writing to old Susan so peacefully?

"You ask about Mr. Bernard Cameron. Don't think any more of him, lovey. I have heard on the best authority that he is going to marry a rich young lady at Doncaster. It is his mother's doing, no doubt; she always hankered after riches, and while he has been ill she has had him to talk to morning, noon, and night—and this is the result. So don't think any more of him, dear Miss Doris, but look out for a good, honourable gentleman, and don't marry at all unless you find him.

"Please excuse bad writing—I know my spelling is all right, for I always was a good speller—and accept my love and duty.

"Your faithful servant, "SUSAN GAUNT."

There was no letter from Bernard; no letter, though Doris waited for it many days.

It seemed clear, therefore, that he must be going to marry the young lady at Doncaster, of whom Susan wrote; and that being so, and poverty and starvation weighing heavily in the balance against prospective wealth and every comfort that money can give, Doris yielded at length to Sinclair's persistent urging, and consented to become his wife.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WELCOME LEGACY.

All things come round to him who will but wait.
Tales of a Wayside Inn.

"Late for breakfast again, Bernard! It's idle you are! Bone idle, that's what it is!" Mrs. Cameron's tones were angry, and when angry they were very shrill.

Bernard, who had entered the room languidly, did not hasten to reply, but stood leaning wearily against the mantelpiece. His face was pale, his eyes heavy and a little bloodshot; he looked unhappy and as if he had passed a sleepless night, which, indeed, was the case; but he had not spirit enough to plead that as an excuse for his lateness. Instead, he glanced at the clock, murmuring that it was scarcely half-past eight.

"And late enough, too!" cried Mrs. Cameron, who was pouring out the coffee as she spoke. "I told you breakfast would be at eight. You are quite well now, and must get out of the lazy, lackadaisical habits of an invalid."

"Yes, yes! All right." Bernard took his place at the table opposite his mother, looking askance at the large plate of porridge set there for him to eat.

"Your porridge will be half cold by this time," continued the scolding voice.

"It is." Bernard just tasted it, and pushed the plate away. "I cannot eat porridge yet," he said.

"You must try. Porridge made as Jane makes it, of good Scotch oatmeal, is just what you want to put some life in you."

Bernard did not think so. He drank his coffee disconsolately.

His mother looked as if she would have liked to make him eat the porridge, as she had done often in that very room when he was a little pale-faced lad, with a small appetite and a strong will of his own. As it was, however, she pushed a loaf of brown bread towards him, saying that he could have some bread and butter, though it was poor stuff compared with porridge.

"Are there no fresh eggs?" asked her son.

Mrs. Cameron reluctantly conceded that there were such things in the house, and Bernard rang for them.

After that, the breakfast proceeded in silence for a time, and then Bernard remarked that he hoped to get another situation as tutor, near London, very soon. "I have written to one or two agents," he said. "I want to get a private tutorship, if I can. It will be less disagreeable than being an under-master in a school."

"Why do you want to be near London?" asked his mother, frowning.

Bernard did not answer. She knew very well that he wanted to be near Doris Anderson, and he did not wish to discuss Doris with her. During his illness, it had been one of his heaviest afflictions that he could not escape from the sound of his mother's voice, as she railed against Doris and her parents.

"Has the newspaper come?" he asked presently.

"Yes." Mrs. Cameron pointed to the local daily newspaper lying on the sideboard; and, as her son rose to get it, she remarked: "I cannot think why the postman has not come."

"Oh, he has. I took the letters from him at the door, as I was passing it--"

"You did?" Mrs. Cameron looked annoyed. "How often have I requested you to allow Jane to bring the letters into the room in a decent manner!" she snapped.

"They were only for me. Surely a man is entitled to his own letters!"

"Whom were they from?" was the next sharp question, as his mother looked keenly at him over her glasses.

"I really don't know. I simply glanced at them to see--" He stopped short, not caring to say that, as there was not a letter from Doris, he had not deemed the others worthy of immediate consideration. Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he produced a couple of unopened letters.

"We will see what this one is," he remarked with an attempt at cheerfulness, taking up a table knife and cutting open an envelope.

"Ha!" he exclaimed as he read. "Oh, mother! Oh, how good of Mr. Hamilton! How good of him! What a boon!--what a great boon for us!"

"What is it? What do you mean?" exclaimed his mother, in great excitement.

"Read it," he said, handing her the letter, and leaning back quite faint and dizzy with surprise and gladness not unmingled with sorrow.

[image]

"READ IT," HE SAID, HANDING HER THE LETTER.

Adjusting her glasses, his mother read the letter, which was from a well-known firm of lawyers in Birmingham.

"DEAR SIR,

"We have to inform you that by the will of our late client, the Rev. John Hamilton, you are bequeathed a legacy of five thousand pounds free of legacy duty, as some compensation for the loss of your fortune, for which our client always felt a little responsible, as, had he been a more businesslike man, he might have prevented the defalcations of your other trustee, Mr. Anderson, or at least he would not have left your money so entirely in his hands.

"If you would kindly write and tell us how you would like to receive your legacy--whether we should pay it into your bank, or directly to yourself, you would oblige,

"Yours faithfully, "MARK AND WATSON, "Solicitors."

"Well," cried Mrs. Cameron, "I never was more surprised in my life, nor more pleased!" she added. "And it was right, too, of Mr. Hamilton! I told him about his being to blame, you know, for not looking after his co-trustee—and I told him my mind about it; and he went away in anger. But, you see, he has been thinking about my words, and he recognised the justice of them—"

"Oh, mother, I wish you hadn't blamed him!" exclaimed Bernard.

"Wish I hadn't blamed him? How silly you are, Bernard! Why, it's to that you are indebted for all this good fortune. If I hadn't stood up for you and put his duty before him, you wouldn't have had anything."

"Did you suggest he should leave me money?" asked Bernard, aghast.

"I did that! I said it was his bounden duty to give you a thousand or two."

"Mother! How could you?"

"Well, I could. It was for you I did it. What right had he to leave all your money in that Anderson's hand? What right had he to sign papers—as he confessed he did—at Anderson's request without reading them? I told him he ought to have been ashamed of himself, and, in fact, that he ought to give you half of all that he possessed—we all knew he had a lot of money somewhere."

"Will it be wronging his relations if I take this legacy?" asked Bernard.

"If you take it? Why, Bernard, how silly you are! You'll deserve to starve if you don't take what the man has left you," cried his mother, angrily.

"I won't take it—if any one else ought to have it," said Bernard.

"Simpleton!" muttered his mother. Then she added, "He hadn't a single relation nearer than a second cousin, who is a rich brewer, so you may make your mind quite easy about that."

Bernard felt much relieved. In that case he would not have any scruples in accepting the legacy which his late trustee had left him, and how welcome the money would be!

"My boy," cried his mother, with more kindness, as she realised what a blessing the money would be to them, "you can return to Oxford, obtain your degree, and afterwards have a school of your own!"

Bernard smiled, as he mentally said good-bye to hard toil as an usher, or assistant-master in another man's school. He would have one of his own one day; but first there was something else of great importance for him to do.

Later in the day, after he had written to the lawyers thanking them for their communication, and asking them to be so kind as to pay the five thousand pounds to his account in the London and County Bank, and after he and his

mother had discussed Mr. Hamilton's somewhat sudden decease during an attack of pneumonia, he damped all her joy by declaring that the first step he should take would be to go to London to Doris Anderson, and the second would be to marry her forthwith.

"I think she will consent," he said, "as her only reason for refusing me before was that the debt was not paid. Now I have only to go to her and say, 'Doris, part of the debt is paid. I have come to marry you,' and then she will consent—oh, yes, I know she will consent!" and his face was bright with joy and thankfulness.

It was in vain that his mother vociferated and protested against his marrying Doris, he would not listen to her any longer.

"It is of no use your talking about the matter, mother," he said; "I am going to marry Doris, and no amount of talking will prevent me."

His mother was miserable; now less than ever did she desire Doris to be her son's wife.

As she lay tossing about on her sleepless bed that night she almost wished Bernard had not received his very substantial legacy, as he was going to use some of it for such a purpose.

In the early morning she dressed hurriedly, purposing to speak to her son on the subject before he started for Doncaster to catch the early express for London.

Early as she was, however, Bernard had been earlier, for he had already left the house when she came downstairs.

Mrs. Cameron hired a dogcart and ordered a man to drive her as fast as possible to Doncaster Station.

But it happened that the dogcart collided with a waggon on the way. No one was hurt, but there was some confusion and considerable delay, and when at length Mrs. Cameron was able to walk into the station at Doncaster, it was to catch sight of the express fast disappearing in the distance.

"I have lost my son!" said the unhappy woman to herself. "He will never speak to me again when he finds out about the letters I have suppressed. He will hate me—yes, he will hate me for doing it." The thought followed that she would deserve her fate, for if ever a parent provoked her son to wrath she had done so.

CHAPTER XXI.

BERNARD SEEKS DORIS.

The course of true love never did run smooth.
SHAKESPEARE.

"Is Miss Anderson in?"

"No, sir. She doesn't live here now, sir," answered Mrs. Austin, in melancholy tones.

"Not live here! Then where is she?" cried Bernard somewhat faintly, for in his surprise and consternation at not finding Doris there a return of the faintness that had before troubled him seemed imminent.

The good woman caught hold of him by the arm.

"Excuse me, Mr. Cameron, sir," she exclaimed. "You are ill. Come inside, sir. Come inside the house."

Bernard shook her hand off, declaring he was all right; but he walked unsteadily into the little sitting-room, where he had expected to find Doris.

"Sit down, sir; I'll get you a glass of water or a cup of tea in a moment--"

"Nonsense! I mean, I'm much obliged to you. But all I wish to know is this, where is Miss Anderson? Where-is-Miss-Anderson?"

"Oh, I'll tell you, sir, in a moment," answered Mrs. Austin, bustling about and getting him some water. "Take a drink, sir," and she held the glass to his lips.

He drank slowly. The room, which had been turning round and sinking into the ground, became once more stationary, whilst the clouds of darkness disappeared, and it was light again.

"There, you'll do now," said Mrs. Austin. "Miss Anderson told me that you had been ill."

"Never mind me. Where is she?" Bernard asked the question impatiently. Would the woman never answer him?

"There have been changes, sir, since you were here," said Mrs. Austin, rather nervously, standing before him, twisting her apron round her fingers, with her eyes fixed upon it. "It all came of the artist gentleman. I wish to goodness he had never set his foot inside of my door!"

"Do you mean Miss Sinclair's brother?" interrupted Bernard, taking alarm at Norman Sinclair's influencing Doris's movements. He remembered warning her against him in this very room, and telling her that if she grew to care for him she would not love her Bernard any more.

"Yes, Mr. Sinclair. I begged her not to listen to him. But she did. And he came again and again, until he had persuaded her to stop making those pictures and give up her business, which was paying her so grandly."

"Give up her business! Did you say he persuaded her to give up her business? Did she do that?"

"Yes, sir, yes. Didn't she tell you? For, now I come to think of it, she had done that before you were ill, when she went to see you at Richmond."

"Had she taken such a step then? She never told me so. She never said a word about it to me."

"Didn't she, sir? Then perhaps she thought you were too ill to be bothered. She told me when she returned from Richmond that she had seen you off by train for the north, hoping that your native air and your mother's nursing would restore you. Not that it has done much for you, sir, as far as I can see—"

"Never mind that. Tell me what Miss Anderson did next?" Bernard asked anxiously.

"She told me that she sold what she had left of the pictures she had finished, and all the materials she had bought in for others; and then, having given up the business, she began seeking employment again, answering advertisements, applying at shops, and all that sort of weary work. It made my heart ache to see her come in at nights tired out, pale, and worn—a lady like that, who ought only to have been fatigued with cycling, or tennis, or amusing herself as other young ladies do! 'Perhaps I shall have more success to-morrow,' she would say to me, with her patient smile. But months went by, and it was always the same, until, at length, she came towards the end of her savings, and then she began to economise and pinch herself of comforts, and—necessaries."

"You don't say so!" cried Bernard in consternation.

"I'm afraid you are ill, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Austin, seeing him turn very pale.

"No, I'm all right. Go on," he said though his old faintness was troubling him.

"Well, sir, the day came when Miss Anderson said to me very plainly that she had no money left, or next to none, so she begged me to allow her to give up her rooms and just have the garret to sleep in until she found work that she could do."

"Why didn't she write to me?" cried Bernard.

"She hadn't much time for writing, sir, when she was all day seeking work; and at nights she was too tired, too down-hearted. And I think, sir, she kept looking for a letter, which didn't come, from you."

"From me? Why, I wrote to her almost every week when I was well enough, until, latterly, having no answer, I became discouraged. But hurry on with your story. Where is she now?"

"She had a letter from Miss Sinclair which made her very glad; and then Miss Sinclair found her some work, about which she was very hopeful at first; but it was difficult to do, I am sure, for she used to come home quite fagged out, and it must have paid badly, for she had very little money. 'I'm such a poor hand

at it, Mrs. Austin!' she used to say. And sometimes she used to add, 'My heart isn't hard enough for it.' Poor dear! If it was a hard heart the work wanted, Miss Anderson was quite the wrong lady for it. I've seen ladies who would 'skin a flint,' as the saying is, but—"

"Never mind that!" interrupted Bernard with more impatience than courtesy. "Tell me where Miss Anderson is?"

Mrs. Austin began again, for she would tell things in her own way. "She fell into a poor state of health, and got a hacking cough, which wouldn't be cured, though I made her linseed tea, and honey and lemon, and—"

"Where is she? Speak! Tell me, is she alive?" For now Bernard's fear caused him to leap to the conclusion that Doris must have died.

"Oh, dear, sir, she's alive, of course! Though she was in a bad state at that time, and had a regular churchyard cough."

"Go on. You frighten me."

"I'm sorry, sir. Where was I? Oh, there came a day when she couldn't go out. I made her lie on the sofa in my back parlour, and it just happened that Mr. Sinclair called: he had been many times when she was out, but that day he called when she was in. He had a very long talk with Miss Anderson. And she was very much excited after he had gone. She cried a good bit, and then, next day, his sister came to see her, and afterwards he called again, and then Miss Anderson sat down and wrote a letter to you, sir, and another one to an old servant in Yorkshire, and she cried while she was writing them. I think those were very important letters, sir, for she was very anxious that they should be safely posted. I had to put on my bonnet and take them to the post myself, for she would trust no one else. And then she waited so anxiously for the answers, but only the old servant wrote. Oh, sir, why didn't you write?"

"I received no letter from her. I have had none from her since the first week after my return to Yorkshire."

"And I'm sure she wrote to you, sir, several times."

Bernard uttered an exclamation. It was clear to him that his mother must have seized his letters and kept them from him.

"There was something in the old servant's letter," continued Mrs. Austin, "which struck my dear young lady all of a heap and made her go about like a stricken lamb, with her poor young face so white and drawn. She did not cry then, sir. I only wished she would, for there was a heart-broken look in her poor face. Then Miss Sinclair came, full of affectionate concern, and she did her best to comfort Miss Anderson; but in vain.

"'It's no use,' she said to me, 'I cannot make Doris cheer up. I shall send my brother.'

"And then, the next thing was Mr. Sinclair came, and after he had gone,

Miss Anderson said to me, quiet-like, 'I'm not going to be poor any longer, Mrs. Austin!' And then she went on to say, 'It will be better for you, dear Mrs. Austin; I've only been a burden on you lately, and now you will be well paid for all you have done for me—not that money will ever repay you, my good, kind friend!' and, throwing her arms round my neck, she kissed me more than once. 'I should have died if it hadn't been for you,' she said. 'And now I am going to live and be Mr. Sinclair's wife. He is rich now, and I have promised to marry him.'"

"To marry him!" Bernard exclaimed, starting up so violently that he overturned a small table. "Did she say to marry him?"

"Yes, sir," Mrs. Austin answered, with great sympathy; "I'm sorry to say she did."

"But she is *my* promised wife!" cried Bernard, picking up the table and beginning to pace up and down the room, in his agitation.

"Indeed, sir!" Mrs. Austin's round eyes opened widely in astonishment. She had always understood that Mr. Cameron loved Doris, and indeed she wondered who could help loving her! But it was altogether another thing to hear that Doris had promised to marry Mr. Cameron.

"Where is she? I must speak to her—must hear from her own lips how it was that she could do such a thing. Where is she?" cried Bernard.

"Wait a minute, please, sir," said Mrs. Austin. "I must tell you that after the engagement was settled Miss Sinclair came the next day and took Miss Anderson away. Miss Sinclair gave me her address,—Steele's Road, Hampstead, and said that I was to forward all Miss Anderson's letters there. Miss Sinclair also gave me a five-pound-note, and Miss Anderson promised to come and see me, and settle up everything before she got married. She begged me to pack up all her things, and take care of them for her; but she said, too, that she would never be able to come and live here again. 'No,' I said, 'you are going to be a grand lady, and you'll forget all about poor Mrs. Austin!' But she said, 'No, no, indeed!' and she cried, and kissed me. 'I'm not very happy,' she said, and could say no more for weeping, especially as Miss Sinclair came up to urge her to make haste, for the cab was waiting.

"Not very happy? I should think not indeed! Oh, Doris!" The last words were said very low, as Bernard turned his head away for a few moments.

"She looked miserable, sir. I'm thinking it was only for a home and support that she was thinking of marriage."

"But she wouldn't sell herself for that!" exclaimed Bernard.

"And then it was such a grievous thing, sir, that you didn't write to her. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. And very sick at heart my poor dear young lady was, many and many a time, while she was looking for the post bringing her a letter, in the days before she got engaged to Mr. Sinclair."

"But I did write! I wrote many more letters than I received from her. I never heard from her after the first week."

"Then there has been foul play, sir, somewhere! Letters have been stopped, and have got into the wrong hands before to-day."

Bernard knew well who must have been the culprit. His mother had wronged and sinned against him in a way which would be hard to forgive. She had done all she possibly could to destroy his happiness in this world. But he told himself that he must not waste time in thinking of that just now; he would hasten to Doris and have a talk with her.

"Do you say she is at Hampstead?" he inquired, hastily.

"She went there with Miss Sinclair, but they are not there now, sir. They have gone to the seaside somewhere, for the benefit of Miss Anderson's health."

"Gone!" cried Bernard. "To the seaside! What seaside? Where?"

"I don't know, sir. They'll tell you at-Steele's Road, Hampstead."

"I'll go there at once. You've been a good friend to Miss Anderson. Allow me," and he pressed a sovereign into the landlady's hand, and hurried out of the house.

In the shortest possible time he was at Hampstead, inquiring at Steele's Road for Miss Anderson's address. Mr. Sinclair happened to be out—which Bernard thought was just as well for him; but the servant being under the impression that his master was somewhere about the house, Bernard was shown up into the studio. There, as he waited, he perceived more than one painting in which Doris's fair sweet face was beautifully delineated. The sight of it there, however, only maddened her unhappy lover. What right had the fellow to make Doris's loveliness so common? What right had he to possess the presentment of it there? By the power of his strong will and helped by his riches he had prevailed upon the lonely girl to promise him her hand in marriage. In the absence of her own true lover he had stolen her from him. But a Nemesis had come, was coming indeed; and when Doris saw her Bernard and spoke with him, face to face, she would throw over the usurper, and matters would be readjusted as happily, nay, more happily, than if this engagement had not occurred.

"For things can never go wholly wrong
If the heart be true and the love be strong"—

quoted Bernard to himself, "and there shall be no mere engagement, but a marriage shall take place forthwith. For, thank God! I am rich enough now," he said to himself, "to be able to marry my Doris. Yes, all will come right when I see her again."

A maidservant entered, bringing in an address on a slip of paper. "Mr.

Sinclair is out," she said, "but this is where we have to send all letters that come, either for Miss Sinclair or Miss Anderson."

"Thank you," said Bernard, taking up the scrap of paper, and reading, "The Queen's Hotel, Hastings," upon it.

"I will go there immediately," he said to himself, as he left the house. "I will take the very first express train to Hastings." He hailed a cab. "Drive me to Charing Cross," he ordered, "and drive your fastest."

CHAPTER XXII

TOO LATE! TOO LATE!

There is no disguise which can long conceal love when it does, or feign it when it does not exist.—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

"How strange it is to be rich!" cried Alice Sinclair, as she sat with Doris in a shelter by the sea at Hastings. "It is delightful!"

Doris smiled, but her smile only seemed to enhance the sadness in the expression of her beautiful face, and she shivered slightly as she drew a fur-lined cloak more closely round her. "This is different from account-collecting," she said, looking at the fashionably dressed people sauntering by, and then allowing her eyes to rest upon the beauty of the sunlit waves before them.

"Yes, or making imitation oil-paintings either!" exclaimed Alice. "Who would have thought to see us, now, that we were two poor girls toiling in a London garret not long ago?"

"To feed a 'Lion' and pay a monstrous debt," said Doris, plaintively.

"And now our task is done," continued Alice, with cheerfulness. "The Lion is fed, and is roaring loudly in the Royal Academy: moreover, he has food enough for a lifetime. And as for you, your struggle with the hard cold world is ended, dear," and as she spoke she laid her hand on Doris's thin arm. "Are you not glad?" she asked a little wistfully, for the sadness of her friend was a great trouble to her.

"I try to be," answered Doris.

"Try to be?" Alice raised her eyebrows.

"Yes. I have to try, you know, for I don't feel able to rejoice about anything

in these days." The tears came to Doris's eyes as she spoke, and her lips trembled.

"Poor dear! That is because you are out of health--"

"Sometimes I wish it was out of life," interrupted Doris wearily. For it was a dark hour with her, and, in her trouble in losing Bernard's love and having promised to marry a man for whom she had no affection, she had for the time being lost her usual happy faith in the golden thread of her Heavenly Father's love.

"Oh, Doris!" Alice was shocked. Things were even worse than she had feared.

"I cannot help it," returned Doris. "I am sad, and there is no denying it. Whichever way I look I see nothing but sadness--sadness in the past, in the present--and, God help me, in the future." Her tones were miserable.

"In the future with Norman? Oh, Doris, you cannot *love* him!" Alice's tones were full of distress.

"At least, I am not deceiving him. He knows what my feelings are."

"Do you think he does--quite?" asked Alice, softly.

"Yes, quite. And he is content: he says the love will come in time--that he will win it."

"I don't think he will," said Alice--they were talking in low tones which others could not hear, as they had the shelter to themselves--"love cannot be compelled. I don't know much about it myself," she added candidly; "no man has ever wanted to marry me, and I have never cared for any one so much as I care for Norman, but I have read about love in books, and I know it cannot be forced. You do not love Norman."

"Alice," protested Doris, "you ought not to say that!"

"Listen, dear," said Alice, "in your innermost heart you know that I am right. I am only calling a spade a spade, and it isn't the least use to make a pretence of calling it anything else. You do not love Norman. Now, dear, hear me out, *you do not love him at all*. I was watching you this morning when you received that letter from him, and you looked infinitely bored. When he is over here you escape from his presence whenever you can, especially if I am not with you. You say that he is not being deceived, but does he realise what a wretched man he will be if he marries you when you are feeling like that? He is full of love and tenderness towards you, and you have not even the old liking for him and interest in his talk and doings which you had at first. You can, in fact, barely tolerate him now. Think, then, what it will be to have to live with him for years and years, until you are old and die--"

"Hush, dear! Perhaps I shall die soon." There was a peculiar sound in the poor girl's voice, and Alice, looking at her with searching eyes, could see that her heart was breaking, and that she would indeed die soon if she were not released

from what was slowly killing her.

"The marriage must not take place," said Alice, firmly. "If not for your own sake, you must stop it for Norman's. If *your* heart is breaking now, *his* will break after marriage, when he finds that he has only bought an empty shell without its kernel, a lovely woman without a heart which can return his love, a wife without the wifely qualities he craves. Poor old Norman! He deserves a better fate," and there was indignation in her tones.

"Yes," said Doris, "it is true. He deserves a better fate."

They were silent for a few minutes after she had said that. The girls sat watching the sunlit sea dotted here and there with boats of various descriptions. They listened to the gentle lapping of the waves, the shouts and laughter of the children paddling on the beach, and the scraps of conversation from the passers-by. But mentally they were seeing very different scenes, and they were hearing, too, other more interesting words. Doris was thinking of Bernard, of the gradual growth of their love for each other, and his proposal upon the hill at Askern in Yorkshire, and, later on, his more mature declaration of love, in Mrs. Austin's house in North London. Alice, on the other hand, was thinking of her brother Norman, and of the pained expression of his face when Doris too manifestly avoided a *tête-à-tête* with him. If it were so now, what would it be when they were married? What prospect of happiness could there be for either of them?

"Look! See who is coming towards us!" exclaimed Doris, suddenly. Her face had lighted up with a smile of singular beauty, and she was leaning forward the better to discern the features of a tall young man hurrying towards them through the promenaders on the front.

"Why, it is Mr. Cameron!" cried Alice, in great surprise. "What can he want here?"

It was soon evident what he wanted, for he came straight up to Doris, exclaiming, "Ah, you are here! How are you?" His eyes sought hers, eagerly and with great wistfulness. "And how are you, Miss Sinclair," he added, holding out his hand to Alice; but his eyes went back to Doris. "They told me at 'The Queen's,'" he went on hurriedly, "that I should find you here, so I came straight along, looking in at every shelter."

"We are very glad to see you," said Alice, rather gravely. Was it for the best, she wondered, for her brother and Doris, that the latter's first lover should return to claim her? She knew instinctively that it was for that purpose this very resolute young man had come. Perhaps, indeed, this would be the solution of the very unsatisfactory state of things she had been grieving over.

Doris said nothing. She dared not bid Bernard welcome, but she could not feign displeasure at his persistency in following her there: it was impossible for her to simulate unconcern and coldness. She was glad to see him, and to know, by

his very presence and the way in which he came to her, that she still possessed his love: a great weight was lifted from her heart, and a glow as of returning happiness crept through her frame, bringing the pretty colour into her cheeks, reddening her pale lips, and brightening the eyes which had shed so many tears.

Alice, glancing at her, understood that Doris's happiness, perchance even her life itself, might depend upon her interview with Bernard at this fateful time. "He has her heart," thought Alice, "he may as well have her altogether: for Doris without a heart would make poor Norman as miserable as she would be herself." Therefore Alice said briskly:

"I am glad you have come up, Mr. Cameron, for I want to do some shopping, and you can sit here with Miss Anderson whilst I am away. I did not like leaving her alone, but now I can go. You will be all right with Mr. Cameron, Doris, and I will return presently," and before they could make any coherent reply, she had set off, walking briskly away from the sea-front.

Bernard gave one grateful look after her, then he quickly turned to Doris. "I may sit down," he said, "may I not? For I have much to say."

Doris bowed. She could not speak, for hope and happiness had come to her, which she was vainly endeavouring to resist. Bernard was there, she had him all to herself; might she not for one half-hour give herself up to the happy present before she was made miserable for life?

"Have you anything to say to me first?" asked Bernard, gently. She looked so frail that he determined to be very gentle with her, and he said to himself that he could not really believe that she was engaged to Norman Sinclair, unless she said it with her own lips.

Doris could not speak. She endeavoured to do so, but in vain. It did not seem to her to be right to say what she wanted to tell him, and yet she could not utter the words that duty demanded. Therefore she remained silent.

"I have given her a chance to speak of her engagement to Sinclair, and she has not availed herself of it; therefore I will not believe she is engaged to him," said Bernard to himself; and then one of his hands stole under Doris's fur cloak and clasped hers warmly, as he cried in low yet earnest tones, "My darling, I have brought good news. I have had a legacy left me in part payment of my lost money."

Doris uttered a cry of joy. "My father!" she exclaimed. "You have heard from him! He has sent you money! Oh, thank God! Where is father? Tell me quickly! And did he mention mother?" She spoke rapidly, in intense eagerness.

Bernard was grieved to disappoint her; still, the truth had to be told, so he said quickly, "The money was not from your father. Mr. Hamilton, his co-trustee, has died and left me five thousand pounds in his will, he said, as some compensation for my lost money. Immediately I knew it I came to claim you, my

dearest!" He drew the shrinking girl a little nearer. "I always said," he continued—"I always said that you and no other woman in the world should be my wife."

"I cannot! Oh, I cannot!" The words were only just audible, but reached Bernard's ears at length.

"Cannot!" He looked at her with pained surprise. Being very sanguine and also very young, he had already, in the last few minutes, almost forgotten the unwelcome news of her having become engaged to Norman Sinclair, which he had heard in London, and which had hurried him to Hastings. "Cannot!" he repeated. "But you must, and you shall! I have been too poor and too ill to claim you for some time. Now, however, that that money has come to me, I have immediately hastened here, in order to claim the fulfilment of your promise made to me upon the hill at Askern Spa. Don't trifle with me, Doris," he added, with a little choke in his manly voice. "I have been through so very much that I cannot bear it."

"I have, too," she faltered. "God knows what I have been through."

"But that is ended," he said, quickly. "Thank God, that is all ended, and I have come now to *claim your promise?*

"I cannot marry you—I cannot," she repeated.

"Why cannot you?" he demanded.

"Oh, Bernard, do not try to question me. Dear Bernard," she looked up at him beseechingly, "be so very good as not to ask me that question. Take my answer, dear, and go away."

"Go away! Doris, do you know what you are saying? I come to you in order to claim you for my own, and you tell me to go away."

"Forgive me, dear," she said, weeping now and turning away her face so that he might not see her tears. "Forgive me, dear, and go."

"I shall not. I cannot—I will not unless you say that you have ceased to love me."

"I cannot say that, Bernard, for I love you," Doris answered, "and I know that I shall never love any other man as I love you." Then she tried to rise, as she ended miserably, "Nevertheless, *I cannot marry you.*"

"Sit still." He placed her on the seat again. "You say that you love me, and yet persist in saying you cannot marry me. I must know how that is. You must tell me, dear. I have a right to know."

Slowly the words dropped from Doris's lips, "I cannot marry you, because I am engaged to Norman Sinclair."

"Engaged to Norman Sinclair?" Bernard repeated indignantly. "Then it is true, that tale they told me in London. You—my promised wife—have engaged yourself to marry that man!"

"Yes, it-is-true," again the words dropped falteringly from the poor girl's

lips. "But I could not help it, Bernard," she added, quickly. "I could not help it—I was obliged. You see, you did not write. There was nothing before me except starvation; and then Norman came to me with his offer, and I was tempted. Oh, Bernard!" she exclaimed, "why did you not write? I waited and waited for a letter so anxiously, especially after I had told you about Mr. Sinclair's offer. Oh, you might have written just one line!" She looked at him with reproach in her blue eyes.

"My dear girl, I did not receive that letter, or any at all from you after the first week of my return to Moss, although I wrote repeatedly. Some one has suppressed our letters, Doris!"

"Cruel! Cruel!" cried the girl, instantly suspecting who it was. "But how was it that, not hearing, you did not come to me in order to ascertain the reason? It is such a long, long time since you returned to Yorkshire, almost a year—and it seems more."

"I have been so ill," replied Bernard sadly, "and when I recovered from my first illness, I caught chills and had bad relapses. I was not out of the doctor's hands during nine months, and my mother nursed me so devotedly. How could I suspect that at the same time she was grievously injuring you and me?"

"And then there was another thing," complained poor Doris. "I wrote to Susan, our old servant, you know, and asked her about you; whereupon she replied that I was to think no more about you, as she had heard on good authority that you were going to marry a young lady at Doncaster."

"Oh, but you couldn't believe that, Doris? Surely you had more faith in my love!" exclaimed Bernard, reproachfully.

"What else could I believe when you never wrote and she said that?"

"Doris, I should not have believed it of you!" exclaimed Bernard, stopping short, with a little frown, as he remembered that she had become engaged to Norman Sinclair.

Doris looked up miserably. "Circumstances were too much for me," she said, "and, forgive me—I thought that they had been too much for you."

"Did you think I was so weak?" cried Bernard—"so weak," he repeated, "as not to be true to the only girl I have ever loved?"

"How was it," asked Doris, gently—"how was it that Susan could hear on good authority that you were going to marry a Doncaster lady?"

"Well, if you must know," said Bernard, "my mother set her heart on the match, and she was always having the girl over and trying to leave us together, and taking her with us everywhere, and she must have spread it about that we were engaged; so I daresay she told Susan the same thing."

"Which would account for Susan's saying that she had the news on good authority," interposed Doris. "But tell me, was the girl rich? And did you like

her?" and she looked searchingly at Bernard.

"Yes, she was very well off," he admitted, "and she was nice enough; but of course I did not love her, for I love you."

"It's very, *very* sad," said Doris, the tears rising to her eyes as she spoke. "But, dear Bernard, there is nothing to be done. It is too late! Too late!"

"Oh, but it is not. You are not married yet. You will have to break with Sinclair."

"I cannot. He is a good and honourable man, and he loves me. I cannot break my promise and make him miserable."

"But your engagement was made upon false premises: you thought I was faithless, and I was not. Everything must be explained to Sinclair, and as a man of honour he will feel bound to release you."

Doris shook her head. "I cannot make him miserable," she said.

It was in vain Bernard argued and pleaded, he could get no concession at all from the poor distracted girl, who simply repeated in different words her one cry, "I cannot, dear, I cannot be your wife."

The young man became angry, at length, at her unreasonableness, as he called it, declaring that she could not love him as much as he loved her, or she would not see such great difficulties in the way of their union; and when, upon his adding that he would see Mr. Sinclair and thrash the matter out with him, she said that she could not consent to that, he got quite out of patience with her, and, saying goodbye rather coldly, went away towards the railway station, with the intention of taking the next train for London.

CHAPTER XXIII. ALICE SINCLAIR'S INTERVENTION.

It never could be kind, dear, to give a needless pain:
It never could be honest, dear, to sin for greed again,
And there could not be a world, dear, while God is true above,
When right and wrong are governed by any law but love.

Anon.

Bernard Cameron was hurrying along towards the station when he met Alice

Sinclair.

The girl looked immensely surprised to see him there, and immediately exclaimed:

"What? You here, Mr. Cameron? Why, I left you in charge of Miss Anderson until I returned. I was on my way back, now," she added.

"I am off by the next train to town," said Bernard, in very injured tones. "I was a fool," he added, bitterly, "to come down here at all."

Alice read the lines of distress and disappointment written upon his face, and was very patient with him.

"There isn't a train to London for at least an hour," she said, "and you must not think of going until you have had some tea. Let us return to Doris, and then we will go into the Creamery and have some tea."

"I must beg you to excuse me," said Bernard, stiffly. "I have taken leave of Miss Anderson, and must now bid you good-bye." He held out his hand as he spoke.

Alice perceived that he had been hard hit. "You must not leave me like this," she said, gently. "Mr. Cameron, I thought you and I were friends."

"So we are. You have always been good to me, but—" He stopped short, and his eyes wandered in the direction of the station.

"It is no use thinking of starting to London yet. As I said, there is no train for fully an hour. Tell me," she regarded him very sympathisingly, "what is the matter? Have you and Doris quarrelled?"

Bernard looked at her kind sympathising face and his resolution wavered. "Quarrelled is not the word," he said; adding, with an effort, "I should like to tell you all about it, Miss Sinclair, if I might."

"I wish you would," said Alice, earnestly—it was one cause of her influence with others that she was always in earnest. "Come and let us walk up and down in Cambridge Gardens, where it is quiet. Then we can have a long talk."

They turned into the less frequented street, and walked slowly along, whilst in low, rapid tones Bernard told Alice all his trouble, and especially the grievous fact that his and Doris's letters had been suppressed and kept from them for many months, finally ending by complaining bitterly of Doris's ultimatum.

"Doris must not marry your brother, Miss Sinclair." Bernard's tone was as decided and masterful as the artist's as he concluded with these words: "She must marry me. We loved each other long before your brother ever saw her, and we love each other still—and shall until death."

It seemed to Alice, walking by Bernard's side and listening to his low, earnest voice, that no power on earth would be able to separate him from the girl he loved, and certainly Norman would not endeavour to do so. Norman was a man of honour, and when he learnt how the two lovers had been kept apart

and separated by the wickedness of Mrs. Cameron, and after everything was explained to him he would release Doris from her engagement, no matter at what cost to himself.

Alice tried to say something of this sort to Bernard, but he scarcely listened.

He was glad of her for a confidante, but did not want to hear her views or listen to her advice, because in his own mind he had already solved the problem. And first, his thoughts, as was natural, returned to Doris, from whom he had parted in anger.

"All this time," he said, hastily, as if only then realising it, "Doris, whom I left in anger, must be in distress. She must be suffering intensely, for you know she is so very sensitive. I must therefore return to her at once, and must encourage her to hope that all will yet be well. If she will not throw Sinclair over--"

"Allow me to remark that you are speaking of *my brother*," interposed Alice.

"I beg your pardon," said Bernard, in remorseful tones, as he looked at the kind girl, whose colour had risen. "It was an awful shame for me to speak like that, but--" He broke off, and began again, "I thought we were agreed that she would have to give him up."

"That is not the way to put it," said Alice. "My brother, who is really the soul of honour, will have to release Doris from her promise. He must do it--and will, when he knows everything."

"Yes, of course. As I was saying, if Doris will not--I beg your pardon, as she cannot in honour release herself, I shall go to Sinclair and tell him that it will be most dishonourable of him if he does not release her from her engagement--"

"That won't do!" exclaimed Alice; "that won't do at all. If you go to Norman in that spirit you will soon be outside his door again. My brother is a bit of a lion, you know, in more senses than one. He might listen to any one speaking very courteously, but if a bear comes in and tries to get his bone, oh! there *will* be a pandemonium!"

"Well, he must be told--"

"I will tell him," said Alice. "I will go to London to-morrow, and will see him and explain everything to him. It will not be a very pleasant task--it will pain me very much to make my brother unhappy, but I will do it for dear Doris and for you."

"It is very, *very* good of you," said Bernard, gratefully, "to say that you will go and explain everything to your brother. Perhaps you will be able to do it in a nicer way than I could."

Alice smiled. She certainly thought that was possible. "Norman is very good," she said. "I am sure he will release Doris, but it will be a dreadful sorrow to him, for he loves her very much."

"I am sure of that. Though he shouldn't have come poaching in my pre-

serves!”

The last words were uttered so low that he did not intend Alice to hear them. But the girl heard, and instantly retorted:

”You forget that was the fault of the person who kept back Doris’s letters and yours, causing her to think that you no longer loved her; so that naturally both she and Norman concluded that she was free to marry whom she pleased.”

”Yes, of course. You are right. I beg your pardon for forgetting that,” said Bernard, penitently.

”Now we will return to Doris together, and after we have explained to her how matters stand, we will go and have some tea at the Creamery in Robertson Street. Afterwards—”

Alice paused, looking wistfully at him.

”I will keep out of her way until you return from London,” Bernard said, understanding that he ought not to proceed further until Norman had freed Doris from her engagement to him.

CHAPTER XXIV. NORMAN SINCLAIR’S LETTER.

Not only those above us on the height,
 With love and praise and reverence I greet:
 Not only those who walk in paths of light
 With glad, untiring feet:
 These, too, I reverence toiling up the slope,
 And resting not upon their rugged way,
 Who plant their feet on faith and cling to hope,
 And climb as best they may.

And even these I praise, who, being weak,
 Were led by folly into deep disgrace:
 Now striving on a pathway rough and bleak,
 To gain a higher place.

* * * * *

Oh! struggling souls, be brave and full of cheer,
 Nor let your holy purpose swerve, or break!

The way grows smoother and the light more clear
 At every step you take.
 Lo! in the upward path God's boundless love
 Supports you evermore upon your way:
 You cannot fail to reach the heights above
 Who climb as best you may!
 EUDORA S. BUMSTEAD.

Doris sat alone in the shelter, after Bernard had left her, in a state of unhappiness so great that she could not even weep.

"All is over between us," she sighed, "and Bernard has gone away in anger. How wretched it is! Nothing could be more wretched! Nothing! I am the most unfortunate girl in all the world!" And she sat with her pale face turned towards the sunlit waves, watching them and yet in reality seeing nothing except her own utter misery. What had become of all her prayers, she wondered—the prayers which she had poured out to her Heavenly Father from a sorrow-laden heart?

He had saved her from starvation, and placed her in a position of great temporal prosperity; yes, but what about her previous many, many prayers for Bernard, for their mutual reconciliation and union when a part at least of the debt was paid, and for the happy and useful married life which they had once planned together on the hill at Askern, and for which she had so often longed and prayed?

"I have done my best," thought Doris, "and have tried to serve God all the while. The thought of Him was ever in my heart, and I gave up my prosperous little business—all that I had—in obedience to His Voice, speaking to me through Norman's words and my own conceptions of what I ought to do. I cast my all into His treasury: and all the time—every day—I prayed for Bernard—and for our future together—until—until I was led by circumstances to believe that he did not love me. And since then—since then everything has gone wrong, and I seem to have lost hope and faith in God and man."

She was in despair. It was the darkest hour of all her sorrowful young life, and she could see no gleam of light in any direction.

How long she sat thus she never knew, but it seemed an immense time before she heard the cheerful voice of Alice behind her saying brightly, "Doris! Doris darling, we have brought you good news!"

"There is no good news for me," answered Doris, without turning her head, and the two who loved her were aghast at the hopelessness of her tones.

"Doris!" exclaimed Bernard, "I have returned, in order to bring you the glad news that there is hope for us, and help, for Miss Sinclair is going to be our good

angel and is going to save the situation.”

”How? What? I don’t understand,” said Doris, turning to look at them in relief and surprise. ”Do explain, please,” she added, tremulously, feeling quite unable to bear any more suspense.

Sitting down beside her, they hastened to tell everything, and then to combat her conscientious objections to Alice’s proposed arbitration, as it seemed to her, at first, that it was scarcely right for Alice to persuade her brother to release his *fiancée*.

”I shall not persuade him,” replied Alice, ”I shall simply tell him the facts of the case, and leave him to act as it seems right to him. But I will tell you this, Doris,” she added, ”I know dear old Norman will at once release you from your engagement.”

Then Alice carried them off to the Creamery, and, after they had partaken of a charming little tea, she invited Bernard to meet her at the Warrior Square Station at five o’clock on the following day, when she expected to be back from London, in order that she might tell him first what her brother decided. When that matter was settled to every one’s satisfaction, Bernard took leave of the girls and went away, to pass the time as best he could until Norman Sinclair’s ultimatum was received.

* * * * *

The following evening, as Doris sat in one of the large balconies of the Queen’s Hotel, enjoying the fine air, the pleasing sea view, and most of all the delightful hope that all might yet be well, Alice, who had been to London, and Bernard, who had met her at the station, came to her there.

”All is well,” said Alice, ”as I knew it would be. Doris,” she took the girl’s thin hand in hers, and placed it gently within Bernard’s, ”Norman has sent you your freedom. You can marry Bernard now as soon as you like, and Norman hopes you will be very happy. He has sent you a letter, dear,” she said in conclusion, putting one into Doris’s hand.

Doris swayed in her chair. She could not even see the letter for the tears which filled her eyes.

Alice, too, began to cry, and Bernard had to clear his voice two or three times before he could speak.

”I am afraid I was a little rough on your brother, Miss Sinclair,” he said at length. ”He is indeed a man of honour. I am sure I beg to withdraw all that I have said against him, and to apologise for my hot words. I hope that you will tell him how grateful we are when you see him.”

”I’m afraid I shall not see him for a very long time,” answered Alice; ”he is

going abroad alone." She looked deeply pained. "He wishes me to stay with Doris and see after her getting married." She said the last words more cheerfully, for, being a woman, the idea of a wedding was pleasant.

"There won't be much to see about in my wedding," said Doris, with a smile, "for I shall have to do without a trousseau and without a good many things, because I am not taking Bernard any money. You will have a poor bride, Bernard."

"I shall not! You will be the very best bride that ever a man could have!" he cried, rapturously.

Then Alice went away, and left them together. Later on in the evening, when Doris was alone, she opened Norman's letter, which was as follows:

"DEAR DORIS,

"I give you back your promise to marry me. I am sorry for the mistakes which have been made and the suffering through which you have passed, and trust that your future life with Mr. Cameron may be all joy and gladness.

"You will, I am sure, do me the justice to believe that had I known he was true to you I should not have tried to induce you to become engaged to me, however much I loved and esteemed you.

"Yours very faithfully, "NORMAN SINCLAIR."

Doris shed tears over the letter, for she knew that, reticent though the writer was about his own feelings, she must have made him exceedingly unhappy.

And when Doris thanked God that night before she slept that He had heard her prayers, and that He had mercifully given her her heart's desire, she prayed, also, for Norman Sinclair that he might be comforted and blessed exceedingly.

CHAPTER XXV. A HAPPY WEDDING.

Never to part till angels call us home.
Song, "Golden Love."

The span of life's not long enough,

Nor deep enough the sea,
 Nor broad enough this weary world
 To part my love from me.
Anon.

So they were wed, and merrily rang the bells,

Merrily rang the bells when they were wed.
 LONGFELLOW.

"After all, Doris," said Alice, the next morning, "you will have a trousseau, and a very pretty one, too. For I am going to buy it for you. Yes, indeed, it is to be my wedding present."

"I don't know how to thank you," said Doris.

"Then don't try. Pay me the compliment of accepting what I have much pleasure in giving."

Doris rose, and, throwing her arms round her friend's neck, gave her a hug.

"How soon do you intend to be married?" asked Alice, presently.

"In three weeks. There is no reason for delay."

"Of course not. The sooner the better. Where shall you be married?" asked Alice, a shadow falling across her face at the thought that she could scarcely take her friend home to be married from Norman's house.

"Oh, here, in this dear place, where my happiness has come to me!" said Doris.

"Here? At Hastings? From this hotel?"

"Yes, why not? I am sure the Vicar of All Saints, whose church I have attended, will marry us."

"Oh, I don't doubt that! Yes, of course you shall be married here."

"There's only one thing," said Doris. "The Austins are not here. And I must have dear Mrs. Austin, and her good son Sam, at my wedding."

"Send for them all," interposed Bernard, entering the room and overhearing her last remark. He had been for a bathe, and was looking well and happy. There is no greater restorative for body and mind than happiness.

"Send for them?" said Doris. "Oh, but I don't think they will come if we send for them. I think I shall have to go and see Mrs. Austin, and arrange with her about their coming down."

"You're not strong enough to take all that trouble," said Bernard. "It will

take you all your time until our wedding-day"—he spoke with joy and pride—"to recover sufficiently for it and for our little tour afterwards."

"We'll not go far," said Doris. "Why should we go far," she laughed happily, "when we have found each other?"

"Why indeed? Supposing we go to the Isle of Wight, will that do?"

"Yes, charmingly. I have never been there. But, Bernard, I must go to see dear old Mrs. Austin and invite her to the wedding."

"Cannot you write to her?"

"No, a letter will not do. Think how good she was to me when I was penniless and a stranger in London! Can I ever forget how she received me into her house, and trusted me to repay her as I could? And then she gave me her late son's painting materials, and tried to make me believe I should succeed as an artist,—and, afterwards, when that had failed, she comforted and encouraged me, and got her nephew to find me work, and, later, interested Alice in employing me; and then afterwards, when I gave up the business and became poor again, she stood by me, trusting and caring for me more lovingly than ever. Bernard, if there is one friend in all the world whom we ought to value and esteem next to the Sinclairs it is Mrs. Austin, and, next to her is Sam Austin, the cabman."

"What did he do?" asked Bernard, though indeed he partly knew.

"He saved me from despair that first night, when, on coming to London by the night train, I found my godmother, Miss Earnshaw, had died, and that I was alone in the great metropolis, with only a few shillings in my pocket, and no claim upon any one in all the vast city. He took me to his mother, and persuaded her to receive me into her house; and then, afterwards, when I had made my first little water-colour sketches, he drove me round to the dealers in his cab, and would take no payment then, nor afterwards, until I was earning a lot of money, and then compelled him to do so."

"He shall come to our wedding, too," said Bernard. "They shall both be our honoured guests."

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!"

"And I'll tell you what we will do, darling. We will give them a wedding-present, yes, we will!"

"Oh, thank you!"

"Nay, you must not thank me, dear! It is you who will invite the wedding guests, that is always the prerogative of the bride. I will pay their expenses, if you will allow me."

"Thank you, I will," said Doris, gladly.

"Shall we go up to town to invite her?" said Bernard, tentatively.

"I should like to do so," said Doris.

"But—"

"Wouldn't it be too tiring for you?" said Alice. "Otherwise," she added, "I should like to go up to shop with you in Bond Street."

"And I," said Bernard, "should like to go over to Richmond on business. The fact is, I have heard that the school in which I used to work is for sale, and I rather think of buying it. When I was a poor assistant there I used to think what a future it might have if it were more efficiently managed. How would you like to live on Richmond Hill, Doris?"

"Near the Terrace, with the loveliest view of the Thames to be seen anywhere! Oh, Bernard, how charming that would be!"

"Well, I'll go and look after the school, if you like; and if you come, too, we can see the Austins while we are in town and invite them to our wedding."

In about a week Doris was strong enough for this arrangement to be carried out. She and Bernard, accompanied by Alice as far as Victoria, where they separated, went to London for the day, and after going to Richmond, where negotiations were commenced for the purchase of Bernard's former school and the head master's house, they went on to King's Cross in order to see Mrs. Austin.

The good woman was delighted to see them together, apparently on such intimate terms.

"Miss Doris!" she cried. "And Mr. Cameron! And both looking so happy! So very happy," she repeated. "Don't tell me anything, I know it all. There'll be a wedding. I saw it in the fire last night. Come in. Come in."

They followed her into her little room, which seemed to Doris to be smaller and dingier than ever after the great rooms to which she was accustomed.

"Oh, Mrs. Austin, I am so happy!" she cried.

"It's Mr. Right this time, and no mistake!" exclaimed the good woman. "Between you and me, miss," she added aside, "I didn't want you to marry that other gentleman. Miss Sinclair was a dear, sweet lady, but the brother was so upsetting!"

"He has been very, very kind to me," said Doris, "and to Mr. Cameron, too. He has been a very good friend to us."

"Has he, miss? Well, I'm glad to hear it, but--" she broke off, and began again, "Give me Mr. Cameron, for a fine, pleasant-speaking, right-living gentleman!" she declared.

Doris laughed, and her eyes rested on Bernard with loving pride. "Do you know, Mrs. Austin," she said, "I was engaged to him before I came to London at all--only unfortunately our engagement had been cruelly broken off."

"Indeed, miss! Ah, I could see you were in deep sorrow when you came to me. If you had seen her then, Mr. Cameron," and she turned to Bernard, "you would have been sorry. She was that white, and there was such a stricken look upon her poor, dear face. And yet, for all she was in such trouble, she did me

good; so that I thanked God for sending her here.”

”She does me good, too,” said Bernard. ”That’s why I love her.”

”Ah, he’s one of the right sort!” exclaimed Mrs. Austin to Doris.

”Yes, I think so,” said Doris, laughing merrily.

Mrs. Austin looked wonderingly at her.

”I never heard you laugh like that before, Miss Anderson,” she exclaimed.

Presently the widow’s two visitors sat at tea in the little parlour.

”And how are you getting on, Mrs. Austin?” asked Doris, presently. ”You say so little about yourself.”

”Well, miss, this is such a joyful occasion I don’t like to spoil it—”

”Oh, then, I’m afraid you are not doing well?” said Doris, sympathisingly.

Tears came into the widow’s eyes; but she dashed them off with a corner of her apron, and tried to smile, as she answered, ”I have a lodger in my front rooms, and a young shop-girl rents my attic; but—but—” and she broke down, weeping bitterly.

Doris and Bernard tried to comfort her, and at length ascertained, with some difficulty, that the cause of her distress was that her landlord had given her notice to leave the house.

”And I’ve lived in it all my life,” she said. ”I was born in it and brought up here: my dear mother lived with me here till she died, and when my husband made me an offer of marriage I said, ’Yes, if you’ll come and live in my dear home.’ And he did, and was so good to my mother—as good as good could be—always taking off his boots before he went upstairs on the stair carpets, and always lighting the kitchen-fire and making me a cup of tea before he went to his work, till he fell ill of his last illness. He died in the front sitting-room. I had the bed brought down there for him. And there was my Silas, he was born in my front bedroom; and he used to paint his lovely pictures, as you know, miss, in the attic; and he lay down and died, as sweet and calmly as a child, in the back bedroom, ’Going Home,’ he said, ’to the Great Artist, Who will put in the finishing touches to the work that He has made.’ I couldn’t bear to leave this house, with all its memories! It will kill me—I know it will! And my Sam feels almost as bad. ’I shall never drive down this road, mother,’ he says, ’when the old home isn’t yours.’” Mrs. Austin stopped at last for want of breath.

”But why does the landlord want to turn you out?” asked Bernard. ”You must be such good tenants.”

”Mrs. Austin is,” said Doris. ”She pays her rent regularly.”

”Yes, miss. I’ve always paid it to the day, though I have been rather hard put to sometimes, when my lodgers haven’t paid up. It’s not for want of the rent that the landlord gives notice. It’s because he’s selling a lot of his houses to a man who wants them for his own workpeople, and therefore must have them

emptied." The widow's tears flowed again.

"Don't cry, Mrs. Austin dear!" said Doris, rising and putting her arms round the good woman's neck, while she kissed her kind old face.

"You shall not be turned out," said Bernard; "I will see your landlord, and buy the house, if I can. Then you shall not be turned out."

"But, sir, it will cost you a lot!"

"It will be an investment, and I shall have a good tenant. You know, Doris," he added, turning to her, "I must not put all the money into the school."

Having asked the landlord's name and address, Bernard left Doris resting in Mrs. Austin's sitting-room, and departed to transact the business, which he was able to do satisfactorily, as the landlord happened to be in a hurry to sell.

"I have bought the house for three hundred and fifty pounds," Bernard announced, on his return to Doris. "You tell Mrs. Austin, dear," he added.

So it was Doris who had the pleasure of telling the good woman that Mr. Cameron had bought her house, and so she would be able to remain in it as long as she lived.

"Thank God! Thank God! That is all I want. And you shall have your rent regularly, sir," said the widow.

"You shall never be asked for it," said Bernard. "When you have the money to spare you can pay it, and when you have not any to hand over, nothing shall be said."

"You are too good, sir," began Mrs. Austin. But Doris interrupted:

"He is only treating you as you treated me," she said. "When I could not pay you, dear Mrs. Austin, you always let it pass over, and forgave me the debt."

"But you have paid everything now, miss." (Through the Sinclairs' kindness Doris had been able to do this.)

"I can never repay you for all your exceeding kindness," cried the girl; adding, "And I am delighted that we can enable you to remain in your comfortable home."

Mrs. Austin was overjoyed. She shed tears again, not for sorrow now, but for joy. "How little I knew when I took you in, Miss Anderson," she said, "that I should be entertaining an angel unawares!"

Then Doris asked Mrs. Austin if she would come to Hastings with her son, in order to be present at the wedding, and this the widow joyfully consented to do, saying:

"I would go further than that, miss, to see you married, and so would my Sam. We'll come to your wedding, if we have to walk every inch of the way."

"That's right," said Bernard; "that's the right spirit! But you will have to allow me to pay your fare, for you might not arrive in time if you walk the sixty miles or so to Hastings, and I shall be only too pleased to pay your fare."

Doris wanted to see Sam, but he was away with his cab, and therefore she could only leave a message for him.

She was exceedingly happy as she returned to Hastings with Bernard in a luxurious corridor-train—so happy, indeed, that she felt at peace with all the world, and therefore ventured to suggest:

“Couldn’t we have your mother to our wedding, too, Bernard?”

The young man’s face darkened, and his voice shook as he answered, “No, I think not. I—I *could* not.”

“We shall have to forgive her, dear,” pleaded Doris.

“Yes—in time. You must give me time, dear.” Bernard was silent for several minutes after that, and then he said abruptly, “We will go to see her after we are married.”

“Yes, dear,” acquiesced Doris; “I should like that.”

The day came quickly which was to make them man and wife.

Theirs was a pretty wedding, although the wedding guests were only two, and they were not of the same rank in life as the handsome bridegroom and the beautiful bride, supported by her friends, and bridesmaid, dressed like herself in costly silk and lace. Doris was in white, and Alice in creamy yellow, whilst Bernard, of course, was in immaculate attire, his good-looking young face lit up with love and joy and thankfulness to God.

“Bless them! God bless them!” exclaimed good Mrs. Austin as the young couple left the vestry, where Doris had signed her maiden name for the last time.

“Amen,” said Sam, “and may they live long happy years!”

Sam had only one regret about the wedding, and that was that he could not bring his cab down to be used on the occasion. “I should like to have driven them to church in it,” he confided to his mother. “It would have been a sort of finish to the two rides I gave Miss Anderson in it. First when I drove her to Earl’s Court Square, and then home to you when she was in such distress, and afterwards when I drove her round to see those skin-flinty old picture-dealers about selling her pictures.”

But now the bride and bridegroom had to be met, congratulated, and wished all sorts of happiness.

“Thank you! Thank you!” said Doris, shaking hands with Sam, and lifting up her glad young face to kiss his mother, while Bernard shook hands warmly with them both, thanking them for himself and his bride.

Later in the day Alice drove with Bernard and Doris to the station to see them off in the train for Portsmouth, as they were going to the Isle of Wight for their honeymoon.

Doris clung to her a little at the last. “I don’t know how to thank you, Alice,” she said; “you have been like a dear sister to me.”

[image]

"DORIS CLUNG TO HER AT THE LAST. 'YOU HAVE BEEN LIKE A DEAR SISTER TO ME.'"

"I don't want thanking," protested Alice.

"But you will feel so lonely, dear, when we have gone."

"Never mind me," said Alice; "you know to-morrow I shall start for Switzerland, in order to join my brother there, and then there will be no more loneliness for me."

"You will Give him our kindest remembrances, Miss Sinclair," said Bernard, earnestly.

"If I can I will—that is, if he speaks of you."

The train began to move off, and there was no time to talk any more.

"Good-bye—good-bye, dear," cried the travellers, and then—Alice Sinclair was left alone upon the platform.

CHAPTER XXVI. TWO MONTHS LATER.

Time and the hour run through the longest day.
SHAKESPEARE.

Mrs. Cameron was a miserable woman. Poor, unhappy, and remorseful, she sat alone in her solitary house—even her one maidservant had left her—thinking dismally of her sad past, mournful present, and hopeless future. On her lap was her son's letter of two months before, the only one he had sent her since he left home to go in search of Doris, and she thought that it would probably be the last one she would ever receive from him.

"I know all that you have done," he wrote, "to destroy my happiness and that of my beloved Doris, and the means by which you sought to separate us for ever in this world, and I write to inform you that your schemes and machinations have failed; for we are engaged to be married, and, there being no longer any

obstacle to prevent it, the marriage will take place on the 20th of this month.

"That, I think, is all I need say now, or at any time, to one who has done her utmost to alienate me for life from the one I loved.

"I remain, Mother, Your much-wronged Son, BERNARD CAMERON."

"A nice letter for a mother to receive!" grumbled the widow. "Yet I know that I deserve it," she added mentally. "I've been too hard—too hard on him, and too hard on other people. If I hadn't been so quarrelsome with my husband, he would not have left most of his money to Bernard, and that wretch John Anderson would not have had the chance of stealing it all. And if I hadn't been so hard on Bernard and on Doris Anderson, I should have retained my boy's love, which would have been better than nothing." She sniffed and passed the back of her bony hand across her tearless eyes. "Yes, it would have been better than nothing, and I might have come in for a bit of his money now he is richer; but, as it is, I've got nothing, neither money, nor love, nor anything at all!"

She looked dismally at the dusk stealing across the room with its threadbare carpet and faded chairs and curtains. There was no servant to come in and light the gas and close the blinds. She was all alone, and so hopeless that she did not care whether the gas was lighted or not. "What matter if it is dark, so long as I have nothing to do but think!" she said to herself, dismally. "They'll have had their honeymoon now, and perhaps will be getting settled in their new home. I wonder where it is? To think that I shouldn't know where my son is going to live! I never thought Bernard would turn against me; and yet—and yet I deserve it, for mine was a crooked policy, directed against all his wishes and ignoring his rights. I told myself I was doing it for him, for his best interests; but really I was doing it more for myself, that he might become rich and be in a position to give his mother a good home; and out of spite, too, against those Andersons, and a determination that Doris should not have him." She paused, listening.

Some street singers were wailing forth the hymn, "O God, our help in ages past!" before the house; but the woman, who had found no help in God, because she had never sought it, was only angered by the sound. Rising and going to the window, she made emphatic signs to the man and woman—the latter with a child in her arms and another clinging to her skirts—to pass on; but they either could not see her in the deepening dusk or would not be persuaded to go away, for they continued singing even more loudly than before.

"Well, I shall not give them anything!" declared Mrs. Cameron, relinquishing the attempt to stop them and returning to her chair by the fireless hearth. "What right have they to come disturbing folks in this way?"

Again she sank into gloomy, miserable reflections, while the darkness increased about her.

The door-bell rang; but she paid no attention to it, thinking that it was only the singers wanting alms. "They may want!" she said to herself grimly. "Other folks want what they can't get, too!"

Once more the bell rang, and yet a third time, and even a fourth; but still Mrs. Cameron remained firm in her determination not to speak to the intruders.

"I'm a hard woman," she said to herself; "aye, and I'll be hard. I'm too old to change now, and nobody cares, nobody cares what I'm like or what I do. If any one cared ever such a little bit, I might be different; but nobody cares, least of all God; He's shut me out of His good books long ago. I shall never get to His Heaven, never! Even if He let me into His Heaven, I shouldn't be happy psalm-singing, and praising Him, and living in His presence. Not I! I don't care at all for Him, and that's truth. And if, as some say, in heaven the angels are always ministering to others and doing deeds of kindness, that work wouldn't suit me. Not it!" She laughed shrilly, as if in derision of the idea; and the darkness deepened around her. "I don't care an atom for other people. Not I!" she went on, and again her weird, unholy laugh rang through the room.

Its echoes reached a young man and woman who stood at the door, hesitating before ringing the bell again, and caused them both to shiver.

"Nobody cares for me, and I care for nobody!" soliloquised Mrs. Cameron. "If any one cared ever so little, it would be different. Oh, dear! What's that?"

An exceedingly loud rapping at the street door made her start up, exclaiming angrily, "Those tramps again!"

She bounced out of the room and across the little hall to the door, opening it somewhat gingerly, and crying out the while in her sharpest tones, "I've nothing for you! Get away! Go!" Then she attempted to shut the door, but a strong hand held, it so firmly that she could not close it, whilst a voice spoke, which she was unable to hear for her own clamour.

"If you don't be off I'll prosecute you!" she cried, menacingly.

"Mother! It is I, Bernard! Let me in."

The words reached her ears at last, penetrating even to her starved and icy heart.

"Bernard!" She fell back a pace, and the door flew open, revealing her son and a lady by his side. The street light fell upon the two, and also upon the pale, astonished face of the unhappy woman they had come to see.

"Bernard!"

"Mother!" He put his arms round her neck, in his old boyish way, forgetting everything except that she was his mother, who was looking miserable, whilst he had come to her in his joy, with his dear young wife by his side.

"If any one cared ever so little, it would be different," she had said to herself. Well, here was Bernard, and he cared for her, in spite of everything, and—*it was different.*

"My son! My son! Forgive me," she said, clinging to him, her tears falling on his manly face and neck, as he kissed her tenderly.

"All right, mother! The past is past," he whispered. "I want you to welcome Doris," he added low in her ear. "She is my wife now."

Mrs. Cameron turned to Doris, holding out her hand, but the young wife raised her face, and she had to kiss her, too.

Then they went in, closing the street door after them; and Bernard, striking a light, lit up every gas-burner he could find about the place; so that the darkness was gone, and it was light, very light.

CHAPTER XXVII. RESTITUTION.

Does any one know what's in your heart and mine,
 The sorrow and song,
 The demon of sin and the angel divine,
 The right and the wrong:
 The dread of the darkness, the love of the day,
 The ebb and the flow
 Of hope and of doubt for ever and aye,
 Does any one know?
 NIXON WATERMAN.

He wins at last who puts his trust
 In loving words and actions just.
 * * * * *
 On every action blazon bright,
 "For toil, and truth, and love, we fight."
 T. S. COLLIER.

An hour later, after they had partaken of a substantial tea-supper, the principal constituents of which Bernard fetched from the village shops, with boyish glee, renewing his acquaintance with the shop-keepers quite merrily, Mrs. Cameron and her son and daughter-in-law sat round the fire Doris had lighted, talking about the future.

Bernard had placed the school at Richmond (of which he had now completed the purchase) in good hands, and he and Doris were going to live in rooms at Oxford until he had obtained his degree, when they would at once proceed to their new home in Richmond.

"We want you to come and live with us, mother," said Bernard; "or if you would prefer not to live with us, at least to occupy rooms near us, so that we may often look in upon you, to prevent your feeling lonely."

"Do you wish that, too, Doris?" asked her mother-in-law, quite timidly.

"Yes, indeed I do," said Doris, heartily. In her great happiness it was impossible for her to cherish any resentment against Bernard's mother.

Mrs. Cameron looked red and confused. Their love made a difference, yes, a very great difference in her feelings. But she shook her head, saying, "You will be better without me. Far better. I will remain here. You can come and see me sometimes, and you must remain here a few days now. I'm afraid we are rather desolate here in the house, but I'll have a charwoman in to-morrow, and we'll try to make the place comfortable."

"The house ails nothing," said Bernard, "for it is home."

"Yes," remarked Doris, brightly, "and you know, 'East or West, home is best.'"

Mrs. Cameron thought remorsefully that she had made only a poor home for Bernard in the last year or two, since he lost his money.

But he appeared to forget all about that, as he merrily assisted her and Doris to arrange a room for their accommodation that night—in point of fact he had engaged a bedroom at the comfortable hydro at Askern, but he did not venture to mention that to his mother under their altered and happier relations.

The next morning, as they were sitting at breakfast, the postman dropped a letter into the letter-box, and Bernard, upon going to the door to fetch it, discovered that it was addressed to himself.

Bringing the letter into the room he looked at the envelope curiously, and perceived that it bore the impression, "London, City & Midland Banking Company, Ltd," whilst the postmark was Doncaster.

"Why, what's this?" he said, and then, opening it wonderingly, found that it was an official intimation from the Doncaster branch of the London, City & Midland Bank, saying that the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds had been placed there to his credit.

The young man put his hand to his brow in great bewilderment. What did it mean? Mechanically he handed the document to his mother, saying, "Look at this. What does it mean?"

Mrs. Cameron fumbled about for her spectacles, found them, could not see through them, shook her head, and, handing the document to Doris, remarked, "You read it, Doris. What does it mean?"

Doris read aloud the printed and written words, which stated that the bank had received twenty-five thousand pounds, and placed the money to the credit of Bernard Cameron.

"Twenty-five thousand pounds!" cried Mrs. Cameron, excitedly. "Why, some one has restored your fortune to you, Bernard!"

Bernard was amazed and glad.

"Who can have paid the money in?" questioned Doris.

"You will have to go to Doncaster to the bank, to see the manager, and ascertain who it is," said Mrs. Cameron.

"Yes," Bernard agreed, still looking very mystified.

"It may be some mistake of the bank's," suggested Mrs. Cameron. "It is dated all right for yesterday."

They were still wondering and conjecturing about the matter, when the sound of a carriage driving up to the door, followed by a loud peal of the door-bell, startled them.

Bernard went to the door, and, upon opening it, perceived, to his intense astonishment, his wife's father.

"Is Mr. Cameron in?" began the visitor, and then, recognising Bernard, he cried, "Bernard! My dear fellow, I *am glad* you are at home."

"Mr. Anderson!" exclaimed Bernard. "Mr. Anderson *here!*"

"Father! Father!" cried Doris, overhearing Bernard's greeting, and running into her father's arms. "My dear father!" Forgotten were all his shortcomings, his desertion of herself and appropriation of Bernard's money, forgotten was everything except love in that glad moment of reunion. "Where is mother?" asked Doris, kissing him again and again.

"In the cab, there." He waved his hand towards the vehicle, out of which Mrs. Anderson was leaning forward, in the endeavour to obtain a glimpse of her child.

Doris ran to the cab, and disappeared within it, as there only could she have her beloved mother entirely to herself for a few moments.

Mr. Anderson signed to the cabman to wait for a little while, and then went into the house with Bernard, asking, "Are you alone? Or is your mother within?"

"She is here. This is her house still," answered Bernard, leading the way into the dining-room, where Mrs. Cameron stood, very erect, and looking extremely

grave.

Mr. Anderson bowed without making the attempt to shake hands, indeed she had placed hers behind her with a very significant gesture.

"I have to thank you, Mrs. Cameron," said the barrister, "and your son, for your exceeding clemency in not prosecuting me for my terrible defalcations more than a year ago, and I must explain how it was that I lost your son's money, and how it is that I have been able yesterday to place the whole amount in the Doncaster branch of the London, City & Midland Banking Co. for him. Have you had an intimation of this money being placed in the bank to your credit, Bernard?" he asked the young man.

"Yes. This morning. I could not understand who placed it there. I am glad it was you. Oh, Mr. Anderson, I am *very glad!*" Bernard seized the elder man's hand, and shook it with warmth. "I feel inclined to throw up my cap and shout 'Hurrah!'" he continued, boyishly, "for I am so delighted for your sake and for Doris's!"

"Well, it's a good thing you've done it," said Mrs. Cameron. "I must say I'm surprised—I never thought you would. What are you nudging me for, Bernard?" she asked, rather crossly. "You know very well that I always say what is in my mind. And I must tell you, Mr. Anderson," she continued, "that it's not me you have to thank for not being prosecuted. I was determined to set the whole machinery of the law to work—I was so mad with you—but Bernard would not have it. He would not raise a finger against you—no, not though I turned him out of my house for his stupidity, as I thought it then, though it seems to have answered well," she admitted.

"Bernard," said Mr. Anderson, looking gratefully at him, "my dear boy, how can I thank you enough? What you must have borne for me!"

"I'm afraid I thought most of Doris," said Bernard, honestly. "It would never have done for me to have brought disgrace and trouble upon her family."

"I sinned," said Mr. Anderson, regarding Bernard's stern mother very mournfully, "I sinned greatly in using money which was not my own for speculations which were risky, as most speculations are. And when all was lost, and I possessed nothing with which to meet my liabilities, as you know, instead of courageously confessing and submitting to the penalty I had incurred, I absconded. Later on, together with my wife, who would not leave me, I took refuge with an old servant of ours, who had married a shepherd in Wales, and there, in a remote place up amongst the mountains, we hid ourselves for a long and weary time. Often I thought of coming down and surrendering to justice, but as often my wife persuaded me to remain in concealment. Eventually, however, I became so convinced that the only right thing to do was to give myself up to the police that, leaving my retreat, I returned, accompanied by my wife, to Yorkshire.

"Then," continued he, "a strange thing happened. Upon reaching York I first went to a lawyer with whom I had formerly transacted business, whereupon he informed me that there had never been a warrant taken out for my arrest, thanks to you, my dear Bernard," and again the elder man gave the younger a grateful glance. "Moreover," the barrister continued, "the lawyer told me that Howden, the man who in the first place led me into those disastrous speculations, had just died, and in his last hours, remembering remorsefully his bad advice to me about speculating, which led to my ruin and desiring to make reparation as far as possible, he bequeathed to me by will the large sum of thirty thousand pounds. You can judge of my extreme delight.

"As soon as the will had been proved and I was in possession of the money I returned to Doncaster, paid all my debts in full, and placed twenty-five thousand pounds in the bank for you, Bernard. After which I came here in the hope of finding you at home. I cannot tell you," Mr. Anderson added, with deep feeling, "I cannot tell you all that I have suffered on account of my sin, nor can I say how great is my relief and satisfaction in being able to restore to you your fortune."

The tears were in his eyes as he said this, and they perceived that his hair had become as white as snow during the last thirteen months, and also that care and trouble had drawn deep lines upon his face. They could not, therefore, doubt the truth of what he was saying, and so Mrs. Cameron as well as Bernard hastened to express their entire forgiveness of his sin and sympathy with him in his sufferings. And if the mother did it less gracefully than her son, Mr. Anderson could not cavil at that, for he knew that it was much more difficult for her, with her hard nature, to speak so kindly than for Bernard.

And when she added, penitently, "I, too, must ask your forgiveness, Mr. Anderson, for the harsh and bitter thoughts I have cherished about you and the hard words I have said," he was only too glad to shake hands with her and say she was not to trouble about that any more.

Upon this touching scene entered Doris and her mother—the two who having not sinned in the matter of the pecuniary defalcations, had yet suffered so grievously by reason of them. Whereupon, kind and loving words were exchanged, and the new relationship of the young people was discussed and approved of by her parents, who both said that they could not have wished for a better husband for their daughter.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

Poets are all who love, who feel great truths
 And tell them, and the truth of truths is love.
 BAILEY.

In Switzerland, where Alice had joined Norman as soon as Doris's marriage had taken place, Alice heard of the surprising restoration of the lost money with the greatest satisfaction.

Doris wrote a full account of the return of her father and the wonderful restitution he was able to make of all the money that he had taken from Bernard and that which he owed the tradespeople.

"Do you know, dear Alice," she wrote in conclusion, "I often and often prayed that he might be able to do this, but it seemed as if my prayers were all in vain, both about this and other matters, and then I grew despondent and doubted—oh, I doubted dreadfully! What patience God must have with us when we have so little faith! And how impatient and short-sighted we are! Why, I might have been sure that just as He clothes the lilies and feeds the birds of the air, so He would give me all things that were needful and that were according to His will. And it must have been His will that my father should be enabled to do right in the end. Well, I'm going to believe in future that He really meant His words when He said, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.'

"And there's another thing, dear Alice," the writer continued joyfully, "Bernard and I want to make one or two thank-offerings for the great mercies we have received.

"First for poor Mrs. Austin, who was so very good to me. You know that Bernard bought her house, in order to prevent her being turned out of it, and now we are giving it to her for life, and to her son after her. She is so delighted, and so is Sam, and it is such a pleasure to us to do this.

"And then, with regard to the school at Richmond, you know Bernard purchased it, and arranged for it to be managed for him until he has finished his career at Oxford, after which he will take it in hand personally; and now he has determined that he will always give schooling and board to two pupils free of charge. They need not necessarily be orphans, but they are to be poor boys of gentle birth, who would otherwise be worsted in the battle of life. They are to receive exactly the same benefits as the other boys, and I am to provide them with clothes, and look after them as a mother might. I need not tell you how glad I am to do this.

"Dear old Susan is coming to live with us and be our matron, much to her satisfaction. She is so glad that Bernard and I are married. You know we could not have her at the wedding, as Mrs. Cameron was not there—for it might have made the villagers at Moss talk if one had been present and not the other, and it would certainly have hurt Mrs. Cameron's feelings.

"Write to me, dear Alice, and let me know what you think of these schemes, which we have planned in this lovely Isle of Wight."

Alice read the letter aloud to Norman, a little later, when, having left Switzerland, they were going up the Rhine in a river-steamer, one lovely day in autumn. She was glad of her friend's happiness, and rejoiced in it so much that she could not keep the letter to herself.

"Cameron seems a decent sort of fellow," said the artist, "after all."

"Oh, yes, he is. Wasn't it nice of him to buy Mrs. Austin's little house in order that she might not be turned out of it, and then to give it to her when he became richer?"

"Yes," said Norman, "I must say that Mrs. Austin deserves it for her goodness to Doris; though she never favoured me, but always endeavoured to make me feel that I was an intruder."

"But she was very good to me," said Alice, softly.

"Yes," said her brother, "and for that, too, she shall be forgiven everything by the poor artist, whom you fed when he was a surly, inconsiderate old bear."

"I'm very proud of my Lion!" exclaimed Alice, lovingly. "See," she added, "I have brought out with us some London papers which arrived just as we were leaving our hotel. I want you to see what is said of your Academy pictures, especially of 'Ganymede.' The likeness of the girl," she added, "is so marvellously like Doris, that I expect her husband will be wanting to buy it."

"Don't!" said Norman, walking a little way apart, in order that she might not see his face.

Presently he returned to her without a shadow on his fine expressive countenance.

"I hope you are observing the beauty of all this Rhine scenery," he said, with a smile. "It ought to appeal to the poetry in your nature."

"Poetry! Poetry in my nature!" exclaimed Alice. "Why, Norman, I always thought that you considered me so *very* prosaic and matter-of-fact."

"On the contrary," said her brother. "It is *I* who have been so often matter-of-fact; *you* have always been steeped in love, so much so, in fact, that you have idealised and nursed illusions for the sake of your beloved ones. Don't you know—

Poets are all who love, who feel great truths

And tell them, and the truth of truths is love.

Yes," continued Norman, humbly, "you are before me, Alice, in the great race, because through your life—as through Doris's—the golden thread of Love leads you and dominates your actions. Not the mere lover's love for one, but a noble enthusiasm and love for all who are near and dear to you."

THE END.

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