

about me, looked up at the grand old house and the splendid elms that stood around, and said: "I can do it, and I will."

Then I went to bed, and with that sweet and strong determination locked in my breast, I slept, brooded over and wrapt around by a peace that held every nerve and muscle of my body and every faculty of my soul in downy bonds until morning.

CHAPTER XXI.

I MEET AN OLD FRIEND WHO BECOMES MY RIVAL.

WHEN I woke, on the following morning, it was with a start and a pang. It was like the shrinking shiver one feels in passing from a room full of warmth and the perfume of flowers and the appliances of comfort into one that is bare and chill; or, it was like rising from a bed, sweet with invitations to dreams and languid luxury, to an icy bath and a frosty toilet. The pang, however, did not last long. With the consciousness that I was relinquishing the hopes and plans of a life, there was mingled a sense of power over other lives that was very stimulating and pleasant. It was a great thing to be able to crown my benefactress with the highest earthly blessing she could wish for. It was a great thing to be able to make my faithful friend and fellow rich, and to restore to him his rights. It was a great thing to have the power to solve the problems of three lives by making them one.

Mr. Bradford and his advisers were exceedingly wise in leaving everything to me, and placing all the responsibility upon me. The appeal to my sense of justice—to my manliness—was simply irresistible. If Henry had been other than what he was—if he had been a young man inheriting the nature of his father—I should doubtless have had difficulty enough with him, but they would have stood by me. He would have made my place hot with hate and persecution, and they would have supported me and turned against him; but they knew that he was not only the natural heir to all that had been promised to me, but that he would use it all worthily, in carrying out the purposes of a manhood worthily won.

It was strange how my purposes with regard to the inmates

of The Mansion glorified them all in my sight. Mrs. Sanderson shone like a saint in the breakfast-room that morning. Mrs. Belden was as fresh and beautiful as a maiden. I sat with Henry for an hour, and talked, not lightly, but cheerfully. The greatness of my sacrifice, prospective though it was, had already enlarged me, and I loved my friend as I had never loved him before. My heart reached forward into the future, and took hold of the new relations which my sacrifice would establish between us; and I drank of his new love, even before it had welled from his heart.

Thus all that morning I bore about my secret; and, so long as I remained in the presence of those whom I had the power and the purpose to make happy, I was content and strong; but when, at length, I went out into the street, and met the courteous bows and warm greetings that came to me from every side as the heir of Mrs. Sanderson, and appreciated the difference between that position and the one to which I should fall as soon as my duty should be done to my benefactress and my friend, I groaned with pain, and, lifting my eyes, exclaimed: "God help me! God help me!"

Without a very definite purpose in my walk, I bent my steps toward my father's house, and on my way was obliged to pass the house of Mr. Bradford. The moment I came in sight of it, I recognized the figure of Millie at work among her flowers in the garden. I saw a quick motion of her head, as she caught the sound of my steps approaching upon the opposite side of the way, and then she rose without looking at me and walked into the house. I had already begun to cross the street toward her; but I returned and passed the house with many bitter thoughts.

It had come to this! As the heir of a large property, I was one whose acquaintance was worth the keeping. As a penniless young man, with his fortune to make, I was quite another person. I wondered if Millie Bradford, the young woman, flattered herself with the supposition that Millie Bradford, the little girl, was still in existence!

The helpless position in which I found myself with relation to this girl worried me and discouraged me. Loyal to her father in every thought and affection, I knew she would not and could not approve my course, unless I followed out his conviction concerning my duty. Yet, if I should do this, what had I to offer her but poverty and a social position beneath her own? I could never make her my wife without her father's approval, and when I had secured that, by the sacrifice of all my expectations, what had I left to offer but a partnership in a struggle against odds for the means and ministries of the kind of life to which she had been bred? To surrender all that I had expected would be my own, and Millie Bradford too, was more than I had bargained for, in my negotiation with myself.

I had not yet learned that a duty undone is always in the way—that it stands so near and high before the feet that it becomes a stumbling-block over which thousands are constantly plunging into disaster. Since those days, in which I was taking my first lessons in life, I have learned that to do one's next duty is to take a step towards all that is worth possessing—that it is the one step which may always be taken without regard to consequences, and that there is no successful life which is not made up of steps thus consecutively taken.

I reached home, not expecting to find my father there, but I was informed by my mother, with many sighs and with the expression of many confidential fears, that he was breaking down and had taken to his bed. Something, she said, had been preying on his mind which she was unable to induce him to reveal. She was glad I had come, and hoped I would ascertain what the trouble was. She had been looking forward to something of this kind for years, and had frequently warned my father of it. Mr. Bird had been there, and had accompanied my father to Mr. Bradford's, whence he had returned with a terrible headache. She always had believed there was something wrong about Mr. Bird, and she always should believe thus. As for Mr. Bradford, she had nothing to say about him; but

she had noticed that men with strange notions about religion were not to be trusted.

I listened to the long and doleful story, conscious all the time that my father's illness was one into which he had been thrown by his sympathy for me. He had been trying to do his duty by me, and it had made him ill. In a moment, Millie Bradford went out of my mind, and I only delayed going into his room long enough to prepare myself to comfort him. I presume that he had heard my voice, for, when I entered the dear old man's chamber, his face was turned to the wall, and he was feigning unconsciousness of my presence in the house.

"Well, father, what's the matter?" I said cheerfully.

"Is that you?" he responded feebly, without turning his head.

"Yes."

"How are you?"

"I was never better in my life," I responded.

"Have you seen Mr. Bradford?"

"Yes."

"And had a talk with him?"

"Yes."

"Has he told you?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to do it?"

"Yes."

I was laughing,—I could not help it,—when I was sobered at once by seeing that he was convulsed with emotion. The bed shook with his passion, and he could not say a word, but lay with his face covered by his hands. I did not know what to say, and concluded to say nothing, and to let his feeling take its natural course. For many long minutes he lay silently trying to recover the mastery of himself. At last he seized the wet handkerchief with which he had been trying to assuage the pain and fever of his head, and threw it into a corner of the room, and then turned toward me, laughing and crying together, and stretched his arms toward me. I bowed to his embrace, and so the long years of the past were blotted out in our mutual tears, and we were boys once more.

I brought him his clothes, and he put them on. Then I turned the key in the door, and, sitting down side by side upon the bed, we talked the matter all over. I confessed to him my idleness, my meanness, my shameless sacrifice of golden opportunities, my weakness and my hesitations, and promised that when the right time should come I would do what I could to give Henry and his mother the home that belonged to them and to bestow upon my benefactress the boon which she would prize a thousand times more than all the money she had ever expended upon me.

"And you are not going to be unhappy and blame me?" he said.

"Never."

"And are you coming home?"

"Yes, to look after and serve you all, so long as you may live."

We looked in one another's faces, and the same thought thrilled us. We knelt at the bed, and my father poured out his gratitude for the answer that had come with such sweet and beautiful fulfillment to his prayers. There was but little of petition in his utterances, for his heart was too full of thankfulness to give a place to his own wants or to mine. When he rose, there was the peace of heaven on his features, and the light of a new life in his faded blue eyes.

"Does my mother know of this," I inquired.

"No," he replied; "and this is the one great trouble that lies before me now."

"Let me break it to her, then, while you go out of the house," I said.

In the state of mind in which my father found himself at the close of our interview, it would have been cruel to subject him to the questions and cavils and forebodings of my mother. So, taking his way out of the house by a side door, he left me at liberty to seek her, and to reconcile her to the new determinations of my life.

I do not suppose it would be interesting to recount the long

and painful conversation I had with her. She had foreseen that something of this kind would occur. She had never believed that that great fortune would come to me, but she had never dreamed that I should be the one to give it up. She was disappointed in Henry, and, as for Mrs. Belden, she had always regarded her as a schemer. She presumed, too, that as soon as Henry found himself the possessor of a fortune he would forsake Claire—a step which she was sure would kill her. It all came of mingling with people who have money. Mr. Bradford was very officious, and she was glad that I had found out Mr. Bird at last. Her life had been a life of trial, and she had not been deceived into supposing that it would be anything else.

During all the time I had been in the house, Claire and the boys had been out. My task with my mother was interrupted at last by the sound of Claire's voice at the door. She was trolling in her own happy way the refrain of a familiar song. I had only time to impress upon my mother the necessity of keeping all knowledge of the new phase of my affairs from her and the rest of the family, and to secure her promise in accordance with it, before Claire entered the room. I knew it would be best that my sister should learn everything from the lips of Henry. She would have been distressed beyond measure at the change in my prospects as well as the change in her own. I knew she had learned to look forward upon life as a struggle with poverty, by the side of a brave man, equipped for victory. She had dreamed of helping him, solacing him, blessing him with faith and love, and rising with him to the eminence which she felt sure he had the power to achieve. No wildest dream of her young imagination had ever enthroned her in The Mansion, or made her more than a welcome visitor there after its present mistress should have passed away.

I exchanged a few pleasant words with her, assuring her that I had cured my father by a few talismanic touches, and sent him out to get some fresh air, and was trying my cure upon my mother when she interrupted me. Then we talked about Henry, and his rapid progress toward recovery. I knew that

she did not expect or wish to see him, because the visit that such a step would render necessary would be regarded as the advertisement of an engagement which had not yet been openly confessed. But she was glad to hear all about him, and I gratified her by the rehearsal of all the details that I could remember. I could not help thinking, as I talked with her, that I had in hand still another destiny. It was astonishing how fruitful a good determination was, when it took the path of Providence and of natural law. I had already four for one, and felt that I could not foresee how many more would be added to the gain already made.

When, at last, I bade my mother and Claire a "good morning," the only question left upon my mind concerned the time and manner of the announcement to Mrs. Sanderson of the relations of Mrs. Belden and Henry to her. Henry, I knew, was still too weak to be subjected to strong excitement without danger, and this fact made it absolutely necessary to defer the proposed revelation and the changes that were sure to follow.

I went out upon the street with a buoyant feeling, and with that sense of strength that one always feels when his will is consciously in harmony with the Supreme will, and his determinations proceed from his better nature. But my trials had not all been seen and surmounted.

Making a detour among the busier streets, that my passage to The Mansion might be longer and more varied, I saw, walking before me, an elegant young man, in the jauntiest of morning costumes. I could not see his face, but I knew at once that he was a stranger in the city, and was impressed with the conviction that I was familiar with his gait and figure. If I had seen him where I had previously known him, his identity would have been detected at once; but he was the young man furthest from my thoughts, and the one old companion whom I had learned to count out of my life. I quickened my steps, and, as I approached him, some sudden and characteristic movement of his head revealed my old college friend Livingston.

"Well, well, well! Man in the Moon! When did you drop, and where did you strike?" I shouted, running up behind him.

He wheeled and grasped both my hands in his cordial way, pouring out his greetings and compliments so freely that passengers involuntarily stopped upon the walk to witness the meeting.

"I was wondering where you were, and was about to inquire," he said.

"Were you? How long have you been in town?"

"Two or three days," he replied.

"You must have been very desirous to find me," I responded. "I have a good mind to leave you, and send you my address. Permit me to bid you good-morning. This meeting in the street is very irregular."

"None of your nonsense, my boy," said he. "I came here on business, and pleasure comes after that, you know."

"Oho! Business! We are becoming useful are we? Can I assist you? I assure you I have nothing else to do."

"Bonnicastle," said he, "you are hungry. You evidently want something to stop your mouth. Let's go into the hotel and get a lunch."

Saying this, he grasped my arm, and we walked together back to his hotel, and were soon seated at a table in his parlor, doing the duty of two hearty young men to a chop and a salad.

We talked of old times, then of his employments since he left me at college two years before, and then I told him of myself, of the encounter at The Mansion which had resulted in Henry's confinement there with a broken limb, and of the way in which I had been passing my time.

"What are you going to do next?" he inquired.

"That's a secret," I said, with a blush, all the frolic going out of me in a moment.

"I know what you are going to do."

"What?"

"You are going to Europe and the East with me. We are

to be gone two years, and to see everything. We'll sing Yankee Doodle on the Pyramids, have a fish-fry on the shores of Galilee, light our cigars at Vesuvius, call on the Pope, see all the pictures, and dance with all the pretty girls from Vienna and Paris to St. Petersburg, and call it study. On very rainy days, we'll write dutiful letters to our friends, conveying assurances of our high consideration, and asking for remittances."

Little did the merry fellow imagine, as he rattled off his programme, what a temptation he was placing before me. It presented the most agreeable path out of my difficulty. I believed Mrs. Sanderson would deny me nothing, even should I renounce all my expectations, and surrender my home to him to whom it naturally belonged. The act of surrender would place her under such obligations to me that any request that might come with it would, I supposed, be sure to be granted. Then it would let me down easily, and save me the necessity of facing my townsmen under my new circumstances. It would furnish me with a knowledge of the world which would be useful to me in the future task of providing for myself. It would complete my education, and give me the finest possible start in life. Livingston's connections would carry me into the best society, and bring me advantages such as I could not secure by means within my own command.

"Are you in earnest?" I inquired, hesitatingly.

"I never was more so in my life."

"You tempt me."

"Well, you know just how much my rattle means," said he, sobered by the tone of my inquiry. "You know I take care of myself, and others too—when they let me. We can have a good time and one that will do us good."

While I felt pretty sure that I should not go with him, unless Mrs. Sanderson should voluntarily offer me the means for the journey, and my friends should urge me to accept them, I told him I would think of it.

"That's right," he said, "and you'll conclude to go."

"When?"

"Next month."

Was this Providence too? Was my road out of my difficulty to be strewn with flowers? How could I tell? Unexpectedly, at the exact moment when it would meet with a greedy welcome, came this proposition. To accept it would be to take me away from every unpleasant association, and all the apprehended trials attending the execution of my great purpose, and give me pleasure that I coveted and culture that I needed. To reject it was to adopt a career of hardship at once, to take up my life beneath my father's humble roof, to expose myself to the triumphant sneers of the coarse men who had envied me, and to forsake forever those associations which had become so precious to me. I could do justice to Henry and my benefactress, and secure this great pleasure to myself also. Had Providence directed all this?

Many things have been accepted first and last, among men, as providential, under the mistaken supposition that the devil does not understand the value of times and opportunities. Evil has its providences as well as Good; and a tempted man is often too much befogged to distinguish the one from the other. Interpreting providences by wishes is the favorite trick of fools.

After a long and discursive talk on the subject of foreign travel generally, and of the project before us particularly, I was bold enough to ask Livingston what business it could be that had brought him to Bradford. He fought shy of the question and seemed to be embarrassed by it. Licensed by the familiarly friendly terms of our previous intercourse, I good-naturedly pressed my question. He gave all kinds of evasive and unsatisfactory replies; and then I pushed the matter further by asking him what friends he had in the place, and endeavoring to ascertain what new acquaintances he had made. I could not learn that he knew anybody in Bradford but Henry and myself, and I became satisfied at last that he had not been frank with me. It is true that he was not accountable to me, and that I had no right to pry into his affairs; but he had

volunteered to say that his errand was a business errand; and I felt that in a place where I was at home, and he was not, I could serve him if he would permit me to do so.

As soon as he could divert me from my purpose, he put me the question whether I had remained heart and fancy free; "for you know," he said, "that it will never do for rovers to leave pining maidens behind them."

I assured him (with those mental reservations with which uncommitted lovers so ingeniously sophisticate the truth) that there was not a woman in the world, with the exception of certain female relatives, who had any claim upon my affection.

"By the way," said Livingston with sudden interest, as if the thought had struck him for the first time, "what has become of that little Bradford girl, whom we met on that memorable New Year's at the Spencers'; you remember that old house in the suburbs? or were you too foggy for that?"

If Livingston had realized how painful such an allusion would be to me, he would not have made it; but his standard of morality, so far as it related to excesses in drink, was so different from mine, that it was impossible for him to appreciate the shame which my fall had caused me, and the shrinking sorrow with which I still looked back upon it.

I told him frankly that I remembered the meeting imperfectly, and that I heartily wished I had no memory of it whatever. "I made an ass of myself," I said, "and worse; and I doubt whether it has ever been forgotten, or ever will be."

There was a quiet lighting of his eye as he heard this; and then he went on to say that her New York friends told very extravagant stories about her beauty and attractiveness, and that he should really like to fall in with her again. Then he went on to moralize, after the wise manner of young men, on the heartlessness of city life, and particularly of city girls, and said that he had often told his mother that no hot-house rose should ever adorn his button-hole, provided he could pluck a satisfactory wayside daisy.

A jealous lover has no rival in the instantaneous construe-

tion of a hypothesis. I saw at once the whole trick. Tiring of his New York life, having nothing whatever to do, remembering the beautiful face and hearty manner of Millie Bradford, and moved by some recent conversations about her with her friends, he had started off from home with the determination to meet her in some way. Endeavoring first to assure himself that I had no claim upon her, he undoubtedly intended to engage my services to bring about a renewal of his acquaintance with her.

I had met my rival; for I could not but feel that if he had been impressed by her when she was little more than a child, her charms of womanhood—her beautiful person, and her bright, pure nature—would impress him still more. It was a bitter draught for me to drink, without the privilege of making a wry face or uttering a protest. He was maturer than I, and possessed of every personal attraction. He carried with him, and had behind him, the highest social consideration and influence. He was rich, he was not base, he was the best of his set, he was the master of himself and of all the arts of society; he was one of those young men whose way with women is easy. What was I by the side of a man like him? The only occasion on which Millie Bradford had ever seen him was one associated with my disgrace. She could never meet him again without recalling my fall, and his own honorable freedom from all responsibility for it. The necessity of getting him out of the country by a period of foreign travel seemed laid upon me. To have him within an easy distance, after I had voluntarily forsaken my fortune, and before I had had an opportunity to prove my power to achieve a fortune for myself, was to live a life of constant misery, with the chances of having the one grand prize of existence torn from my hands and borne hopelessly beyond my reach.

"Oh, it's a daisy business, is it?" I said, with a pale face and such carelessness of tone as I could assume. "There are lots of them round here. They're a bit dusty, perhaps, in dry weather, but are fresh after a shower. You would never be contented with one: what do you say to a dozen?"

Livingston laughed, and laughed in such a way that I knew he had no business in Bradford. But why had he kept away from me? Why had he been three days in the town without appraising me of his presence?

He held up his hand and looked at it with a curious smile. "Bonnicastle," said he, "do you see anything peculiar on the back of that hand?"

"Nothing," I replied, "except that it seems to be clean."

"Does it seem to you that there is one spot on it that is cleaner than all the rest?" he inquired.

I confessed that I was unable to detect any such locality.

"Well, my boy, there is a spot there which I could define to you, if I should try, that I have kept clean for two years, and which has a life and sacredness of its own. It once had a sensation—the sweetest and most thrilling that you can imagine. It was pressed by a pair of innocent lips, and wet by as sweet a dew-drop as ever nestled in the heart of a rose. You never thought me romantic, but that little touch and baptism have set that hand apart—for the present, any way."

"If you wish to give me to understand that Milly Bradford ever kissed your hand and dropped a tear upon it, you have brought your chaff to the wrong market," I said, the anger rising in my heart and the color mounting to my face.

"Don't be hasty, old fellow," said he, reaching over and patting me on my shoulder. "I've said nothing about Millie Bradford. I've lived among roses and daisies all my life."

Whether Livingston saw that I had a little personal feeling about the matter, or felt that he had been foolishly confidential, or were afraid that I should push him to an explanation, which would compel him to reveal the circumstances under which Millie had begged his forgiveness with a kiss, for charging him with my intoxication—a fact of which I was too stupid at the time to be conscious—I do not know; but he assured me that he had been talking nonsense, and that I was to lay up and remember nothing that he had said.

We had already pushed back from the table, and he had

rung for a waiter to have it cleared. In response to the bell a man came with his tray in one hand and a card in the other. Handing the latter to Livingston, the young man took it with a strange, embarrassed flush on his face. Turning it over, and looking at it the second time, he exclaimed: "I wonder how he knew me to be here. It's your friend Mr. Bradford." Then turning to the waiter, he added: "Take these dishes away and ask him up."

I rose at once to go; and he did not detain me, or suggest a future meeting. I shook his hand and bade him "good-morning," but was arrested at the door by finding Mr. Bradford waiting outside. Seeing Livingston within, he came forward, and, while he took my arm and led me back, said: "I am somewhat in haste this morning, and so have followed my card at once. I am not going to separate two fellows like you; so, Arthur, sit down."

I did not believe my presence welcome to Livingston during this interview; but as I was curious to witness it, and had a sufficient apology for doing so, I sat down, and remained.

"I have just taken from the office," Mr. Bradford went on, "a letter from my friends the Spencers, who tell me that you are to be here for a few days; and as the letter has evidently been detained on the way, I have called at once to apologize for not having called before."

Livingston was profuse in his protestations that it was not of the slightest consequence, and that while he should have been glad to meet Mr. Bradford, he had passed his time quite pleasantly. I saw at once what had occupied him during those three days, in which he had not announced his presence to me. He had been awaiting the arrival of this letter. He had chosen to be introduced in this way, rather than bear the letter himself. It was a cunningly-contrived, but a very transparent, proceeding.

Livingston was invited to the Bradfords to dine the next day, of course, and quite of course, as I was present when the invitation was given, I was invited to meet him. This was satis-

factory to me, though I doubt whether Livingston was pleased with the arrangement, for he had evidently intended to see Millie Bradford before he announced himself to me.

Inviting my friend to call at The Mansion during the afternoon and make my aunt's acquaintance, and renew his acquaintance with Henry, I took my leave of him and passed out with Mr. Bradford. I was not a little surprised to learn how pleasantly the latter remembered my college acquaintance, and how high an estimate he placed upon him. If Livingston could have heard his hearty words of praise, he would have learned how smoothly the way was paved to the accomplishment of his hopes and his possible purposes. In my jealousy, every word he uttered was full of discouragement, for I was sure that I knew the motive which had drawn Livingston to the town, while Mr. Bradford was as innocent as a child of any suspicions of such a motive.

As we came near his house, I said: "You are in haste this morning, but I wish to see you soon—before to-morrow, if you can spare me the time."

"Come in to-night, then," he responded.

At night, accordingly, I went, and he received me alone, as he did on the previous day. I told him of my interview with my father and mother, and of the determination at which I had arrived with relation to Mrs. Sanderson and Henry. He listened to me with warm approval, which was evident, though he said but little; but when I told him of Livingston's proposition to travel, and my wishes in regard to it, he dropped his head as if he were disappointed. I urged the matter, and frankly gave him the reasons for my desire to absent myself for a while after the change in my circumstances.

He made me no immediate reply, but rose and walked the room, as if perplexed and uncertain concerning the response which he ought to make to the project. At length he paused before me, and said: "Arthur, you are young, and I am afraid that I expect too much of you. I see very plainly, however, that if you go away for a protracted absence, to live still longer

on Mrs. Sanderson's benefactions, you will return more disqualified than you are at this moment to take up an independent life. I do not approve of your plan, but I will not lift a finger to thwart it. After you have surrendered your place in Mrs. Sanderson's family, you will be in a better position to judge whether your plan be either desirable or practicable."

Then he laid his hand upon my shoulder, in an affectionate way, and added: "I confess I should be sorry to lose sight of you for the next two years. Your father needs you, and will need you more and more. Besides, the next two years are to confirm you more than you can see in the style of character and manhood which you are to carry through life. I am very anxious that these two years should be made the most of."

The interview was a brief one, and I left the presence and house of my friend under the impression that he not only did not approve my plan, but that he thought it very doubtful whether I should have the opportunity to realize it. He said but little, yet I saw that his faith in Mrs. Sanderson's generosity, where her own selfish ends were not involved, was not very hearty.

On the following day I met Livingston at Mr. Bradford's table. The family were all at home, and Millie, most becomingly dressed, never had seemed so beautiful to me. Livingston was evidently very much impressed by her charms, and showed by the attention he bestowed upon her his desire to appear at his best in her presence. I was distressed by my own youth, and the easy superiority which he manifested in all his manners and conversation.

It was strange, too, to see how the girl's quick nature had shot beyond mine into maturity, and how, in her womanliness, she matched my friend better than myself. I was full of embarrassment and jealousy. The words that were addressed to me by the other members of the family were half unheard and but clumsily replied to, absorbed as I was in watching Livingston and Millie, and seeing how happily they carried on their conversation. I was enraged with myself—I who had always

been quick and careless—for I knew that I did not appear well and felt that the girl, whose senior I was by several years, regarded me as a youth in whom the flavor and power of maturity were lacking. Livingston was a man, she was a woman, and I was a boy. I saw it all and felt it all, with pangs that none may know save those who have experienced them.

The evening did not pass away, however, without giving me an opportunity for a quiet talk with Millie. There was one woman whose sharp vision did not fail to detect the real state of affairs. Aunt Flick was on the alert. She had watched the play from the first, with eyes that comprehended the situation, and in her own perverse way she was my friend. She managed to call Livingston away from Millie, and then I took a seat at her side. I tried to lead her into conversation on the subject most interesting to me, but she declined to say a word, though I knew that she was aware of all that was occurring in relation to my life.

The moments were precious, and I said impulsively, out of the burden of my heart, "Miss Bradford, I am passing through a great trial."

"I know it," she replied, looking away from me.

"Are you sorry?"

"No,"—still looking away.

"Are you my friend?"

"That depends."

"I get very little sympathy," I responded bitterly. "No one but my dear old father seems to understand how hard this is, and how hard all have helped to make it for me. The revolution of one's life is not a pleasant process. A dozen words, spoken to me by the right lips, would make many things easy and anything possible."

She turned to me in a startled way, as if I had given her sudden pain, and she had been moved to ask me why I had done it. I was thrilled by the look, and thoroughly ashamed of the words that had inspired it. What right had I to come to her with my troubles? What right had I to seek for her sympathy?

Was it manly for me to seek help from her to be a man? If she had not pitied me and seen further than I did, she would have spurned me.

This conversation was nothing but a brief episode in the evening's experiences, but it made a healthy impression upon me.

Livingston and I left the Bradfords together, and, as we were to take opposite directions to our lodgings, we parted at the door. Not a word was said about Millie; and all that he said about the Bradfords was in the guarded words: "These friends of yours seem to be very nice people." I knew that he would be there again, as soon as it would be practicable, and that he would be there without me. I was quite reconciled to this, for I saw that he monopolized attention, and that I could be nothing but a boy by his side, when he chose that I should be.

He remained in the town for a week, calling upon the Bradford family nearly every day, and on one occasion taking a drive with them in the family carriage. In the meantime Henry made rapid strides toward recovery, and the dreaded hour approached when it would be necessary for me to take the step which would abruptly change the current of my life.

When I parted with Livingston, he still entertained the project of travel, and said that he should return in a fortnight to ascertain my conclusions.

CHAPTER XXII

MRS. SANDERSON MEETS HER GRANDSON AND I RETURN TO MY FATHER'S HOME.

LIVINGSTON had been gone three or four days when, one morning, Henry's surgical attendant came down stairs from his regular visit to the young man, and announced that his patient was sitting in a chair by the window, and that he would soon be able to take a little passive exercise in the open air. Having given me directions with regard to getting him back to his bed, when he should become tired with sitting, he went away. The sudden realization that Henry was so near the point of perfect recovery sent the blood to my heart with a dull throb that made me tremble. I knew that he would endeavor to get away as soon as possible, and that he would go whenever his mother should consider it safe for him to be separated from her.

"Are you well to day?" I said, lifting my eyes to my aunt.

"Perfectly well."

"Are you willing to have a long talk with me this morning?" I inquired.

She looked at me with a quick, sharp glance, and seeing that I was agitated, replied with the question: "Is it a matter of great importance?"

"Yes, of the greatest importance."

"H'm! You're not in love, I hope?"

"No," I responded, coloring in spite of the terrible depression that had come upon me, "though I probably should not tell of it if I were."

"I'm sure I don't see why you shouldn't," she answered quickly.