

then they sought for him in vain; in the midst of her grief they came to her, asking where he was to be found, and she could not tell. His valet said,

"If Madame will look among Monsieur's papers perhaps she will find the note which summoned him away this morning, I dare not, Monsieur would dismiss me."

But wild with grief she heeded him not, but dismissing them all, said:

"We will wait until he comes, it must be soon."

And for a whole day and far in the next night, she nursed her grief alone, mourning over the pale cold corpse of her fair dead boy, but saying,

"For my sin, for my sin, I was unworthy."

But bye and bye the desire to share this anguish with her husband—the need of his sustaining arm became insupportable. And remembering the words of the valet, she went slowly and wearily into her husband's dressing-room, to search for some clue to his whereabouts.

His keys were thrown upon the dressing-table, his desk locked stood near. It was filled with notes and letters, some opened and others tied in packages.

The first two or three were business notes, then some bills, then a delicate little perfumed note dated the day before. With these words written in a hurried hand.

"Dearest:—Come to me at once, Rolf has sprained his ankle terribly, and is so cross I can do nothing with him. He wants papa, and you know I sing to night, so I must leave him sick or well.

Thine, Nina."

What did it mean? with eager eyes, and trembling hands she opened another, which read thus:

"I have a supper to night at the 'saloon de Théâtre,' will my own precious Rolf make the hours flee like golden seconds by his dear presence. What you have often called me,
Your darling, Nina."

With a wild cry, forgetting what she came there for, forgetting the dead boy in the next room, over whom her heart had mourned so piteously but just now, Coralie, with frantic eagerness, read note after note, like these; some more tender, some upbraiding him for negligence, but all calling him

her own, her Rolf. Some were dated as far back as when they were in London, but all bore the post mark of Paris or Florence. This was why they had been hurried from London, and then from Paris, that her husband might be near this woman.

An opera singer or a ballet dancer, that her notes plainly bespoke her, and—heaven help the heart-broken reader,—her husband's mistress!

Then when all those billet-doux were read and re-read she bowed herself upon the ground and strove to make out what it all meant. For hours she sat thus, crushed and bowed down, with this terrible revelation, until the gray dawn broke and her lamp grew pale.

Then she rose and calmly, opened and read letter after letter, many of them in the same hand but dated years ago, before she knew him. Full of love, at first, then of upbraiding, then a demand for money, because a child was born, "which I have named Rolf," the writer said, that was the reason of his "No!"

Then came angry bitter letters, telling of neglect and desertion; some of them had followed him to America, and one was received the very morning he had told her of his love, in the parlor of "Ingle-side." And in it was a threat which Cora hardly noted—that she would send the child to him, and make him acknowledge it.

These were the notes which had met them in London, the first acknowledging the receipt of a sum of money, others reminding him of his promise to come to Paris, and then the one which had brought them to Florence—which said, "your son is ill, come quickly."

She read them all, quietly, then folding, and tying them together laid them back again, and turned to go, but suddenly a well known hand struck her, and eagerly she caught up a bundle of letters,

"Oh mamma! and I dared to doubt you,—ingrate that I am!" she cried,

There they were, all the letters she had pined so for, dozens of them, from every one of those dear ones whom she deemed had forgotten her.

And under all, lay the fond pleading letters she had written to us, each one as she had given it into her husband's hand to send away.

"Dastard," she said, her eyes flashing, "these are mine at least," laying them aside she arranged the rest, and locked the desk.

Then beside her boy's cold corpse she read all those loving words we had sent across the deep to her.

But though she kissed them often, she never shed a tear, but read and re-read them until twilight fell. Then calling her maid she dressed herself in a dress of azure velvet, put diamonds in her ears and on her breast, and laid bright flowers 'midst her golden curls, and with but one long kiss upon her darling's brow, summoned her carriage and went forth, with only the valet for her companion, spite of the frightened remonstrances of her servants.

"To the Opera House," she said, as she drove away.

It was a blaze of light, and for a moment after they entered the lobby she grew dizzy, but recovering she bade the servant go and procure her a seat.

They were very late, the opera had begun some time before, drawing the curtains closely round her box she scanned the assembled audience, for a long while in vain.

But bye and bye a little stir occurred in a box opposite her, and a party entered, one of the ladies, a beautiful woman, dressed in the extreme of the fashion was attended by two gentlemen, and one of them was Rolf Livingstone.

He sat down moodily, with a look of *ennui* upon his face, answering once in a while the gay sallies of his companions, then relapsing into silence.

Now Cora ordered her attendant to draw back the curtains, and sat in a graceful position with her eyes fixed upon her husband.

It was just as the ballet was closing, and the instant her curtains were withdrawn all eyes were turned towards her, in wonder and admiration.

Oh I know how beautiful she looked in her magnificence, with a blaze of diamonds flashing in the light, no wonder Rolf Livingstone sprang up with a white face as he beheld her. Then sank down again as the laugh and jeers of his companions recalled him to himself.

She met his gaze coldly, and turned her eyes indifferently upon the stage, just as the curtain went down. Then she watched him endeavoring to excuse himself from his companions, as she knew from their gestures, and the way the lady clung to his arm—in vain.

"Haste Adolphe, I must meet your master in the lobby, and take him home to his dead son," she said with a laugh as they made their way through the crowd.

"As soon as I speak to your master, call my carriage," she added as they went on.

Just at the door they came face to face upon Livingstone and his company. He turned white as the wall beyond him. With a bow and a sneer she said in a gay tone,

"Pardon my interruption sir, but I would say a word in your ear if your lady will permit me."

"Certainly," was the reply from the person thus addressed, as she let go his arm, "I will wait."

Before he had time to recover himself she said in a low tone, approaching her lips to his ear.

"Your youngest son died last night, and we"—

"My God! Cora what do you mean?" he cried catching her arm.

With a look of withering contempt she drew back, then said coldly.

"The gentleman forgets himself," and made a sign to her servant.

"Mrs. Livingstone's carriage?" he cried.

"Waiting," was the reply from the groom without, and before Rolf could stay her she had passed into the carriage and was whirled away.

At home once more she laid aside her gay dress, and seated herself besides her boy's little couch.

After she had watched his sweet face for a time, she called for her easel and began with a steady hand to sketch that calm pale face, upon the canvass.

"Mamma will like to see how you looked the last day you were on earth my boy," she said.

Suddenly a carriage drove recklessly to the door and a furious knock told who had come. In a moment she heard his quick step and eager voice as he came up stairs. Bending down, she pressed one kiss upon the little white face, and then proceeded calmly without a tremor, to her unfinished portrait.

"Leonard my boy! my boy!" burst forth from the grief-stricken man, as he threw himself upon the dead body of his child. But the mother and wife, who yesterday, was so tender, so loving and sympathizing, sat by unmoved,

never looking up from her canvass, but working calmly and steadily at her picture. Suddenly with a cry of anguish, Rolf started up saying.

"In the name of heaven, what has come over you?"

"A desire to finish my dead child's portrait before you bury him, sir. I took one of him last week in the flush of health, when he was just a year old. It was so beautiful, I thought to give it to his father on his birth-day. Now I want mamma to see how my darling looked when he had grown to be an angel. My precious boy," and with a gentle smile she stroked back the little soft curl from her baby's brow and wound it lovingly round her finger. It was the only sign of tenderness she showed before him. Later in the day she gave directions how she desired the funeral to be arranged.

"My child shall never lie in this unchristian country," she said, "but let them carry him to Paris, where he shall lie until I take him home with me."

And the next morning, Rolf Livingstone, at her stern command started for Paris, and did as she desired. While he was gone she collected the little that had belonged to her girlhood, which she had treasured up for the old memories which hung about them.

Among them were a few dresses, these she packed together. Then with a small sum of money, which was the gift of Mr. Audley before her marriage, she went forth from her home, leaving behind her a letter in the desk which contained her husband's other letters.

"I came to this place when my boy died, hoping to find some clue to where my noble husband was, that I might within his faithful arms lose half the dreadful grief which was upon me. Unsuspectingly I read one letter, then I read all, every one this box contains. Those which bore my name, I have retained, and they are my comforts, and lay like a shield over my heart. Those of your paramour I have left for your comfort. With nothing save my few girlhood's relics, the littleness of which in my love, I was so proud, happy that all I had, you gave me, I go hence forever. It were vain to seek me, even did you desire it, for God being my witness, henceforth I am no more to you than that dead boy whose body you have this day taken from our desolate home.

"Every gift of my wedded life you will find in their places, the keys lie on your dressing-table.

"Henceforth, I live to prepare for my Leonard's greeting when he shall come to meet me at the gate-way of heaven. Your place is to protect and guard your remaining son, but God pity the poor boy; God protect him. While life lasts I will pray for you, whom with my whole soul I once loved.

"Coralie."

Then she went forth, seeking the places where the letters from home told her Clarence was. But when after a weary two days' travel she reached it, he had gone, and "gone to his uncle in Paris," they said.

Wearily she retraced her way and after days and nights of travel, reached Paris. Then spent with her exertions, penniless and weary, for a whole day she wandered through the streets seeking for Mr. Audley's residence, and only found it as the shades of night were falling round her. After that, the way I found her, and her illness I have already told.

A few days after she came, and while we yet despaired of her recovery, Rolf Livingstone arrived. None of us saw him but Mr. Audley, who sternly and positively forbade him the house.

"This child whose life you have cursed, is mine now, and to the utmost extent of the law will I protect her from you."

"She shall choose between us sir:" was the haughty reply as he departed.

And so she did, for when she grew able to bear it, we told her he had been here. With a wild shriek of terror she cried,

"Save me from him, I will never go to him."

With loving words we soothed her, and then told her she must see him once more, and let him know her determination. At first she would not hear of this, but afterward she consented, and we sent for him to come on such a day. Proudly and confidently, he came, certain of his power over her, deeming that a few tender words would make her forget the heart-wrongs she endured.

How little he knew her! When we told her, he had come, she said calmly.

"Then let every one of my family come to this room, else I will not see him even now."

And when all were assembled, she bade a servant show him up. With a quick step and pale but haughty face, he came up the room to where she stood with her brother's arm about her, for she was yet too weak to stand long alone. Kneeling at her feet, he clasped her hand in his and kissed it passionately.

"My wife, my precious wife forgive me."

"Mr. Livingstone, I beg of you rise, your position is very unbecoming: and unloose my hand if you please. Nay sir, I insist, else I shall have to call upon Mr. Audley to free me from your insult."

"Insults!" he said bitterly as he rose, "insults! for me to kiss your hand Birdie!"

"Yes sir, the vilest insults, your presence here is an insult, not to me alone, but to those assembled here, my pure fair sisters, my angel mother. The noble brother upon whom henceforth I shall lean for strength, and whose arms will evermore shield me from the pollution of wicked men. Shall they not my brother, will not Howard Percy guard and protect his desolate sister from the infidel *roué*?"

"I will, so help me God," said Howard in a firm clear tone.

For a moment Rolf stood looking in a dazzled sort of a way into Cora's face, which was so child-like and so fair, beneath the little cap of lace which shrouded it. Then with outstretched hands he cried in tones of anguish, such as I think never reached my ear before,

"Coralie, my wife, you do not mean it?"

"As God is my witness, I do" she said calmly, "the one desire of my life is never to look upon your face again."

"Then if there is a God, God help me now," and with a cry of agony, he rushed out.

"Take me to bed again, mamma," was all she said. And though she lay there many days, she only said the words of all, ere they sleep.

"Good night, dear papa."

Mr. Audley has heard that Livingstone has returned to Italy, but since that day we have not heard from him, Cora never mentions his name, nor do we.

As soon as she is able, Howard and I will take her among

the mountains of Switzerland, and now she is so much better Stuart and May, have started upon their long delayed tour, taking Gracie with them, because we thought it better for her to be away, when Ernest made his trial upon Adèle, we have not spoken of it to the poor child herself yet, but he is very desirous to begin.

Estelle and Lela are again in the whirl of fashionable life, in which I fear the latter strives in vain to drown the sorrow an old memory still has for her,—but Mr. Audley likes them to be gay, is pleased that his wife and daughter should be much sought for.

In the meanwhile, Ada whose recent loss, and deep mourning dress preclude her entrance into gay society, is my companion, and we sit, a quiet party in my sick child's chamber, with Adèle, and sometimes Howard and Clare for our visitors, and read, or else write letters home.

I do not like to see Ada so quiet, poor child, it is a strange change, from the wild gay life, which is as natural to her, as the breath she draws.

She has told me in secret of her love for Carrol, and of the coolness which first came between them, because she hated to own even to herself how much she liked him, and how afterwards because she encouraged innocent Harry Lester, the breach widened, until at last Lela came and,

"Won his heart from me, then I gave him up," and she declares with a smile, "I have quite lost my idea of him now, dear friend, and think I could dance at his wedding quite complacently, without a sigh for my first love."

But though she talks thus I doubt she means it.

NOVEMBER.

We have been away for a couple of months, and are thankful to know how much benefit the change has been to Coralie.

And—now how can I write it, how express my gratitude to Him who doeth all things well. My Adèle sees once more. Oh I think of all the pain I have endured, that hour of suspense in which the operation was in progress surpassed them a hundred fold until Ernest came into the

room where we sat, and throwing himself into a seat covered his eyes saying,

"Successful, she will see, thank God!" in a trembling voice,

And she does see, thanks be to our Father above, although as yet in a darkened room, still, she sees. The necessary excitement and call for exertion, has done Cora a world of good. I have written a letter to Stuart to hasten his journey, and by the time they return, Adèle will be quite able to bear the light.

Clarence declares the first eyes which see his new picture shall be Adèle's, but she whispers,

"Not till Gracie comes, dear Clare."

To-night we were much astonished by a visit from young Lawrence, Ada's cousin, who used to be such a great friend to my little girls, in their holidays at Rosedale and Ingle-side.

He is the perfection of a light-hearted blue-eyed sailor, heedless and reckless as his boyhood promised. One speech of his, brought a tinge of red to Ada's pale face, spite of her former declarations of carelessness.

"One of your old lovers was making a deuce of a fuss, because he did not arrive in Sicily before you left, and pestered me with all sorts of questions about you, whether you were married, etc. I expect he will follow you here, as likely as not."

"What was his name?" asked Ada laughing.

"Carrol, he is some kind of a ——— by George, if I know what, but he is something, which is going to keep him abroad a deucedly long time."

"He has been appointed consul to some one of the Mediterranean Cities, he wrote me word," said Clare, "Lester is with him this year too."

CHAPTER LXXII.

DECEMBER.

At breakfast yesterday morning, we were discussing the arrangements of a ball, which Estelle was to give that evening in honor of the Ambassador of S——, and of Marion's wedding day anniversary, she declares.

"I have forgotten to tell you my dear," said Mr. Audley looking up from his paper, "that I have taken the liberty of inviting a guest to your fête this evening."

"Whom pray? lady or gentleman?" asked Estelle.

"Oh, a gentleman of course, and one well worth your knowing, I recommend you and Nora to endeavor to captivate him, for I know of none more worthy of enchaining."

"Dear! who can he be, and what can he be like, to whom you, 'Bien Bon,' take such a desperate fancy," said Lela.

"Ah! he is an old fancy of mine, I associate him with others who were once very dear to me, perhaps that is one reason, why I notice him enough to perceive his own excellence. Remember I recommend him. Although to tell the truth I rather surmise, from two or three things I have heard him say in regard to womankind, that our shy little Gracie is his type."

"Well then what is the use of our exhausting our charms, 'wasting our sweetness on the desert air' etc."

"True enough, Aunt Es, I hate men who have their 'types,' it makes one feel so uncomfortable to know you are being compared with some one else, I will none of your perfect men, I hate him already," said Lela.

"Very well, you saucy minx, now remember you are to keep out of the way, and let Gracie captivate him, that is if the child arrives in time."

"Oh they will be sure to be here by night, dear Gracie, I know they will," said Adèle.

"Yes so they will," quoth Lela, "and I make over my right and title henceforth and forever to Gracie."

"See that you do," laughed Mr. Audley as he went out. Soon after breakfast I was seated alone in my dressing-