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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KATHLEEN'S DIAMONDS; OR, SHE LOVED A HANDSOME ACTOR ***



KATHLEEN'S DIAMONDS

OR

SHE LOVED A HANDSOME ACTOR

By Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller

HART SERIES No. 45

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Contents

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
"Alas! Why Did She Do It?"	5
CHAPTER II.	
After Sixteen Years	7
CHAPTER III.	
"This Prince Karl—This Ralph Chainey—is My Rescuer at Newport Last Summer," Whispered the Romantic Girl	11
CHAPTER IV.	
"I Distinctly Forbid You to Know this Actor," said Mrs. Carew	15
CHAPTER V.	
Mrs. Carew is Mysteriously Absent	19
CHAPTER VI.	
Kathleen's Defiance	23
CHAPTER VII.	
"Mrs. Carew is Going to Make You Marry Her Son," said the Maid	27
CHAPTER VIII.	
"Please Buy My Diamond Necklace," said Kathleen	33
CHAPTER IX.	
Murdered!	37
CHAPTER X.	
At Dead of Night	40
CHAPTER XI.	
The Fatal Telegram	45
CHAPTER XII.	
"Kathleen, I Swear that I Will Avenge Your Murder!"	50
CHAPTER XIII.	
Another Mystery	53
CHAPTER XIV.	
A Strange Fate	57
CHAPTER XV.	
Poor Daisy Lynn	63
CHAPTER XVI.	
Kathleen's Desperation and Her Escape	70
CHAPTER XVII.	
"Will You be My Own Sweet Wife, Kathleen?"	74
CHAPTER XVIII.	
Kathleen's Disappearance	79
CHAPTER XIX.	
"Ralph Chainey is a Married Man!"	83
CHAPTER XX.	
Kathleen Makes a Startling Discovery	88
CHAPTER XXI.	
Was Ralph Chainey a Villain?	91
CHAPTER XXII.	
Rescued	93
CHAPTER XXIII.	
"Papa, Darling, It is I, Your Little Kathleen!"	97
CHAPTER XXIV.	
Turned Out Into the Storm	102
CHAPTER XXV.	

Teddy Darrell Again	105
CHAPTER XXVI.	
"I Would Lay Down My Life to Serve You!" said Teddy	107
CHAPTER XXVII.	
Alpine's Renewed Hopes	111
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
Teddy Darrell's Plans	115
CHAPTER XXIX.	
Fedora's Escape	119
CHAPTER XXX.	
"My Darling Girl, I'm as Fond of You as Ever!"	122
CHAPTER XXXI.	
Kathleen's Weary Waiting	126
CHAPTER XXXII.	
"We Have Met—We Have Loved—We Have Parted!"	128
CHAPTER XXXIII.	
Ralph Chainey's Anger	133
CHAPTER XXXIV.	
Alpine Sows the Seed of Jealousy	135
CHAPTER XXXV.	
Alpine's Falsehood	138
CHAPTER XXXVI.	
A Cruel Stab	142
CHAPTER XXXVII.	
Ralph Chainey is Driven to Desperation, and Turns on His Foe	146
CHAPTER XXXVIII.	
"I Have Come for My Diamonds," Kathleen said to the Jeweler	148
CHAPTER XXXIX.	
Kathleen Before Her Father's Portrait	153
CHAPTER XL.	
A New-found Relative	157
CHAPTER XLI.	
Ralph's Letter	160
CHAPTER XLII.	
"You Shall Not Marry Ralph Chainey!" Uncle Ben Cried Violently	162
CHAPTER XLIII.	
The Old Housekeeper's Story	167
CHAPTER XLIV.	
Grandmother Franklyn	171
CHAPTER XLV.	
Ivan Receives a Check in His Career	175
CHAPTER XLVI.	
"I Have Betrayed Myself. You Know My Heart Now."	177
CHAPTER XLVII.	
A Terrible Crime	181
CHAPTER XLVIII.	
"Kathleen Has Mysteriously Disappeared."	184
CHAPTER XLIX.	
The Franklyns at Last!	188
CHAPTER L.	
"She Was My Mother."	192
CHAPTER LI.	
A Cousin for a Lover	195
CHAPTER LII.	
The Search for Kathleen	198
CHAPTER LIII.	
"Oh, Sir, Have Pity on Me!" prayed Daisy Lynn	200
CHAPTER LIV.	
"Is This Your Niece?"	205
CHAPTER LV.	
Kathleen and Daisy Meet at Last	207
CHAPTER LVI.	

"So Shines a Good Deed in a Naughty World."	210
CHAPTER LVII.	
Mrs. Carew Triumphs in Her Sweet Revenge Upon Kathleen	212
CHAPTER LVIII.	
"I Will Never Humble Myself to You Again."	214
CHAPTER LIX.	
Oh, Ralph Chainey, Wake!	217
CHAPTER LX.	
"My Love Shall Call Him Back from the Grave!"	220
CHAPTER LXI.	
She Loved Much	223
CHAPTER LXII.	
"God Bless Brave, Bonny Kathleen Carew!"	225
CHAPTER LXIII.	
Within Prison Bars	227
CHAPTER LXIV.	
"Your Father is George Harrison, the Convict!"	231
CHAPTER LXV.	
A Startling Dénouement	234
CHAPTER LXVI.	
"I Will Go to the Old Haunted Mill," said Kathleen Bravely	239
CHAPTER LXVII.	
Teddy's Love Letters	242
CHAPTER LXVIII.	
In Mortal Peril	244
CHAPTER LXIX.	
"I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen."	252

KATHLEEN'S DIAMONDS

OR

SHE LOVED A HANDSOME ACTOR

CHAPTER I.

"ALAS! WHY DID SHE DO IT?"

What is the matter? Oh, nothing—a girl
 Is found here in suicide rest.
 Romantic? Of course; here's a rich, dark curl
 On the beautiful, blue-veined breast.

AMELIA V. PURDY.

Incredible, you say?

Alas, it was too true!

She was dead by her own hand, the beautiful child-wife of Vincent Carew, the millionaire—dead in her youth and beauty, leaving behind her all that life held for a worshipped wife and loving mother; for upstairs at this moment in the silken nursery her child, the baby Kathleen, barely six months old, lay sweetly sleeping, watched by an attentive French *bonne*, while in the darkened parlor below, the girlish mother, not yet eighteen, lay pale and beautiful in her coffin, with white flowers blooming on the pulseless breast, hiding the crimson stain where the slight jeweled dagger from her hair had sheathed itself in her tortured heart.

She was so young, so ignorant, or surely she would have held back her suicidal hand—she would have taken pity on her child, the dark-eyed little heiress she was leaving motherless in the wide, wide world that, whatever else it may give us, can not make up for the loss of the best thing life has to offer—a mother's love!

It is always a terrible misfortune to a young girl to be motherless, and it was going to be the tragedy of Kathleen Carew's life that she had no mother. The dagger-thrust that let out the life-blood of unhappy Zaidee Carew turned the whole course of her daughter's life aside into different channels.

But that lay in the future. *Now* all Boston wondered over the tragic death of Vincent Carew's wife, and people asked each other in dismay:

"Why did she do it?"

No one could answer that question.

The world thought that the young wife was perfectly happy.

And why not? Surely she had good cause.

Vincent Carew, the rich bachelor, who was a power in politics, and aspired to be governor of his state, had married Zaidee Franklyn out of a poverty-stricken home, lifting her at a bound to rank and fortune, and all for love of her fair face.

He had snapped his white fingers in the face of the world that called his marriage a *mésalliance*, and carried everything by storm. For his sake, society—cultured Boston society—had received his wife, the lovely young Southern girl, with her shy ways and neglected education, and for a time all went well.

So no one could answer the question why did she kill herself, but that was because Vincent Carew was too proud to admit the ubiquitous reporter inside his aristocratic portals. If one of these curious mortals had secured admittance to the house and questioned the servants, they would have told him what they suspected and discussed in whispers among themselves—that madame was madly jealous of the teacher her husband had employed to finish her very imperfect education.

[Pg 7]

"She is a snake in the grass, that pretty widow, and she makes my mistress unhappy," said the housekeeper, the first month that Mrs. Belmont came, and her opinion was adopted by all the other servants. They all hated the stately young widow in her black garments, and when the grewsome tragedy of Mrs. Carew's death darkened the sunlight in that luxurious home, they whispered to each other that it was Mrs. Belmont who had worked their mistress such bitter woe that she could not bear her life.

If indeed she had schemed for anything like this, Mrs. Belmont had succeeded in her designs. Zaidee Carew, with her own dimpled, white hand, had cut the Gordian knot of life, and in a few more days a stately funeral *cortège* moved away from Vincent Carew's doors to the cemetery where his dead wife, in all her youthful beauty, was laid to rest beneath the grass and flowers.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER SIXTEEN YEARS.

An exquisite face—patrician in style;
Note the lashes, how black, and their sweep—
The arch of the brows, and the proud lip's smile,
The flash of the eyes dark and deep.

Away from the forehead in waves the hair
Flows with the glisten of bronze;
Glorious in volume, the frame from where
The face of an houri dawns.

AMELIA V. PURDY.

"I never saw such a forgetful girl as you, Kathleen Carew. Here you sit dreaming, instead of dressing for 'Prince Karl' to-night. Are you going to the theater, then, or not?"

"Of course I am going, Alpine. I did not know it was so late. What, you are dressed already? How sweet you look! That blue *crêpe de Chine* is awfully becoming to you. Well, then, please ring the bell for my maid, won't you? I'll be ready in ten minutes."

[Pg 8]

"You'd better. Mamma will be furious if you keep her waiting," Alpine Belmont answered, crossly, as she touched the bell.

Then she looked back curiously at the graceful, indolent figure in the easy-chair, leaning back with white hands clasped on top of the bronze-gold head.

"Kathleen, what were you thinking about so intently when I came in? I had to speak twice before you heard me."

Kathleen raised her dark, passionate, Oriental eyes to the speaker's face, and, blushing vivid crimson, answered, dreamily:

"Alpine, I was thinking of that handsome young man who saved my life at Newport last summer. I was wondering who he was, and if we should ever see him again."

"It isn't likely we ever will," answered Alpine Belmont, carelessly. "I don't suppose he's in our set at all—some poor clerk spending all his winter's savings on a short summer outing, very likely. I wouldn't be thinking about him, like a romantic school-girl, if I were you, Kathleen. He didn't care about you, or he would have made himself known to you before this," and, with a low, taunting laugh, Alpine Belmont left the room just as Susette, the maid, came in.

"You'll have to do my hair in a hurry, Susie. There's no time for prinking," laughed her mistress; and while the maid brushed out the magnificent, rippling tresses, Kathleen relapsed into thoughts of the unknown hero whose handsome image haunted her thoughts.

"Is it true, as Alpine says, that he did not care for me? It is strange he did not stay to inquire who I was, after I came so near drowning. If he was a poor young clerk, as Alpine believes, perhaps he was too proud to reveal himself, thinking I would scorn him because I was an heiress. Ah, how little he knew Kathleen Carew's heart!" [Pg 9]

Her thoughts ran thrillingly on:

"Oh, how handsome he was when I first saw him in the water, that day at Newport! He kept watching me, and I could not help looking back. He seemed to draw my eyes. I know I wanted him to like me, for I wondered if my bathing suit was becoming, and I felt glad my hair was down, because I had been told it looked pretty that way, all wet and curling over my shoulders. His brown eyes said as plain as words that he admired me. Other men did, too, I know, but this time it seemed to thrill me with a new pleasure. As I splashed about like a mermaid in the waves, I kept thinking of him, wondering who he was, and hoping he would be at the ball that night. I wanted him to see how well I looked in my white lace and pearls. Then all at once came that treacherous undertow that swept me from my feet, down, down, down, under the heavy waves. Oh, how horrible it was! I thought I would be drowned, and my last thought was——"

"What gown, Miss Kathleen?" asked the maid.

"Anything, Susette. It don't matter how I look to-night. You can't decide? Oh, well, that new white cloth with the pink ostrich feather trimming, and diamonds. Alpine is wearing pearls and a blue gown, and we don't want to be dressed alike."

While Susette fastened the exquisite gown and clasped the diamonds, her thoughts ran on:

"He rescued me, the handsome, brave fellow, and as soon as he laid me, limp, but faintly conscious, upon the sands, he walked hastily away, and no one at Newport ever saw him again. Neither could any one ever find out who he was, although I'm afraid mamma did not try very hard. But he was certainly very modest. He did not want us to make a hero of him. Heigho, I do wish I knew his name—I do wish I could see him again! Alpine says I am foolish and romantic, and that I fell in love with him because he saved my life. Indeed, I think it was before—yes, at the very moment I first met his beautiful brown eyes gazing so eagerly into mine. A quick electric thrill seemed to dart through me, and——" [Pg 10]

"Kathleen, aren't you ready yet?" asked Alpine, entering. "The carriage has been waiting ever so long, and mamma is getting furious over your delay."

"I'm ready," Kathleen answered, composedly, without hurrying the least bit. She drew her white opera-cloak leisurely about her ivory-white shoulders, and followed her step-sister down-stairs to where Vincent Carew's second wife, once the widow Belmont, poor Zaidee's governess, was waiting in impotent wrath at the detention.

"The first act will be quite over before we get there, and it will be entirely your fault, for Alpine and I have been ready for an hour," she fretted as they entered the carriage.

CHAPTER III.

[Pg 11]

"THIS PRINCE KARL—THIS RALPH CHAINEY—IS MY RESCUER AT NEWPORT LAST SUMMER," WHISPERED THE ROMANTIC GIRL.

This is the way of it, wide world over,
One is beloved, and one is the lover,
One gives and the other receives.

E. W. W.

The first act had indeed begun when Mrs. Carew with her two daughters entered their box at the theater; but absorbing as was the interest in the popular play, "Prince Karl," many heads were turned to gaze admiringly at the trio of fair ones, for the matron, although fifty years old, looked much younger, and her stately charms were set off to advantage by black velvet and jet, with ruby ornaments on her neck and arms. Her silvery-white hair was arranged very becomingly, and Alpine felt quite proud of her mother's *distingué* appearance.

Alpine Belmont herself was a milk-white blonde, a trifle below the medium height, and with a rather too decided inclination to *embonpoint*. But the plumpness and dimples were rather fascinating, now in the heyday of youth—she was barely twenty—and with passable features, pale straw-gold hair, and forget-me-not blue eyes, Alpine passed as a belle and beauty.

But Kathleen Carew—Kathleen, with her slender, perfect figure just above medium height, and her vivid face as fresh as a flower, with her great, starry, passionate, Oriental eyes, veiled by thick curling lashes black as starless midnight, in such strong contrast to the rich bronze-gold of the rippling hair that crowned her queenly little head—Kathleen Carew was truly

"The Rose that all were praising."

"The house is crowded," Mrs. Carew observed in a gratified tone, as she swept the brilliant horse- [Pg 12]

shoe with her lorgnette.

"Oh, of course. They say Ralph Chainey is a splendid actor," returned Alpine, as she threw back her blue-and-white cloak to give the crowd the benefit of her plump white arms and shoulders.

"Does Ralph Chainey play Prince Karl?" inquired Kathleen, with languid interest; and, forgetting to listen for the answer, turned her attention to the stage where the actors were strutting their brief day.

The play went on, and Kathleen, rousing with a start out of her languid mood, watched it with eager eyes.

Everybody knows the clever, fascinating play "Prince Karl." Mansfield has made it immortal in his rôle of the courier.

This new actor, whose name had brought out the fashionable world of cultured Boston, was no whit behind Mansfield in his clever impersonations. He was young, and had flashed upon the dramatic world two years before with the brightness of a star. Time was adding fresh laurels to his name, and Boston, critical as it was, did not hesitate to add its plaudits, for, be it known, Ralph Washburn Chainey was a Bostonian "to the manor born."

"Oh, it is splendid! And is he not perfectly magnificent?" exclaimed Alpine Belmont, turning eagerly to Kathleen, as the curtain fell upon the first act.

Then she started with surprise, for Kathleen was leaning back in her chair, breathing heavily, her face very pale, her eyes half veiled by the drooping lids.

"Kathleen, what is the matter? Are you going to sleep, or are you ill, or—*what?*" she demanded, in a high whisper.

Kathleen caught Alpine's hand and drew it against her side.

[Pg 13]

"Oh, Alpine, feel my heart how it beats!" she whispered. "I have had such a shock! Did you not recognize him, too?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, Kathleen."

"Don't you? Oh, Alpine, I have found *him* out at last—my hero!" whispered the romantic girl.

"Kathleen, you're dreaming!"

"I'm not. I knew him in a minute, and he recognized me, too. I saw it in his glance when his eyes met mine. He started, then I smiled—I could not help it, I was so glad."

Mrs. Carew had been listening to catch the whispered conversation. A heavy frown darkened her face. She leaned forward and muttered, harshly:

"Kathleen, you must be crazy!"

The girl shrugged her shoulders contemptuously, and took no other notice of the speech.

But Alpine's curiosity was awakened, and she whispered, eagerly:

"Where is he, then? Point him out to me."

"I can not. He has gone off. Wait till he returns," answered Kathleen, sitting up straight in her chair again. The color was coming back into her face again, her eyes flashed radiantly. Mrs. Carew regarded her with suppressed displeasure.

Some gentlemen acquaintances came into the box, and the subject of Kathleen's discovery was dropped. They chatted gayly until the time for the curtain to rise, then returned to their seats.

The curtain rose upon the second act of the play, and Alpine was so interested that she leaned eagerly forward, quite forgetting, in her keen admiration of Prince Karl, her step-sister's interesting disclosure just now.

[Pg 14]

But suddenly Kathleen's taper fingers closed in a gentle pinch upon her plump arm.

"Look—now—don't you recognize him?" she murmured, triumphantly.

"Who? Where? Oh, for goodness' sake, Kathleen, don't bother me now! I don't want to lose a word of glorious Prince Karl!"

"But, Alpine, it is *he*, Prince Karl—my hero!"

"Good heavens, Kathleen! do you really mean it?"

"Yes, I do, Alpine. This Prince Karl—this Ralph Chainey—is my rescuer at Newport last summer. Watch him, Alpine, and perhaps you will catch him looking at us a little consciously, as I did just now."

"I see the likeness *now!*" answered Alpine, in a tone of suppressed dismay, whose import Kathleen could not understand. She said no more to her step-sister, but sat through the remainder of the play in a blissful dream.

The beautiful young heiress was intensely romantic, and for long months her fancy had been haunted by the image of the handsome young man who had saved her life. To find him again in the handsome young actor whose name was on every lip thrilled her with delight. He had recognized her, too, and the memory of his startled glance, so quickly withdrawn, thrilled her with keen delight, although he did not permit her to meet his eyes again.

Kathleen felt a little triumph, too, over Alpine, who had declared that her hero was doubtless a

mere nobody—perhaps a clerk in a country store, than which position Alpine's contemptuous ideas could not descend lower.

Alpine was watching him now with such eager interest that Kathleen smiled and thought:

[Pg 15]

"I believe Alpine has fallen in love with him, herself. But she need not; he is mine, mine, mine!"

She was claiming him already in her thoughts, forgetting that she had never even spoken to the handsome stranger to whom she owed such a debt of gratitude. It seemed to her that she was as dear to him as he was to her, and she almost expected to see him waiting to hand her to her carriage when they left the theater.

But no; the faint, fluttering hope was soon extinguished. Other admirers were waiting obsequiously, eager for the honor of touching the small gloved hand of the beautiful belle, but when the curtain dropped on Prince Karl bowing to the applauding audience, Kathleen saw him no more that night.

When Mrs. Carew dismissed her maid that night she sent an imperative summons to her step-daughter to come to her room, and received in return a polite request to be excused. Kathleen was tired, and meant to retire immediately.

CHAPTER IV.

"I DISTINCTLY FORBID YOU TO KNOW THIS ACTOR," SAID MRS. CAREW.

Love is a pearl of purest hue,
But stormy waves are round it;
And dearly may a woman rue
The hour when first she found it.

L. E. L.

Despite the message, Mrs. Carew, who went at once to Kathleen's room in a rage at her impertinence, found the young girl still in her ball-dress and jewels, sitting dreamily in an easy-chair, having dismissed Susette to arrange her bath. She yawned sleepily at her step-mother's entrance.

"I sent you word to wait till to-morrow," she said, petulantly.

[Pg 16]

"I did not choose to wait, Miss Impertinence!" and as Kathleen opened wide her big black eyes in a sort of contemptuous amazement, Mrs. Carew continued, angrily: "Alpine has told me how silly you were over that actor; how you love him, and long to get acquainted with him. Do you not know that it is very bold and coarse for a young girl to even think of a man that way until he has given some sign of liking for her? But Alpine declares that this man has never even noticed you."

"Alpine is a sneaking tell-tale, and you are a cruel woman!" Kathleen answered, indignantly. "And, madame, if I am ignorant, as you charge, of the proper feeling to observe toward men, who is to blame for that? Why did you not train me as carefully as you did your daughter Alpine? You took my poor dead mother's place before I was two years old. Why did you not do your duty by her orphan child?"

"How dare you speak to me like this?" demanded the angry woman. "Be silent, and listen to my commands!"

Her fingers itched to slap the cheek that dimpled with insolent amusement, but she clinched her hand and went on:

"Your father left you in my care when he went abroad for his health, and you shall obey my commands while he is gone. If you dare defy me, I shall lock you in your room, on bread and water, till you beg my pardon."

There was no answer. Kathleen looked her indignation, that was all.

"I distinctly forbid," said Mrs. Carew, "any further nonsense over this actor. Good heavens! an *actor*! What would your haughty father say?" contemptuously. "I will not take you to the theater again while he plays here. You disgraced yourself to-night, making eyes at him on the stage, and there shall be no more of it. I shall not permit him to make your acquaintance, even if he seeks to do so, which is very doubtful, as"—scornfully—"the infatuation seems to be all on one side."

[Pg 17]

Kathleen writhed with mortification, but she did not permit her foe to see how cruelly she was wounded. She held her queenly little head erect with that silent smile of maddening amusement on her scarlet lips. Years of wrong and injustice had made her scorn this woman who filled her dead mother's place so unworthily, and she made few efforts to conceal her feelings.

"I forbid any acquaintance with this Ralph Chainey—this actor. Do you understand me, Kathleen?" repeated her step-mother.

"I have heard you," answered the young girl, with a mutinous pout of her full lip.

"You will obey me?" a little anxiously, for Kathleen had never been so aggressively rebellious as to-night.

At the question, Kathleen rose to her feet and stood up like a young lioness at bay.

"I will *not* obey you, madame!" she replied.

"What?" almost shrieked Mrs. Carew.

"I will not obey you!" she repeated, with flashing eyes. "I will not run after Mr. Chainey, as you pretend so falsely that I am doing, and I will make no unmaidenly overtures toward his acquaintance, but if the proper opportunity offers for me to know and thank him for saving my life, I shall surely avail myself of it!"

They stood glaring at each other, the girl roused into furious rebellion, the woman speechless with fury, her steel-blue eyes seeming to emit electric sparks from her deathly white face, so intense was her fierce wrath. Controlling herself with an effort, she turned to leave the room, and, pausing on the threshold, hissed back one significant sentence at the defiant girl:

[Pg 18]

"Forewarned is forearmed!"

"I do not fear you!" Kathleen answered; but Mrs. Carew never looked back.

"What will she do? What can she do? She will never dare lock me in my room, as she threatened!" Kathleen murmured, uneasily, and then her overstrained nerves gave way. She threw herself on the bed and sobbed aloud, in nervous abandonment to her outraged feelings.

God help that poor, motherless girl! She knew that the events of that night would only make her life harder than it had been before under the roof that her step-mother ruled with an iron hand.

The beautiful young heiress did not have a happy life, in spite of all the good gifts with which fate had so richly dowered her at her birth. Her step-mother had always hated her, and never relaxed her efforts to harden her father's heart against his only child. Perhaps she hated Kathleen the more because Heaven had denied any children to her second marriage, and she knew that to this girl would go the bulk of her father's great wealth.

Mrs. Carew had two children by her first marriage—a son, now twenty-three, called Ivan, and the girl Alpine. Her favorite scheme was to marry the hated Kathleen to this son, so that he might share her rich inheritance. Failing in this, she meant, if it lay in the power of a human devil to compass it, to have Kathleen disgraced and disinherited, so that she and her children might enjoy the whole of the great Carew fortune.

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 19]

MRS. CAREW IS MYSTERIOUSLY ABSENT.

Alas, that clouds should ever steal
O'er Love's delicious sky—
That ever Love's sweet lip should feel
Aught but the gentlest sigh.
L. E. L.

Mrs. Carew did not appear at breakfast the next morning and Alpine, with a reproachful glance at Kathleen, said that mamma was sick. She had been so worried last night that she could not sleep, and this morning she had such a terrible headache that she must lie abed all day.

Kathleen did not look either repentant or sorry. She simply said that in that case she would not practice her music this morning, and went off to her own little studio, where she painted a while with great ardor, then threw down her brush, and rang for Susette to bring up the morning papers.

Susette lingered a minute after she had put down the newspapers.

"Miss Kathleen, I don't think it will disturb Mrs. Carew the least bit if you practice your music," she said, significantly.

"But her head aches, Susette."

"No, it don't miss; she's not in the house, so there! She went away early—very early, in her traveling-dress, the Lord knows where; for James told me so on the sly." (James was the butler, and Susette's sweetheart.)

Kathleen looked a little startled as she said:

"You must be mistaken. Ellen has been with her mistress all day. I tapped at the door a while ago to ask how she was, and she reported Mrs. Carew as very low."

"They are all deceiving you, Miss Kathleen, but what for I don't know, only I'm sure and certain she ain't in this house," protested Susette, stoutly.

"Very well, Susette. Her absence has no more interest for me than her presence," Kathleen answered, indifferently, as she opened *The Globe* and read the encomiums on Ralph Chainey's acting that filled a critical half column.

[Pg 20]

Her eyes sparkled and her cheeks glowed with pleasure.

"He plays 'Prince Karl' again to-night. Oh if I only could go again!" she thought, regretfully; then, throwing down the paper, she decided she would go and practice her music, since Mrs. Carew

was not ill, as Alpine pretended.

She had played but a few bars when Alpine entered with reproachful eyes.

"Have you no feeling, Kathleen? You will kill mamma!"

"Since mamma went away this morning early and has not yet returned, there's no danger," Kathleen answered, coolly.

"It is false! Who told you so?"

"No matter how I found it out. I'm in possession of the mysterious fact."

"It's that prying Susette, I know! I shall advise mamma to dismiss her immediately."

"You'd better not, Alpine. Susette knows some of your *secrets!*" Kathleen answered, with a provoking laugh.

"I have no secrets!" snapped Alpine; but she left the room discomfited.

Kathleen practiced and read until the late luncheon, where she was surprised to find herself alone.

"Where is Miss Belmont, James?" she asked.

"Miss Belmont went out for a walk," he answered, respectfully.

While Kathleen was making up her mind to go for a walk, too, some callers were announced. She received the matron and her two gay young daughters, entertained them herself, with an apology for the absence of the other members of the family, and saw them depart with a sigh of relief.

[Pg 21]

"I will go for my walk now," she decided, but turning from the piano, she saw an open note lying on the floor. Her own name attracted her, and picking it up, she read, under date of that morning:

"DEAR ALPINE AND KATHLEEN—Mamma wishes you to join us at an informal three-o'clock lunch to-day, to meet a distinguished guest. Brother George was at college with Prince Karl—Ralph Chainey, you know—and he is coming here to lunch with us to-day. Do come, girls! He's so handsome and talented I want you both to know him. There will be several others, too, but we want you especially. I want him to see our beautiful Kathleen."

The note bore the name of Helen Fox, one of their intimate girl friends, and Kathleen realized in a minute that she had been tricked by crafty Alpine, who had gone to the luncheon alone to meet Ralph Chainey.

A futile sob of bitter disappointment rose in the girl's throat, and crushing the note in her hand, she walked to the window, gazing blankly out into the handsome street through burning tears.

A light laugh startled her. There was Alpine Belmont, in elegant attire, walking toward the gate with a tall, handsome, *distingué* young man. Lifting his hat with a smile, he left the young lady there, and walked away with a hasty backward glance at the window that showed him a lovely, woful face staring in undisguised wonder at the spectacle of Ralph Chainey walking home with deceitful Alpine Belmont.

[Pg 22]

"Alpine, you wicked girl, how could you treat me so unfairly?" she demanded, shaking with passion.

Alpine flung herself into a chair, flushed, laughing, insolent.

"You told mamma last night that I was a sneaking tell-tale, didn't you? Well, then, I paid you off, that's all! Besides, mamma does not allow you to know Ralph Chainey—a pity for you, my poor Kathleen, for he's the most fascinating young man I ever met. I made myself very agreeable to him, and I think he fell in love with me. You see yourself he walked home with me from Helen's luncheon. Would you like to know what I told him about you, my charming Kathleen?"

"No!" the girl answered, hotly.

"I don't believe you—you're dying to hear. Well, it was this: I said you did not recognize him in the least last night till I told you it was the man that saved you at Newport. Then I said you would not come to meet him at the luncheon to-day, because you said it would be such a bore having to thank him. Ha, ha! You'd like to murder me, I know!"

CHAPTER VI.

KATHLEEN'S DEFIANCE.

She went her way with a strong step and slow—
Her pressed lip arched, and her clear eye undimmed,
As if it were a diamond—and her form held proudly up.

N. P. WILLIS.

Helen Fox was one of those sweet, pretty, amiable girls that everybody loves. Her rosy lips were always wreathed in smiles, and the very glance of her roguish blue eyes invited confidence. She

was the most popular girl in her set, and the intimate friend of Kathleen Carew and Alpine Belmont. [Pg 23]

Warm-hearted Helen had been sadly disappointed because Kathleen had not come to the luncheon, and the excuse that Alpine offered—namely, that her step-sister could not tear herself away from a new novel—seemed too shallow to entertain.

"I'm really mad with Kathleen, the lazy thing!" she said, frankly, to Ralph Chainey, who smiled, but made no comment. He was thinking about what Miss Belmont had told him just now. It rankled in his mind.

"I am anxious for you to meet her, she is such a beauty!" continued Helen, enthusiastically.

He gave some flattering answer that made her dimple and blush, but she answered, with a careless glance around:

"Oh, yes, we girls are well enough; but wait till you see my bonny Kathleen. Such lips, such hair, such eyes!"

Ralph Chainey laughed.

"You needn't be so sarcastic, Mr. Chainey. You haven't seen our beauty yet."

"I saw her last night at the theater."

"Oh, so you did. I forgot that. Well, isn't she charming?"

The handsome actor replied with a quotation:

"Perfectly beautiful, faultily faultless."

"She is all that," Helen Fox replied; but she looked at him with puzzled eyes, and thought within herself that he was somehow piqued at Kathleen Carew. But why, since the two had never met?

Suddenly the reason presented itself to her mind.

"The great vain thing! He is piqued because the beauty didn't come to the luncheon. He is offended because she did not seem anxious to meet him." [Pg 24]

And she was secretly amused at the young actor's palpable vanity, regarding it as a good joke, little dreaming of the seed that Alpine Belmont had been sowing in his mind.

Many envious glances followed Alpine, a little later, when she bore Ralph Chainey off in triumph as her escort home; but Helen was pleased, for she thought:

"If Alpine asks him into the house he will get acquainted with Kathleen, and then he will find out how lovable she is."

But when George Fox, who had also walked home with a young lady on Commonwealth Avenue, returned home he reported that Ralph Chainey had left Miss Belmont at the door.

Suddenly Helen remembered sundry small matters that were not at all to Alpine's credit.

"That girl is tricky, I know," she said to herself. "Perhaps she did not ask Mr. Chainey to go in. Perhaps she kept Kathleen from coming here to-day. She has been known to do shabby things to cut other girls out of their lovers. Not that Ralph Chainey is Kathleen's lover *yet*, but he ought to be. They are just suited to each other, both are so splendid. It may be that Alpine intends to catch him herself before her sister gets a chance." Helen laughed a sage little laugh to herself, and added: "I'll ask mamma to let us call at Mrs. Carew's and take Kathleen with us to the theater to-night."

"Oh, Alpine! where is Kathleen? George and mamma are waiting out here in the carriage. We have just one seat left, and we stopped to ask Kathleen to go with us to the theater." [Pg 25]

"Mamma is out, Helen, and she would not like it if Kathleen went without leave."

"But mamma is with us, Alpine. She would chaperon Kathleen."

"She can not possibly go," began Alpine, in a high tone of authority; but at that moment a light swish of silken draperies came through the hall, and a sweet voice said, clearly:

"Kathleen *can* go, Helen, and she *will* go, too, if you will wait till she gets on her things."

And Alpine beheld her step-sister, cool, calm, defiant, rustle up to Helen Fox and kiss that piquant, silk-robed damsel.

"Come upstairs with me, Helen, dear, while I dress," she said, radiantly, trying to draw her toward the stairway, for this colloquy had taken place in the hall.

Alpine followed them upstairs out of reach of the servants' ears, and then she said, sharply:

"You need not get ready, Kathleen, for I shall assume mamma's authority in her absence, and forbid your going."

"Oh, Alpine, where is the harm?" pleaded Helen.

"Mamma has forbidden her to go to the theater any more this week, because she caught her making eyes at an actor on the stage last night," Alpine answered, maliciously.

"It is false!" answered the young girl, stung to madness by Alpine's wickedness. Turning to Helen,

she said, proudly: "I accept your invitation, Helen, and will accompany you to the theater, in spite of a hundred Alpine Belmonts! I am no slave to be domineered over in this manner, and Alpine had better go and leave me alone before she arouses me any further."

[Pg 26]

"Very well, miss; take your own way and defy *me*; but mamma will make you repent it, be sure of that," snapped Alpine, withdrawing.

"Oh, Kathleen, I didn't know I was going to raise such a breeze! Perhaps you had better not go if Mrs. Carew objects," Helen said, uneasily.

Kathleen turned on her a face crimson with angry passion.

"I'd go if she killed me for it!" she cried, with an imperious stamp of her dainty foot. "Who is that woman to forbid my going to places of amusement, like other girls?" She rang the bell violently for Susette, and added: "Say nothing before my maid, Helen; but on our way to the theater I'll tell you how wickedly Alpine treated me this afternoon."

Presently Alpine, peeping through her door, saw the two girls going away, Helen a little uneasy looking, the other proud, defiant, beautiful as a dream.

"She will meet Ralph Chainey, after all," Alpine muttered, in a fury.

It was midnight when Mrs. Fox's carriage stopped again at the Carew mansion, and George handed Kathleen out and rang the bell for her at her own door.

The windows were closed, and not the faintest gleam of light shone through them. George waited a few moments, then rang the bell again.

"Every one must be asleep, they are so long coming," said Kathleen, shivering in the cold night air.

They rang again furiously; but there was no response. The locked door, the dark, forbidding windows seemed to frown on their frantic efforts to arouse the house.

[Pg 27]

Mrs. Fox put her head out of the carriage window and said:

"Kathleen, you had better come home with us to-night, my dear. I don't think you will be able to rouse any one there; and you will catch cold waiting in the cool night air."

CHAPTER VII.

"MRS. CAREW IS GOING TO MAKE YOU MARRY HER SON," SAID THE MAID.

I've thought of thee—I've thought of thee,
Through change that teaches to forget;
Thy face looks up from every sea,
In every star thine eyes are set.

N. P. WILLIS.

Kathleen was annoyed by her failure to get into the house, but she did not attach any particular significance to it. She supposed that Alpine, out of spite, had caused the servants to lock up and go to bed; that was all. She went home willingly enough with her kind friends, intending to return the next morning.

And when she laid her beautiful head on the pillow that night, it was to dream of soft brown eyes that had looked thrillingly into hers, and of a warm white hand that had clasped hers, oh! so closely, when he said good-night; for Ralph Chainey, the actor—or Prince Karl, as Kathleen called him in her thoughts—had come into Mrs. Fox's box twice between the acts, and had been presented to the beautiful heiress whose life he had saved last summer, and from whose presence he had gone away *incognito*.

Prince Karl had been on his dignity at first. He had remembered what Alpine Belmont had told him that afternoon.

[Pg 28]

He believed that beautiful Kathleen was cold, proud and ungrateful.

So, after bowing over her little hand when George Fox presented them, he turned his attention to the vivacious Helen, and scarcely looked at the radiant creature close to her side.

Kathleen bit her red lips and remained silent. She understood Ralph Chainey's mood, and knew that she had to thank Alpine for his indifference.

Her sweet lips quivered with a repressed sob, and her dark eyes swam in moisture that threatened to fall in blinding tears. It was hard—cruelly hard to have him believe her proud and ungrateful, and to see him resent it in this cavalier fashion.

He bowed himself out presently, and then Helen Fox turned to her, eagerly.

"How did you like him, Kathleen? Isn't he just splendid?" she exclaimed. Then she saw how grave and quiet the young girl looked, and remembered what Kathleen had told her in the carriage.

"Oh! I forgot; he did not really pass one word with you. He was piqued and stiff over what Alpine told him," she cried, and added, consolingly: "Never mind; he'll come round. He admires you very much—I saw that in his eyes—and, of course, he is secretly very much interested in you, having saved your life! It is very romantic, Kathleen, and I shouldn't wonder if it's a match."

"Don't, Helen!" answered the girl, somewhat incoherently.

But Helen laughed gayly, and when the next act was over and the actor came again for a few minutes, he found her whispering very mysteriously to her mother. She nodded at him, and went on confiding something to her mother's ear.

[Pg 29]

George Fox had gone out, so there was no one to speak to but Kathleen—trembling Kathleen—who blushed warmly when he came to her side, and murmured, tremulously:

"I want to thank you for—for last summer. It was so good of you, so noble, to risk your life for a—a stranger."

"Pray do not speak of it; it was nothing. I ran no risk; I am a good swimmer," he replied, a little stiffly.

But Kathleen went on, in that tremulous voice:

"I—I have always remembered you with gratitude—always longed to see you again, that I might thank you from my heart for your goodness. Papa, too, wanted to see you. Why did you go away so suddenly?"

Where was the arrogance, the indifference on which Alpine had expatiated? The sweet lips trembled; there was dew on the curling black lashes that shaded the splendid, luring black eyes. When Ralph Chainey had gazed into them a moment, he turned away his head like one dazzled by too much sunlight.

"Why did you go away so suddenly?" she repeated; and then he said:

"It was because I am an actor, Miss Carew. If I had stayed to receive your thanks, and disclosed my identity, the story would have got into the newspapers, and people would have said I did it to get some free advertising. Your name would have gone all over the country as the heroine of the rescue. You would not have liked the publicity, perhaps; and so I hurried away."

"It was very good of you to think of that," she answered, simply; then added hastily, for the minutes were passing, and she knew he must soon return to the stage again: "Mr. Chainey, Alpine told me what she had told you this afternoon. It was—was—a joke on her part. I *did* recognize you last night as soon as I saw you. I told her who you were. She was jesting, believe me for I—I could not—be so ungrateful as to forget your face so soon."

[Pg 30]

It was time for him to go. He rose and held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said, in his deep, sweet voice, pressing her hand warmly. His magnetic brown eyes gazed deep into hers, and he murmured, inaudibly to the others: "It was the happiest moment I ever knew when I saved your life!"

Then he was gone. From the stage she met his eyes twice fixed on her, as if he could not resist the temptation of looking. When George Fox put them all into their carriage, he came out, still in his stage costume, to say good-night. He held her hand just a moment longer than Helen's, and he whispered:

"I hope we shall meet again."

His eyes, his words, his thrilling hand-clasp, haunted the motherless girl that night in the mystical land of dreams.

She arose early, after a rather restless night, and her first thought was that she had no morning-dress.

"I am taller than Helen, so I can not wear one of hers; neither can I wear the low-necked costume I wore to the theater last night," she murmured, in perplexity.

Her musings were cut short by a tap at the door. Susette, her maid, entered with a large bundle.

"Good-morning, Miss Kathleen. I've brought your walking-dress for you to come home," she said, undoing the paper and displaying a black silk costume.

[Pg 31]

"Oh! how good of you, Susette! I was just thinking I would have to ask Mrs. Fox to send around for it."

"Mrs. Carew sent me," said Susette, pursing her lips.

"So she has returned?" asked Kathleen, resting her charming head on her elbow and looking down at the maid, who had seated herself on an ottoman close to the bed.

"She came home near midnight last night, Miss Kathleen."

"Near midnight? Why, then, some one must have been awake when I came home, Susette! Why did no one answer the bell?"

"The madame's orders," Susette replied, significantly.

The great dark eyes of Kathleen dilated in wonder.

"But why——" she began, and the maid interrupted:

"Miss Kathleen, I did some eavesdropping on your account last night, and if you'll not think the

worse of me for it, I'll tell you Mrs. Carew's plans."

The woman was rather intelligent and quite well educated for one in her position. She had been in Kathleen's service five years, and loved her young mistress dearly. Her devotion to her interests had won her a warm place in Kathleen's heart.

"Go on," she said, and Susette continued:

"When madame went away yesterday it was somewhere into the country where there's a boarding-school, where you are to be sent to-day."

"Susette!"

"It's the gospel truth, miss! They packed your trunk last night, all ready for you to start. That's why they wouldn't let you in. You were not to know anything."

"To—send—me—back—to—school!" exclaimed the young girl in such amazement that the words came with difficulty from her lips. Her eyes flashed with anger. "I will not go! She can not force me!" she declared.

[Pg 32]

"She intends to *make* you go. I heard her tell Miss Belmont so," said the maid, looking very sad, for she knew that Mrs. Carew's will was law.

Kathleen's face grew scarlet with passion, and there was a dangerous light in her eyes, but she did not answer. Springing from the couch, she allowed Susette to attire her in her black silk.

"I thought maybe if I told you beforehand that maybe you could think of some way to outwit her," said the maid.

"And I will—I *will*! I will never be sent to school again!" cried the girl, in something almost like terror. She clasped her little hands and sighed: "Oh, why did papa ever go away and leave me here in that woman's power? She was always cruel to me, but she did not dare so much while he was here. Oh, I wish he would come home to his poor Kathleen!"

Bitter burning tears rolled down her cheeks and dropped on her heaving bosom. It was so hard to be ruled by this coarse woman, who envied and hated her in the same breath.

"She is going to make you marry her son, too. She told her daughter that she was determined to bring that about, so he might share your fortune," Susette remarked at this juncture.

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 33]

"PLEASE BUY MY DIAMOND NECKLACE," SAID KATHLEEN.

I've no mother, now I'm weeping—
She has left me here alone;
She beneath the sod is sleeping,
Now there is no joy at home.

Old Song.

Before Kathleen could reply, the door opened softly and Helen Fox came in with two letters in her hand. Kissing Kathleen good morning, she exclaimed:

"What do you think? The postman has just brought me a proposal!"

"From Loyal Graham?" queried her friend.

Helen blushed up to her eyes, but answered, gayly:

"No, indeed—from Teddy Darrell."

Kathleen arched her black eyebrows in surprise.

"Teddy Darrell! Why, he proposed to *me* last week," she said.

"And did he ask you to keep it a *secret*?" asked Helen, consulting her letter, her blue eyes dancing with fun.

"Yes, he did, now that I recall it. Oh, my! I'm sorry I mentioned it; but you took me by surprise."

"There's no harm done, my dear, and you need not look so conscience-stricken. Bless you, I don't mean to keep it a secret, although he prays me here to do so. Why, Teddy Darrell is the worst flirt in Boston, and proposes to a new girl every week, always trying to keep the new love a secret from the old one."

"But does no one ever accept him, Helen?"

"Perhaps. I don't know, I'm sure I sha'n't, and I'm just dying to tell the girls. Why, only last week we were comparing notes over him, and out of seven girls in the crowd he had asked five to marry him. Maud Sylvester said I'd be the next one on his list, and you see I am."

"But how can he fall in love so often?" queried Kathleen, laughing.

[Pg 34]

"He's very susceptible, I suppose, or maybe it's all in fun. You know some young men like to be engaged to several girls at once, so they can boast of their conquests, and maybe he's one of them. Well, I must lacerate his poor heart by a refusal," with a mock sigh.

"Who will be his next victim?" asked Kathleen.

"Either Maud Sylvester or Katie Wells. One is an actress, the other a novelist. He is wild over both fraternities."

"How amusing!" laughed her friend. "But your other letter, Helen? Is it another proposal?"

"No; this is an invitation to attend a flower show."

"From Loyal Graham?"

"Ye-es," Helen answered, a little consciously. "But, Kathleen, how pale you are! Did you not sleep well?"

"No; I was restless," answered the girl.

She debated within herself whether she ought to tell Helen of the news Susette had brought. She concluded that she would not just yet.

"Come, we will go down to breakfast, dear," Helen said, drawing an arm through Kathleen's to lead her away.

"Susette, you need not go back yet. I shall want you after a while," said Kathleen, and the maid remained very willingly.

Down-stairs Kathleen smiled, talked, ate, and drank in a mechanical fashion. She was busy revolving schemes for escaping her threatening fate.

Kathleen had not been home from school more than six months. The idea of returning to it, and leaving the social whirl, that as yet was so new and charming, was not to be tolerated.

"And just as I had met Ralph Chainey, too," she said to herself, in keen dismay.

[Pg 35]

Her mind was on a rack of torture. She was afraid that open rebellion would not avail. Her foe was keen and subtle. She would employ strategy to compass her ends.

"I ought to meet her with her own weapons," she thought; and all at once she began to wonder if she could not quietly get away and go South to her dead mother's relatives, there to remain until the return of her father should make her safe from persecution.

Two hours later Kathleen bade her friends good-morning, and walked away with Susette, as they supposed, toward her home. Little did Helen Fox, as she gazed with loving eyes after her beautiful form, dream of the tragic doom hanging over Kathleen Carew.

"Susette, I am not going home with you," she said.

The maid looked inquiringly into the beautiful young face, and Kathleen added, determinedly:

"I am going straight to the station, where I shall take the train and go South to my mother's relatives, to remain until papa gets back to free me from that woman's tyranny."

"Oh, Miss Kathleen! do you think that will be for the best?" inquired Susette, timorously.

"Of course it will, Susette; for they will be kind to me for my dead mother's sake."

"And you will have me to pet you and care for you?" said the affectionate maid.

"I can not take you with me, Susette; for it might get you into trouble, you good soul, and I don't want to do that. I can take care of myself, never fear. No, you are to go straight back home and say that I sent you, and will follow presently."

[Pg 36]

Susette began to sob dismally, and Kathleen had to draw her aside into a pretty little park where they seated themselves, and talked softly for some time. Then Kathleen arose, and pressed her sweet rosy lips to the woman's wet cheeks.

"Now good-bye for a few weeks only, Susette, dear; for as soon as papa returns I'll be back. If Mrs. Carew turns you out, go to Helen Fox and ask her to give you employment while I am away. She will do it for my sake, I know. And I'll write to you at Helen's as soon as I get to Richmond. How fortunate that I have my diamonds with me, for I can go to the jeweler's and sell enough to carry me on my journey. Oh, Susette, don't sob so, please, dear! Good-bye; God bless you!" She signaled a passing cab, gave the order: "Golden & Glitter's, Tremont Street," and was driven swiftly away.

It was a bright, cool morning in April, and Tremont Street was thronged with shoppers and business people as she stepped out of the cab in front of the jeweler's elegant shop.

Bidding the cab wait, the young girl drew down her lace veil and entered without noticing, in her preoccupation, the tall, blonde young man, with a small satchel in his hand, who was intently gazing into the jeweler's window with a covetous gleam in his pale, dull-blue eyes.

But the young man's eyes turned aside from the contemplation of the treasures displayed within the heavy plate-glass window and fastened on the beautiful young girl with her patrician air and elegant costume.

"Kathleen, as I live!" he exclaimed, with a violent start, and followed her stealthily into the shop.

The elegant place was thronged with shoppers, and he mingled with them, keeping close to Kathleen, although unobserved by the object of his espionage.

[Pg 37]

"I wish I had the money that lucky girl is going to spend!" he muttered, enviously, to himself.

Kathleen went immediately to the desk of Mr. Golden, the senior partner of the firm. Drawing a

small black case from her pocket, she opened it, displaying a very pretty diamond necklace.

"Mr. Golden, of course you remember when papa bought this necklace here for me," she said, timidly. "He paid five thousand dollars for it, you know. Well, papa is away"—with a catch in her breath—"and—I—I need some money very much. Will you do me the favor of buying this back for whatever you will give me?"

The kindly white-haired gentleman, drew a check toward him and began to write rapidly.

"Will a thousand dollars do you, my dear young lady? Because you can take that, and leave the necklace as security for the loan. You can redeem it when your father gets back," he said, beaming genially upon her, for the Carews were among his best customers.

CHAPTER IX.

MURDERED!

As I came through the Valley of Despair—
As I came through the valley, on my sight,
More awful than the darkness of the night,
Shone glimpses of a past that had been fair.
E. W. W.

When Kathleen had thanked Mr. Golden for his ready kindness, and gratefully accepted the check, she hastened to the bank, on the next block, and had it cashed in some large and a few bills of smaller denomination. She had left Cabby waiting for her in front of the jewelers, telling him that as soon as she returned from the bank she wanted him to drive her to the station, to take the first train for the South.

[Pg 38]

Accordingly, she returned in a few minutes and sprung into the cab, little dreaming that she was watched and followed by the tall, blonde young man who had recognized her when she had alighted at Golden & Glitter's, and followed her into the store.

He had secured a cab for himself, and was following fast upon her track.

"Now, what is up with the heiress? Must be an elopement. Egad! Alpine told me she was in love with a handsome actor, and that the *mater* was going to take her back to school to save her for me. Deuce take her! I don't want her, only for the money she'll get from old Carew. I was always afraid of those snapping black eyes of hers. I'd rather have that little blue-eyed New York ballet dancer of mine, in spite of her extravagance. A thousand dollars—a cool thousand! That's what the little minx wants me to give her now, or——But I won't think of that; it makes me savage. A thousand dollars! That's what Kathleen Carew has in her purse this moment, besides the diamond on her finger, and her ear-rings—real diamonds inside the little gold balls she wears snapped over them in daytime. I wish I had 'em for my little duck! Wouldn't she be sweet with great sparklers in her pink ears! And to think that the *mater* refused me the check I begged her for this morning, and she rolling in old Carew's money, while her only son could not keep up any style at all only for gambling!" ran the tenor of his thoughts, as he pursued hapless Kathleen to the station, making up his mind that she was about to elope, and grimly determining that she should purchase his silence with her money and jewels. "And cheap getting off like that, when I might take her back to mother and keep her for myself. Egad! maybe the actor will pay me something on his own account; d—n the lucky rascal!" he muttered.

[Pg 39]

To his amazement, no person met Kathleen at the station. She bought her ticket alone, and entered the parlor car of the vestibule train going South.

"To Richmond, hey? Running away alone, and to those poor relations of hers, I'll be bound. No chance, then, of getting any of her boodle for my dearie. She will need it all, for they say the Franklyns, her mother's relations, are poor as Job's turkey hen. Well, I'll follow, and we'll see if anything turns up to my advantage;" and, buying a ticket as far as Philadelphia, he entered the train, after first disguising himself by taking from his hand satchel and putting on a dark wig and dark, heavy whiskers.

The train rushed on and on through the land; but Kathleen, sobbing under her veil, took no heed of time. Day passed, and it was far into the night. The train rushed into a lonely woodland station, snorted and stopped, while the conductor shouted:

"Passengers for the South change cars here!"

Kathleen and a single gentleman seemed the only Southern passengers. They groped their way out into the darkness of the starless night. The other train was waiting on the other side of a small wooden depot. Kathleen, confused by the strangeness and darkness, staggered shiveringly forward on the muddy path, alone, and frightened at the solitude.

A stealthy step behind her, two throttling hands at her throat smothering her startled cry. She was thrown violently down, the jewels wrenched from her hands and ears, the purse from her dress; then the black-hearted murderer fled toward the waiting train, leaving his victim for dead upon the ground.

[Pg 40]

CHAPTER X.

AT DEAD OF NIGHT.

I gaze on her frozen face,
Her mystical, sightless eyes.
And now—even now—her grace
The power of death defies.

W. J. BENNERS, JR.

Kathleen lay still and white under the starless sky, like one dead, and there was no one to come to her rescue, for the telegraph operator, busy at his instrument, dreamed not of her proximity, and at this hour of the night there were no loiterers about in the village. Swiftly and silently had the fiend escaped, and it was most probable that day would dawn ere any one would discover the beautiful girl lying out there in the rear of the depot upon the damp, muddy ground, dead and cold.

But to return to Boston, which our heroine had so unceremoniously quitted.

Her last thought as the train steamed away with her was of Ralph Chainey, the handsome actor, who had looked so tenderly into her eyes, and who had whispered as he held her hand at parting: "I hope we shall meet again."

Her tears had started at the memory.

"It is all over," she sighed. "He will be gone away from Boston before I go back, and I shall never see him again."

But at that very moment events were shaping themselves in Ralph Chainey's life so as to bring him to her side again.

In his room at the Thorndike Hotel he was reading a telegram that said:

[Pg 41]

"Come at once. Fedora is ill—perhaps dying."

His handsome face grew grave and troubled. Throwing down the telegram, he sought his manager.

"Every engagement for this week must be canceled. I must go South on the first train."

"But, my dear Mr. Chainey, the loss will amount to thousands of dollars," expostulated the reluctant manager.

"No matter; let the loss be mine. A—some one—is—ill—dying. I must go."

"I am very sorry. We were having a splendid success here," sighed the manager; but his regrets did not deter the young man from going.

Two hours after Kathleen had left Boston, he drove up to the same station where she had taken the train for the South, and entered another one going in the same direction.

Meanwhile, Susette sauntered back to Beacon Street with the message Kathleen had dictated—she would be at home later on.

Mrs. Carew was indignant. She had been planning to take Kathleen away by the noon train. Her trunk, already strapped and corded, stood in the hall.

Susette received a severe scolding for leaving her young mistress, but she did not seem much affected by it.

"She is my mistress, and I should not dare to disobey her orders," she replied, and walked out of the room.

"What shall you do now?" asked Alpine, curiously.

"I must wait and take her on a later train."

Ringling a bell, she sent her own maid to Commonwealth Avenue, to bring home her tardy step-daughter.

Ellen returned with the news that Kathleen had left Mrs. Fox's several hours ago.

[Pg 42]

"And with Susette, too," said the elderly maid, sourly; for she cherished a secret grudge against Kathleen's maid, who was younger than herself, better looking, and had ensnared the affections of James, the butler.

Susette was recalled. On being questioned, she readily admitted that Kathleen had started home with her, but sent her on ahead, promising to follow.

While the angry step-mother stormed and raved over Kathleen's willfulness, awaiting her return in impotent anger, the young girl was flying fast from her tyranny, and nearer to the fate that loomed darkly in the near future.

The flying train sped on through the night with Ralph Chainey. He had thrown himself down dressed upon his berth, for the porter had told him that he would have to change cars at midnight.

He was restless and troubled. No sleep visited his eyes. In spite of himself, his thought turned back to Boston—to Kathleen Carew. She haunted him with her musical voice and luring eyes. At last a deep groan forced itself through his lips.

"I would to Heaven we had never met!" he exclaimed, in a tone of deep despair.

Pushing back the light curtain, he looked out into the night. It had grown cold and bleak. A light patter of mingled rain and snow was beating against the window.

"How dreary!" the young man murmured, with a shudder; and added, in a sort of awe: "Dying! can that be true?"

The porter, who was very attentive—the result of a liberal tip—came and put his head between the curtains. [Pg 43]

"We change cars at the next station, Mr. Chainey, and that's but a few miles away. You'd better be getting ready."

Ralph came into the little reception-room, and the man assisted him into his overcoat. A few minutes more, and the train was slowing up at the lonely station.

"You're the only person getting off, sir. Good-night, sir; a pleasant journey!"

The porter handed out Ralph's valise, and he stepped down into the darkness, while the train went its way.

"But where the dickens is the other one?" soliloquized the young man, standing still a moment, the light snow pelting his face, while he peered into the darkness for the locomotive's head-light. "It must be behind that little depot. Here goes for a tour of investigation!" and with his valise in hand, he strode forward in the darkness, hardly knowing where he went, and wondering at the scarcity of railway officials and light.

"The train can't be here. It is probably late," he thought, and then his foot tripped, and he fell headlong over a body lying in his path.

A shudder of nameless horror shook the young man as he scrambled to an erect position, muttering:

"Good heavens! a woman, I know, from the silken garments. Now, what is she doing out here on the ground in this Cimmerian darkness, with the snow coming down in a fury?" He raised his voice and shouted loudly: "Halloo, halloo!"

The closed door of the depot, with its one blinking lighted window, opened, and then the form of a man appeared in the opening.

"Who is it, and what's the matter?" he exclaimed, shortly. [Pg 44]

"Bring a lantern out here. I've found a woman dead in the snow!" was the startling answer.

Ralph had knelt down and felt the face and hands of the motionless woman. They were cold as ice, and he realized that she was dead.

"Horrible!" he murmured, and while he waited for the man to come with the lantern little thrills of awe ran through him. The flesh he had touched was firm and young, the hair was soft and curly, the garments silken. Who was she, and why was she out here under the night sky, cold and dead?

The depot agent came hurrying out through the driving snow, and flashed the light of his lantern full into their faces, for Ralph was still kneeling down by the motionless form.

"Who are you, and what is the row?" he inquired, curiously, but Ralph did not reply.

He was gazing in terror at the silent face with its closed eyes that lay so pale and still before him, wet with the falling snow, the bronze curls tangled on the forehead, drops of blood congealed on the exquisitely-formed ears; and, oh, horror! the white throat and chin had dark crimson finger-marks upon them. The small velvet hat had fallen off, the dress pocket was turned inside out, one hand had the glove torn off, and was wounded where a ring had been wrenched from it.

"Oh, Heaven!" groaned Ralph Chainey, in a low voice of shuddering horror, and the man exclaimed:

"Why, this looks like robbery and murder! See, her pocket has been turned inside out, a ring has been torn from her finger—a diamond, very likely—and her ears are bleeding where her ear-rings have been torn out! Look at the red marks on her throat! Good Lord; she has certainly been choked and robbed by some devil in human shape! Mister, who are you, and where did you come from, and how did you find her?" [Pg 45]

Ralph Chainey, whose face had grown as white as the dead one before him, did not reply save by a second groan of unutterable horror. He was wringing his hands in dismay, and the expression of his eyes was one of bitterest anguish. Not until the man shook him by the shoulder, and plied him over and over with questions, did he reply, telling him in disjointed sentences the simple truth of how he came there, and adding:

"If I am not mistaken, she is Miss Carew, a young Boston lady, whom I met there only last night. How she came here, what is the mystery of this, I can not understand."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FATAL TELEGRAM.

"The young village maid, when with flowers she dresses
Her dark, flowing hair for some festival day,
Will think of thy face till, neglecting her tresses,
She mournfully turns from the mirror away."

"Poor thing! she must have been a beauty," the railway employé said, as he contemplated Kathleen's cold and beautiful face. "Come, let us carry her into the house and get a doctor. Maybe she ain't really dead, only swooned," he continued, hopefully; and between them they bore her in, and laid her on a bench made soft with their overcoats.

Then the man ran to his instrument, which was ticking busily away, and directly said:

"Your train is several hours late, sir; so if you'll stay here, I'll run and fetch a doctor."

[Pg 46]

He flashed out at the door, and in the illy-lighted, shabby little waiting-room Ralph Chainey was alone with beautiful dead Kathleen, so cruelly murdered.

He knelt down by her side in an agony of dumb despair. He gazed through blinding tears upon the sweet white face; he took her cold, white hand and kissed the wound upon it, and then he whispered, as if she could hear him:

"Beautiful Kathleen! you will never know now how dearly I have loved you since first I saw your face! You are dead—dead! and soon the dark earth will cover you away forever from the sight of men. Ah! if only those dead lips could uncloze long enough to tell me the name of your dastardly murderer, I would pursue him to the ends of the earth, but that I would bring him to punishment!"

He bent his head until his pale lips touched the rigid ones of the dead girl. They were icy cold, but the soft curls of bright hair that lightly brushed his forehead, how soft, how silken, how alive, they felt! But she was dead—this girl who had blushed last night beneath his glance, whose voice had been so sweet and low when she spoke to him.

"Ah, Fate is a cruel lord,
A tyrant at best his rule;
And we learn by sin and sword
While here in his rigid school.
Ah, me. I left her with hopes beguiled,
We parted, and Fate looked on and smiled."

The shock and horror of the occasion began to overcome him, strong man as he was; and his head reeled; consciousness forsook him. He fell in a crouching position upon the floor, where he lay until the doctor entered, followed by his gentle, girlish wife.

"Oh, the dear, sweet, pretty creature! what an awful way for her to meet such a fate! The murderer ought to be burned at the stake!" exclaimed the young wife, sorrowfully, and her tears fell fast on Kathleen's face.

[Pg 47]

Doctor Churchman examined the girl's throat carefully, and said, with a deep sigh:

"Poor thing, she is quite dead! There is nothing I can do for her but to carry her over to our house and take care of the body until her friends come."

A deep groan startled him, and Ralph Chainey staggered dizzily to his feet.

"Ah, sir! so you have recognized this young woman, Dickson tells me. Well, please dictate a telegraph message to her friends at once," Doctor Churchman said to him, gently, for the despairing look on the young man's face touched him with sympathy.

"He must have been in love with the murdered girl," he said to himself.

Ralph went into the little office and sent a message off to Mrs. Carew's address:

"I have found Kathleen Carew here dead under very mysterious circumstances. Please come immediately, as I am compelled to leave."

By one of those strange rulings of fate that so startle us at times, a mistake was made at the Boston office in taking the message, and when received by Mrs. Carew the telegram ran thus:

"I have married Kathleen Carew, and nothing can change it. Please God in Heaven, I am comforted to know it."

Mrs. Carew raved with anger, and the very next day the Boston papers published, as a sensational item, Miss Carew's elopement and marriage to the handsome actor, who charmed all women's hearts out of their keeping—Ralph Washburn Chainey.

[Pg 48]

Mrs. Carew's active malice could invent but one sting for the heart of her step-daughter at so short a notice. She cabled at once to Vincent Carew in London a garbled account of Kathleen's elopement with an actor, one of the lowest and most unprincipled professionals who had ever disgraced the stage.

Vincent Carew had just been buying his ticket to return to America. His health was restored, and his heart ached for a sight of his bonny Kathleen, his beloved daughter.

Close against his heart lay her picture, and her last sweet, loving letter, in which she implored him to come home to his unhappy child. She did not mention her step-mother's unkindness, but a vague suspicion stirred within him and prompted his speedy return.

His ticket was bought, his luggage, with so many beautiful gifts for Kathleen stored in it, was sent down to the steamer. He smiled as he thought of the surprise in store for his "home folks."

Upon this complacent mood came the malicious cablegram from his irate wife.

The revulsion from his pleasant mood to keen wrath was terrible.

Vincent Carew had a dislike to actors in general, of which no one understood the origin.

The thought of his bonny Kathleen married to one of this abhorred class drove the proud man beside himself with shame and rage. For an hour he raged and stormed about his room until he was on the verge of apoplexy.

Having exhausted the first fury of his anger, he flung himself into a cab and was driven in haste to a lawyer's office.

His last act on leaving England was to execute his last will and testament, in which he angrily disinherited Kathleen, his only child. Leaving the document with the lawyer for safe keeping, with instructions to forward it to America in case of his loss at sea, the angry man was driven down to the steamer, and embarked for home—the home that would be so lonely now without the light of Kathleen's starry, dark eyes.

[Pg 49]

Did he repent his harsh and hasty deed, that haughty man, as he paced the steamer's deck those long moonlight nights thinking of his dead wife—lovely, childish Zaidee—and the daughter she had left him—willful, spirited Kathleen? Did he shudder with fear as he remembered that should anything happen to him at sea, the cruel will that disinherited the young girl would be irrevocable? Or did he gloat over the prospect of her sufferings with her impecunious husband? No one knew, for in his bitter trouble and humiliation he stood proudly aloof from all, cultivating no one's friendship, seemingly absorbed in his own thoughts, until *that* night—that night of awful storm and darkness—when fatal disaster overtook the good ship *Urania*, and she was burned at sea, her fate sending a thrill of horror through the heart of the world when the tidings became known with Vincent Carew's name among the lost.

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 50]

"KATHLEEN, I SWEAR THAT I WILL AVENGE YOUR MURDER!"

My idol is dead—my queen!
I stand by her frozen clay,
And bitterly wail, "Kathleen,
Come back to my heart, I pray!"
But only the moaning storm winds sigh,
"Come back, come back!" as they hurry by.
W. J. BENNERS, JR.

Gentle, womanly hands prepared lovely, hapless Kathleen for the grave, and she was laid upon a white bier in Doctor Churchman's pretty parlor. Very pale and beautiful she looked, and as Ralph Chainey bent over her for one farewell look, she did not seem like one dead, but just asleep. It even seemed as though the white flowers on her breast moved softly, as with a gentle breath; but when he hastened to hold a mirror over her lips, it remained clear, without any moisture. He laid it down with a bitter groan.

His delayed train would arrive in a few moments and he was compelled to leave the dead girl's side for a death-bed. He must leave Kathleen here with these kind, sympathetic people; but he would return as soon as he could; for there must be an inquest, at which he must be the chief witness.

He wondered how her relatives would take it—her stately step-mother, her pretty step-sister, who had told him such unblushing falsehoods about Kathleen.

"Helen Fox will be sorry, I know, for she loved Kathleen dearly," he murmured aloud. Tears fell from his beautiful brown eyes upon the angelic face, and he went on talking to the girl in a low monotone, almost forgetting that she could not hear him, or perhaps fancying that her gentle spirit hovered near: "My darling, you will never know how dearly I loved you, nor how I shall mourn you all my life long! Once I saved your life and oh! why did not Heaven give me that joy again? Why did I come too late to-night?" With a groan, he laid his hand softly on the one that clasped the white flowers on her breast, and added: "Kathleen, I swear that I will avenge your murder, if it takes me all my life to do it and costs me all my fortune!"

[Pg 51]

He bent and pressed his lips on her white brow and her soft curls, took a white rosebud from under her pulseless hand and placed it in his breast, then he was gone. Presently, when the excited villagers began filing in to look at the murdered girl, they saw a tear-drop that had fallen

from his eyes glittering like a pearl on the bosom of her black silk dress.

The little community was wild with horror and excitement at the finding of the murdered girl in their midst, and when it became known that she had been recognized as a great Boston heiress, the *furor* became even greater. The telegraph wires flashed the news from town to city, and the newspapers that one day had chronicled the news of Kathleen's elopement, printed twenty-four hours afterward in flaring head-lines the awful story of her robbery and murder.

Even Mrs. Carew, wicked as she was, paled to the lips as she read it, and Alpine fainted outright. Weak, selfish, cruel as the girl was, she had cared for Kathleen more than she knew. The girl's charms had won upon her, in spite of herself.

"Good heavens! that actor, he has robbed and murdered her, the fiend!" Mrs. Carew cried, violently. "He is even worse than I thought!"

"I do not believe it, mamma. There is some mistake—there must be. Ralph Chainey was a gentleman, and rich in his own right," Alpine answered, speaking the truth for once.

Like every one else, she admired the young actor, and though his preference for Kathleen had angered her, she was not prepared to do him the flagrant injustice of believing him as wicked as her mother asserted.

[Pg 52]

There was a moment's silence; then Mrs. Carew exclaimed, with a startled air:

"Good heavens, Alpine! think what this means to us! Kathleen dead, the whole Carew fortune is ours!"

Alpine had the grace to be ashamed.

"How can you think of that *now*?" she exclaimed, reproachfully. "I—I had rather know that—that Kathleen was alive than have the wealth of the Vanderbilts!"

Then she burst into tears and left the room in a hurry.

Mrs. Carew looked after her aghast.

"I did not think she would take it so hard, but then I always suspected her at times of a sneaking fondness for that black-eyed witch," she mused. "Well, I don't mind. It will look better in society, a little real grief on Alpine's part. As for me, I'm glad she's out of the way, and the Carew wealth assured to me and mine."

She gave a low laugh of satisfaction, but her hands were shaking with excitement, and her heart fluttered strangely. She was recalling the coincidence of Kathleen's and her mother's deaths—both at nearly the same age—sixteen—and both by violent means.

The maid came so suddenly into the room that it gave her a violent shock. She started and looked around angrily.

"Why do you enter the room so rudely, without knocking, Ellen?"

"I beg pardon, madame. I knocked, but you did not hear, so I made bold to enter, because Miss Belmont sent me in a hurry."

"Well?"

[Pg 53]

"She desires to know if I shall get your things ready to go after Miss Carew's body?"

The woman spoke in an unmoved tone. Her mistress had taught her to hate the fair young heiress.

"She means to go?" interrogated Mrs. Carew.

"She is getting ready, madame, and told me you were going."

"Yes, of course, Ellen. In the absence of my husband and son, it is my harrowing duty." Mrs. Carew put her handkerchief to her dry eyes and sighed: "Make haste, Ellen."

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER MYSTERY.

"Ah, you or I must look
Into the other's coffin, far or near,
And read, as in a book,
Words we made bitter here,
Some time!"

There was a little flutter of excitement at Doctor Churchman's pretty cottage.

The Carews had at last arrived, after being vainly looked for for more than two days, and their aristocratic airs and their stylish maid created quite a sensation.

Kathleen was waiting for them in the little parlor—Kathleen with shut eyes and pallid lips and folded, waxen hands—so unlike the brilliant beauty they remembered, with this awful calm upon her face.

They gazed upon her, and Mrs. Carew's lips twitched nervously, while Alpine wept genuine tears, remembering remorsefully how kind Kathleen had been, and how illy she had repaid her goodness.

Ralph had not come yet, but a telegram from Richmond had arrived announcing that he would come early in the morning when arrangements had been made to hold an inquest.

[Pg 54]

Mrs. Churchman placed rooms at the service of the ladies and they retired early, pleading fatigue, but really to talk over all that they had heard.

They had inquired as to the strange telegram that had been received, and learned the true contents of it. They knew now that it was of Kathleen's death, not her marriage, they had been informed.

"She must have arrived here on an earlier train than Mr. Chainey, so she was evidently running away from home," said Mrs. Carew, and she added: "I think that wicked Susette eavesdropped and blabbed my intentions to her mistress."

"It is very likely," said Alpine, dejectedly. She was sitting with her pale cheek in her hand, thinking of the dead girl down-stairs whom she had been taught to hate and envy. The latter had come easy enough, the former was a lesson not so easily learned. She wished now, in her sudden accession of remorse, that she had let herself love winsome Kathleen, whom it was so hard to hate.

An exquisite casket had been ordered, in which Kathleen was now resting easily like one asleep. Although she had been two days dead, there was no sign of change about her. Beautiful and fair as a flawless pearl lay Kathleen in her last sleep.

"Immediately after the inquest to-morrow, we will remove the body to Boston for burial," Mrs. Carew had said in her haughty manner to Doctor Churchman.

As the night advanced, the whole family retired to rest. It was not deemed necessary to sit up with the corpse. She was left alone in the open coffin, the lid being placed on a table. Not until after the inquest would it be fastened down on the murdered girl.

[Pg 55]

Alpine Belmont tossed restlessly upon her couch by the side of her sleeping mother. She could not rest, this girl whose conscience had at last awakened. She was haunted by the ghosts of her evil deeds—the cruelties she had shown her little step-sister.

"If she had not run away, she would not have come to this; but we drove her to it—it was my mother's sin and mine," she thought, fearfully, for the crimson marks on Kathleen's throat, the wounds on her ears and fingers had thrilled her with horror.

She was not usually romantic, this girl, but Kathleen's horrible fate had terribly unnerved her. A strange impulse came to her to go down alone to the parlor, to stand by that open coffin, and beg Kathleen to forgive her all the wicked past.

"She will hear me, for the spiritualists tell us that the souls of the dead remain at first near their unburied bodies," she thought, superstitiously; and, obeying her impulse, rose, slipped on a dressing-gown, and drawn by an awful and irresistible yearning, sought the presence of the dead.

It was but a few moments more before the whole household was aroused by piercing shrieks. They rushed to the parlor and found Alpine screaming beside an *empty coffin!*

Kathleen Carew had disappeared as mysteriously as if her body had followed her soul to Heaven.

The gray light of dawn was stealing in through the windows, and by that light they saw some withered roses lying on the floor. Last night they had lain on Kathleen's breast. The hall door stood wide open, and a terrible suspicion came into Doctor Churchman's mind.

[Pg 56]

The beautiful corpse had been stolen by unscrupulous parties, either for the purpose of a ransom from rich relations or for the horrible uses of a medical college.

"I could not sleep, so I came down here to look at her again, and she was gone," sobbed Alpine, in hysterical dismay.

Searchers were organized in haste, but no clew was found, and when Ralph Chainey came it was to be confronted with this mysterious case. He almost went wild with agony; he employed the cleverest detectives unavailingly. Mrs. Carew grew tired of the search, gave it up, and went back to Boston, congratulating herself in secret that she would not be at the expense and trouble of a funeral for her hated step-daughter.

Following fast upon this event came the news of the *Urania's* loss at sea, being burned to the water's edge, with all on board.

Soon after a cablegram from a London lawyer made the widow acquainted with the fact of her husband's recent will, under whose provisions all Vincent Carew's wealth was divided between his wife and her daughter, disinheriting Kathleen for her disobedience, and making no mention of his prodigal step-son, whom he had cordially despised.

Alpine was delighted with her good fortune, and her mercurial temperament began to recover itself from the shock it had sustained in Kathleen's loss.

A STRANGE FATE.

I never thought that I should see thine eyelids shut in death,
Thy bright brow cold, thy spirit quenched that glowed and bloomed beneath.

SUMNER LINCOLN FAIRFIELD.

Poor Kathleen! she had passed through a strange and terrible experience.

On that night when she had been so suddenly choked and robbed by an unseen foe, the young girl had swooned from terror.

That quick relapse into unconsciousness had saved her life.

Thinking her dead, the murderer had relaxed his hold on her throat, and throwing her roughly from him, escaped with his booty in time to board the other train.

Kathleen, by one of those strange psychological conditions sometimes induced by severe mental strain or shock, passed from her swoon into a state of coma or trance. Through the two nights and one day in which she lay thus, her senses seemed to be preternaturally acute, although her bodily faculties were bound in iron bands of inaction.

What was her agony during the two hours when she lay alone in the murky darkness and the snow and rain—what her joy when the voice of her beloved penetrated her senses!

Saved, saved! And by *him*! How she longed to speak—to utter aloud her joy and relief; but she could not voice her gladness—she could only lie passive and inert, and hear him proclaim her dead in a voice of the bitterest despair.

Oh, the blended rapture and agony of those hours! To lie still like a stone, mute, moveless, and hear *his* voice breathing his love for her, feel his kisses on her cold face and hands!

[Pg 58]

She longed with a terrible yearning to move, to stir beneath his touch, to cry out to him that she was alive, that she loved him even as he loved her; but her body seemed to be as entirely dead as her soul was alive—alive and in agony.

She knew that strangers came and went; that they talked of her as dead; that they spoke of her beauty in pitying admiration; that they shuddered at the red finger-marks on her throat, the wounds on her hands and ears where her jewels had been torn away. She felt tears fall often on her cold white face; she heard them talk of an inquest on the morrow, and wonder if her relations from Boston would soon arrive.

Then came the moment when Ralph Chainey had to tear himself away from her. She heard gentle Mrs. Churchman talking to him about her, and saying that she was not changed in the least—she was a very natural-looking corpse.

It seemed to the girl as if her heart leaped wildly enough to stir the flowers on her breast at that awful word.

A corpse!

That was what they called her—when she was so full of agonized life! Why could they not see that she was not dead? They said she was unchanged. Why did they not suspect the truth, that she was in a trance, not dead?

Then the doctor's wife went out and left Ralph Chainey alone with the lovely corpse. Then it was he kissed her brow and hands, and his tears fell on her face. She heard him utter words of love and of farewell. She knew that he took a flower from under her hand and went away, and then she realized that the man she loved better than any one else in the world had gone away and left her to her fate. No one else would greatly care if she were dead or living. Perhaps—they—would—bury—her—alive!

[Pg 59]

At this stage of thought Kathleen seemed to die indeed. Her acute consciousness of everything became mercifully suspended; she did not know who came or went; she did not know when she was placed in the elegant casket, with its silver plate bearing her name; she did not know when the two women, her step-mother and step-sister, came and looked at her in her pallid, silent beauty. All was a merciful blank.

Then the lamp was turned down to a weak glimmer, and they left her alone until the morrow. Mrs. Carew went upstairs to be with her secret, silent exultation, Alpine with her keen, stinging remorse.

The hours crept on toward midnight, and if any one had been there to notice, they would have seen a marked change on the face of the girl in the coffin.

The complexion had lost its deadly pallor and become more life-like in its hue. The breast was faintly heaving, the beautiful veil of long, curling black lashes was fluttering faintly against the cheeks.

Suddenly the black lashes rolled upward; a pair of large, glorious dark eyes were revealed. In them was for a moment the blankness of one rousing from a deep sleep.

Then Kathleen weakly lifted her hands, and as they dropped at her sides they touched the cold, metallic edges of the casket. A low, inarticulate cry came from her lips, and she rose upright, staring about her with bewildered eyes.

[Pg 60]

She comprehended that she was about to be buried alive. Nothing returned to her yet of the past—everything merged itself into one startling consciousness of utter horror, and with a blind

instinct of fear struggling in her dazed mind, Kathleen climbed down out of the casket, that stood on long trestles, and escaped from the house.

Doctor Churchman was attending a patient in the neighborhood, and the front hall door was unlocked. Kathleen tore it open with a shaking hand and ran out into the street. A white flood of moonlight shone down upon the sleeping town, but no one noticed the black clad figure, bareheaded, with white flowers falling from its breast, running along with terror-winged feet toward the open highway, until out of sight of the glimmering white houses.

Just as Kathleen emerged into the open country, she saw lights flashing in the gloom, and several men who seemed to be searching for something or some one. She shrunk back in alarm, but she was too late. They had seen her, and came toward her with eager shouts and made her a prisoner.

"It is she!" exclaimed one. "See, she answers the description exactly—young, pretty, dark eyes, light hair, and a black silk dress!"

"I do not know you. What do you want with me?" wailed Kathleen, wringing her little white hands piteously.

But they did not answer her. They dragged her away from the spot and placed her in a waiting carriage. Then they drove away, and one of them said, significantly:

"She is so exhausted by her long tramp that she will not be violent, and we shall get her back to the asylum without any trouble." [Pg 61]

Kathleen did not notice what they said. She was so dazed and frightened by her troubles that her memory was almost gone. She put her white hands to her brow and tried to recall her wandering thoughts, to remember her name, and why she was here. But she could not do it—everything was cloudy and vague. With a helpless, fluttering sigh, she resigned herself to her strange fate, and crouched shiveringly into the corner of the carriage that lumbered along the country road a good seven miles before it came to a standstill before a large, gloomy, prison-like building.

It was a lunatic asylum, and hapless Kathleen had rushed upon a strange fate.

A handsome young woman, who had gone mad over the treachery of a false lover, was being conveyed to the asylum, and had cunningly eluded her keepers and escaped into the woods. A reward was offered for her apprehension, and a large number of men had formed themselves into searching parties. As none of them had seen her, and she answered perfectly to the description, one of these parties had taken Kathleen into custody. At the asylum it was the same way. No one had seen her, so the captive was accepted without any doubts as to her identity, her hatless condition and dazed manners keeping up the illusion of her insanity. The men received their reward and went away, never doubting that they had found the right girl.

Kathleen was put to bed in a small cell by a kind but illiterate attendant, and, still dazed and dumb with horror, sunk into a deep sleep. Food had been offered her, and she had eaten a very little, then pushed it away with a repellant gesture. After that, she was left alone, and slept wearily for long hours, awaking refreshed and in her right mind. [Pg 62]

She could remember everything now—her flight from home, her journey that had been interrupted by her terrible experience of robbery and attempted murder. Then the long trance, her terrified revival in her coffin, and the frenzied flight into the darkness of the chilly night. All flashed over her mind in the first, walking moment, and she wondered why those strange men had captured and brought her here to this strange place.

"And what a miserable little room and bed; not one quarter as good as Susette's," she murmured, with a glance of disdain around her at the tiny cell.

Alas! she soon became aware of the painful fact that she was an inmate of an asylum for the insane, was believed to be insane herself, and was called by the name of Daisy Lynn.

In vain did Kathleen eagerly assure the attendants, and every one else that would listen to her tale of woe, that there was a dreadful mistake—that she was not the girl they thought her, but Kathleen Carew, of Boston.

They listened to her with significant smiles, and said to each other:

"In her wanderings she has heard about that poor murdered girl, and now assumes her identity."

CHAPTER XV.

[Pg 63]

POOR DAISY LYNN.

Do not ask me why I love him!
Love's cause is to love unknown;
Faithless as the past has proved him,
Once his heart appeared mine own.

LETITIA E. LANDON.

Spring, summer, and autumn glided past, and still Kathleen Carew remained an inmate of the asylum. At first she had been frantic over her strange fate, and her wild entreaties for freedom

had been set down to real lunacy. The stupid attendant paid no heed to her ravings, and only laughed when she claimed to be Kathleen Carew, the beautiful young girl whose murder at Lincoln Station had so stirred up the whole country.

They were stupid, and did not read the papers, or they might have seen the strange story of her disappearance—might have suspected that she was speaking the truth.

So the weary months went on, and when Kathleen, after her first wild ravings against her fate, had given up at last to a sort of sullen despair, something happened in her favor.

The matron, startled and alarmed by the appearance of the young girl, felt her heart stirred to pity, and wrote to her friends:

"Miss Lynn is no longer a raving maniac, as at first. She has become silent and melancholy, and looks so worn and ill that I fear she is slowly dying of a broken heart. I think you ought to take her home again, and see what home associations will do toward prolonging her life. She will never be troublesome or violent again; the physician assures me of that. Indeed, the state she has fallen into is one that often precedes speedy death, and the poor child ought to have home comforts and petting, now that she is so very near the end."

The matron, who had always pitied and admired the beautiful, unhappy young girl, watched over her tenderly while she waited for the answer to come to this merciful letter. She was startled at the delicacy of the young girl's form, that had been so graceful and rounded when she first came, and the pallor of her face and hands. The great Oriental dark eyes had become wild and startled, like those of a haunted fawn, and her voice when she spoke was low and tremulous, and had the sound of tears in its music.

[Pg 64]

When the matron gazed at this sweet and lovely young girl she marveled that any man's heart could have been cold and harsh enough to turn against such charms and leave that young heart to die of despair, or madden with its cruel wrongs.

"She is beautiful and refined enough for a king's bride," the matron said, with an angry thought of the monster in man's likeness who had brought the young girl to this pass.

She waited eagerly for a letter to come from Miss Watts, the girl's aunt, hoping and praying that she would take her away, and not leave her to die at the asylum.

Tears came into her kind old eyes as she thought of herself robing this beautiful form for the grave, and folding those waxen white hands on the weary breast for the last long sleep.

She did not tell Kathleen she had written to her aunt to take her away, because she feared the effect of a disappointment. She waited silently, and at last the letter came. Miss Watts was an old woman—a soured old maid, who had not much patience with love and lovers, and who had been much disgusted with her niece for losing her senses over a man's perfidy. She was blind, and her pretty niece had been eyes and hands to her before her trouble. Now she had to depend on servants entirely, and she was crosser than ever. She grumbled very much at the idea of her niece's return.

[Pg 65]

"A nice place this will be—me blind and Daisy insane," she grumbled; but the thought of the young girl's fading so fast in the asylum touched her, and she had her maid to write that the girl might come home if they were quite, quite sure she was harmless and would not make any trouble.

So Mrs. Hoover, the kind-hearted matron, came herself to bring Kathleen home to her aunt, for she wanted to explain to the old lady the young girl's strange fancy that she was not Daisy Lynn at all, but Kathleen Carew, a beautiful young Boston heiress, who had been mysteriously murdered in the vicinity of the asylum, and of whom the poor lunatic had chanced to hear in her wanderings.

So Kathleen came into her new home an utter stranger, but was received as belonging to it. The servants were new, and the old lady was blind. She could not see the face of her niece, and she attributed the strange tone of her voice to her illness. She passed her long, delicate fingers carefully over Kathleen's face, and exclaimed in surprise at its delicacy of outline.

Kathleen overwhelmed Mrs. Hoover with kisses and thanks, and called her her benefactress for securing her release from the asylum.

"I should have died or gone mad in reality if I had been kept there much longer; but now I shall go away from here and find my friends," she said, hopefully.

Mrs. Hoover looked very much alarmed at this declaration.

"My dear, if I had thought you would run away, I would not have brought you here," she exclaimed, uneasily.

[Pg 66]

"But, dear madame, I have no claim on this old lady here, and I must think of my poor father, who has returned from Europe ere this, I know, and is mourning me as dead," obstinately answered the pale young girl, whose heart throbbed wildly at the thought of returning to her home and friends.

The good old matron seized the wasted little white hand of the girl, and patted it tenderly in hers, as she said, remonstratingly:

"Now, listen to me, Daisy, dear: If you run away from home your aunt will have you followed and

brought back to the asylum, and you know you would not like that, would you?"

"I would rather die," sobbed the poor girl, trembling like an aspen leaf.

"Then take my advice, and don't do anything rash, dear child. Now here's a good idea: Stay quietly here, and write to your friends to come to you here," said the matron, who thought that this would pacify Kathleen a while.

"But I wrote to them from the asylum. I wrote and wrote and wrote—all in vain," sighed the girl.

"Perhaps your folks were out of town. I would try again," soothed the matron, who knew that none of those pathetic letters had ever gone outside the asylum.

"I will write again," said Kathleen, patiently, for the matron's hints had sorely frightened her. She did not want to run away and be captured and taken back to her terrible prison. She resolved to write again; then, if no answer came, she must dare her fate. Let her but get safely home and all would be explained, and her pursuers would have to go away baffled. [Pg 67]

"How angry papa will be when he finds out what horrors his little girl has endured," she thought, with burning tears.

So Mrs. Hoover went away, sadly believing that she should never see the poor, sweet child again; she looked so wan and pallid, as if she already had "one foot in the grave."

Then Kathleen, who was left to herself almost all the time, went back to poor Daisy Lynn's room, and began to write to all her friends. By night she had quite a pile of letters to post.

She had written to her father, to Helen Fox, to Alpine Belmont, to several of her girl friends, to Ralph Chainey, and even to Teddy Darrell, who had loved her and asked her to marry him. Despite his flirting propensities, Teddy was a prime favorite with every one because of his warm heart and good nature. If any one asked Teddy Darrell to do a favor, he would "go through fire and water" to accomplish it. Helen Fox was accustomed to say, laughingly, that Teddy Darrell would try to flirt with a broom-stick if he only saw a woman's dress on it; but beyond this weakness, which the girls easily forgave, he was a thoroughly good fellow, with a good figure, handsome face, and a pair of dark eyes that always laughed their owner into your good graces.

"Some of them will get my letters, surely, and come for me," she thought, as she started out to post her letters.

Her aunt sent a servant to post them and ordered her back.

"Reba will always do your errands for you," she said; and Kathleen had to relinquish them reluctantly to the maid. [Pg 68]

Reba had her instructions, and while Kathleen watched her from the window, she cleverly pushed some scraps of papers into the letter-box on the corner, and carried the letters back to Miss Watts, who locked them into her private desk.

"It is strange what a fad she has taken into her head!" she thought, carelessly.

Kathleen waited with burning impatience for the answers to come to her letters. She counted the hours it would take for them to go from Philadelphia to Boston.

Meanwhile, almost unconsciously to herself, she began to take an interest in the absent girl whose place she had taken in the asylum, and in this small, neat home, so different from the splendor to which she had always been accustomed.

The little room she occupied, although not luxurious and grand like her own in her father's mansion on Commonwealth Avenue, was a perfect bower of maidenly innocence and sweet, loving fancies. The windows were curtained with white lace looped with rosy ribbons; the brass bedstead had a white lace canopy; the toilet-table, the lounge, the low chairs, all repeated the pretty fashion of white lace and rose-pink ribbons, and the floor was covered with a light-hued carpet strewn with ferns. Pretty little pictures adorned the mantel and the walls, and the daintiest kind of a dressing-case was displayed on the toilet-table. In the drawers were girlish trifles, such as young girls gather about them, and there was, too, a pretty little diary, at which Kathleen glanced with tender interest, wondering what was written on those pages, penned by the hand of a fair young girl, who had gone mad for love. [Pg 69]

"But it would not be right to read it," she said at first, and would not touch it, until her loneliness, added to her interest in poor, missing Daisy Lynn, decided her that it would be no harm to read the diary.

She opened it, and a man's photograph fell out into her hands. She gazed at it with eager curiosity, exclaiming:

"This must be the false wretch that drove poor Daisy Lynn to madness!"

Suddenly the girl's face, already so pale and wan, whitened to an ashen hue, her great dark eyes dilated in a sort of horror, and she flung the photograph far from her into a distant corner, exclaiming, indignantly:

"Ivan Belmont, my step-mother's hateful son, whom she wanted me to marry, so that I might endow him with a fortune."

It was some time before she could command her nerves sufficiently to read Daisy Lynn's diary, and then her tears fell freely, for the story of the young girl's love was all written there, gay and joyous at first, then sad and plaintive, then drifting into deep despair, followed by the disjointed ravings of a mind distraught.

"Oh, how sweet, and then how sad!" exclaimed Kathleen. "Love comes to all young girls with the same symptoms, I suppose, for I felt just as she wrote in the first after meeting Ralph Chainey—so gay, so glad, so joyous. The sky seemed brighter, the flowers sweeter, the whole world was a new place. There is nothing in the world as sweet as love."

CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 70]

KATHLEEN'S DESPERATION AND HER ESCAPE.

"And then she sang a song
That made the tear-drops start;
She sang of home, sweet home,
The song that reached my heart."
Popular Song.

Kathleen sighed restlessly as she turned the pages with her little white hands.

"Love is sweet, but, oh, how sad it is, too!" she sighed. "Oh, how cruel it is to love and be beloved again, yet be severed from one's love by so strange and cruel a fate as mine."

She read aloud, in a soft, murmuring voice, like sweetest music, some verses from Daisy Lynn's book:

"It is the spirit's bitterest pain
To love and be beloved again,
And yet between a gulf that ever
The hearts that burn to meet must sever!"

"With me the hope of life is gone,
The sun of joy is set;
One wish my heart still dwells upon,
The wish it could forget!
I would forget that look, that tone,
My heart has all too dearly known.
But who could ever yet efface
From memory love's enduring trace?
All may revolt, all my complain,
But who is there may break the chain?"

"Poor Daisy Lynn! how could she love Ivan Belmont like that?" exclaimed Kathleen, in disgust, forgetting that he *was* a rather handsome man, and that tastes differ. A longing to see what Daisy Lynn looked like came over her, and she searched the room in vain for her picture.

Then she went down and asked Miss Watts if she might see her niece's photograph.

The old blind lady looked up with gentle displeasure.

"Daisy, child, have you no memory of the past?" she exclaimed. "You know very well that in all your life I have never allowed you to have your picture taken!"

"But why not?" asked Kathleen, in wonder.

"Because it is a sin," replied the old lady, who was rigidly religious. "Have you forgotten," she continued, "the second commandment that you used to read every Lord's day at Sabbath-school?" and she repeated, solemnly:

"Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them."

[Pg 71]

Kathleen stared in amazement at this liberal interpretation of the Scriptures, and retired regretting that she could not have the sad pleasure of gazing on the features of the unfortunate girl in whose fate her own was so strangely bound up.

"Poor, poor Daisy Lynn! I wonder what became of her when she escaped her keeper and wandered abroad that cold, dark night?" she mused; and she thought that the girl must be dead and at rest from her sorrows.

A long week of waiting elapsed, but no answer came to Kathleen's letters.

Kathleen grew desperate with suspense and trouble. She could no longer while away the dreary winter days by reading poor Daisy Lynn's novels, or playing sad melodies on her pretty little piano. She began to pace up and down the little room for long hours, revolving plans for escape from Miss Watts.

The three servants whom the old lady employed guarded the young girl, by the order of their mistress, as jealously as if she had been a convict in a penitentiary. All the doors were locked and

guarded by burglar chains. She had appealed to their mercy in vain; and she was empty-handed and had nothing with which to bribe them. They had been told she was melancholy mad, and saw no reason to doubt the story. Her sad, white face, her beautiful dark eyes, in which the tears so often gathered, and her mournful little songs, all lent color to the charge.

Desperate emergencies require desperate remedies. Kathleen decided, in spite of Mrs. Hoover's warnings, to run away.

She had no money; but that did not deter her from her purpose. She would beg in the street for money to go to Boston before she would remain here any longer, she told herself, with a burst of tears. [Pg 72]

Her old fear of her step-mother had died out in the conviction that her father had, of course, returned home ere now, and that, under his protection, no harm could befall his beloved child.

From the curtained alcove where Daisy Lynn's soft, white sheets and blankets and counterpanes were stored on shelves, Kathleen brought the sheets and tore them into strips, working on them every night until she had succeeded in making a strong plaited rope with which to let herself down from the window.

"Heaven help me—dear Heaven help me!" she prayed all the while; and one dark night toward midnight she fastened the rope to the shutter hinge and let herself safely down to the street.

Stunned by the velocity of her descent, and with bleeding hands rasped by the rough rope, Kathleen fell upon the ground and lay there pantingly a few moments.

"Free at last, thank Heaven—free!" she murmured, gladly, and wrapping her long circular cloak around her, and drawing the warm hood close about her beautiful face, she ran breathlessly along, flashed around a corner, and had left her prison behind her, fleeing, as she hoped, to home and happiness.

It was growing late, and in the quiet city of Philadelphia there were few pedestrians abroad, and those mostly men. In any other city of that size Kathleen, with her beautiful face, would have been insulted over and over, but the Quaker City of Brotherly Love had in it a smaller ruffianly element than the others. When she stopped and appealed to those she met she invariably received a coin instead of a leer; but they were so small—so small, and, oh, it would take so much money to get to Boston! [Pg 73]

She had stopped a policeman on his beat and asked him timidly how much money it would take to get to Boston.

"Oh, as much as twenty dollars, I guess!" he replied; and at his curious stare she thanked him and ran away, pausing under a street lamp to count her money.

"Only two dollars and twenty cents! I shall never, never get enough!" she sighed, and then she gave a shriek. A thief had snatched the money from her little white hand and run down a side street.

Kathleen started to run after him, but there was no policeman in sight, and the thief had quite disappeared. She ran till her limbs trembled with weariness, and suddenly emerged into Walnut Street. People were coming out of the Walnut Street Theater, and crowding the pavement. She saw a handsome man handing a fair young girl to her carriage, and the sight awoke memories of the past when she, Kathleen Carew, heiress then to a million, now a beggar in the streets, had been handed to her carriage by Ralph Chainey, the handsome young actor, who had whispered in her ear:

"I hope we shall meet again."

A dry sob rose in her throat, but she choked it back, and advancing till she was in the midst of the throng, paused suddenly, and began to sing in a low but thrilling voice that favorite old song, "Home, Sweet Home," at the same time holding out her tiny white hand for largess.

It was a desperate deed, but poor Kathleen was a desperate girl, and knew little more of the evil of the world than a little baby. She was so eager to get money to go home, and she thought that out of this great crowd there might be many who would pay her for singing the simple little song that everybody loved so well—"Home, Sweet Home—The Song That Reached My Heart." [Pg 74]

CHAPTER XVII.

"WILL YOU BE MY OWN SWEET WIFE, KATHLEEN?"

"Love thee? So well, so tenderly,
Thou'rt loved, adored by me,
Fame, fortune, wealth, and happiness
Are worthless without thee!"

Kathleen had a sweet and bird-like voice, that had held crowded drawing-rooms entranced in the happier days that now seemed so far away.

As that exquisite voice—timid at first, and faltering, but gradually gaining strength and volume—rose upon the night air the young girl was at once surrounded by a wondering and admiring

throng.

Her desperate courage began to give way as she saw herself hemmed in by the crowd, and the impulse seized her to fly; but she beat it bravely back, for already silver coins began to rain into the small, white, outstretched hand that seemed so ridiculously dainty and aristocratic for a street beggar.

"Jove! what a regular beauty!" one man whispered to another, as he gazed eagerly into the sweet, flower-like face.

She heard him, and her voice shook with indignation, but she kept on, holding fast meanwhile to her earnings, determined that no bold thief should capture them this time.

Suddenly she became aware that the crowd's attention was being diverted from her, and resolved to escape at this auspicious moment.

The fact was that the popular actor, Ralph Chainey, who had just carried staid Philadelphia by storm in his popular impersonation of Prince Karl, was just leaving the theater for his hotel, and almost every one turned away from the beautiful singer for a glimpse of the tall, dark, handsome young fellow, with his swinging stride, as he came among them.

[Pg 75]

He, on his part, had been standing back a little, arrested, like the others, by that sweet, sad, thrilling song. As it neared the end, he pressed forward to make a generous contribution to pay for his share in the rare entertainment.

The crowd fell back and made way for him, and Kathleen, dreaming not of the nearness of the lover who haunted all her thoughts, started to fly.

Ralph Chainey had not yet seen her face, but he hurried in pursuit of the slight cloaked figure, generously anxious that she should not lose the money he was going to bestow on her for the song.

The crowd began to disperse, and Kathleen, unconscious of pursuit, ran half a square, then slackened her pace. So it was that Ralph Chainey caught up with her, and laid a strong, detaining hand upon her arm.

With a low moan of terror Kathleen raised her beautiful, frightened dark eyes to the face of her assailant.

For a moment they gazed, spell-bound, into each other's eyes.

To both it seemed like the shock of a life-time—that sudden *rencontre*; and to the man it was more startling than to the girl, for he had long sorrowed over the fate of Kathleen Carew, believing her dead.

Yet here stood this slight girl whose voice had so thrilled him a few minutes ago gazing at him with Kathleen Carew's eyes, looking out of Kathleen Carew's face.

[Pg 76]

Was she ghost or human?

Was she a phantom of his brain, this slight, pale girl?

He had thought of her so often, he had mourned her so passionately, that perhaps his brain was distraught—perhaps the vision was the figment of a mind diseased.

But suddenly the moan died away on the sweet, red lips; the hunted look faded from the somber dark eyes and was succeeded by a look of joy as she faltered:

"Ralph Chainey!"

His hand had slipped from her arm in the first shock of recognition. Now he hastily put it back and pressed it to see if it was real flesh and blood or only a phantom woman. He muttered, hoarsely:

"Kathleen Carew, are you ghost or human?"

Kathleen's dark-eyes laughed radiantly into his.

"I am human, Mr. Chainey, as I think you ought to realize from the way you're pinching my arm," she returned, with pretty archness.

All in a moment she had changed from a sad, persecuted young girl, begging her way in the dark street, to a very queen of love and happiness.

Looking into his luminous brown eyes, all her sorrow seemed to flee away, and the sunlit sky of love seemed glowing over her head, instead of dark, wintery skies.

Her archness, her smiles, and the warm, human touch of her wrist, recalled him from his ghostly fears, and he said, faintly, but eagerly:

"I can hardly believe my senses, Kathleen. You—alive—after all these months, when I sorrowed for you dead! Where have you been?"

Her face paled, and she looked apprehensively over her shoulder.

"I—I—can not tell you here!" she faltered. "I might be missed and followed. If—if—you would only take me to the depot, and send me home to Boston to papa, I will be so grateful. I—I—think I have enough money to pay my way."

[Pg 77]

Ralph Chainey signaled a passing cab, and lifted the young girl gently into it.

"Drive slowly about the streets for an hour until further orders," he said to the driver, as he

sprung in and took his seat by Kathleen. "Oh, what happiness this is to find you alive, Kathleen!" he exclaimed, searching for her little hand, and holding it warmly clasped in his.

She nestled slightly toward him, and he thrilled with happiness at the confiding motion.

"You will send me home to papa?" she repeated, sweetly.

Then he said:

"It will be several hours before the next train for Boston leaves, Kathleen, so you can tell me all about yourself while we ride about and beguile the time of waiting. Or, would you prefer to go to a hotel and rest, and have some refreshments?"

"I am not hungry nor tired, and prefer to ride about with you this way," answered the girl, with naïve simplicity; and he drew a sigh of relief.

He was young, but more worldly wise than Kathleen. He preferred not to take her to a hotel until she had some claim on him, to silence carping tongues. But first he must know the secret of her mysterious whereabouts ever since the night when he had kissed and wept over her beautiful dead face, and gone away on a mission that brooked no delay.

But for a few minutes he was silent from sheer happiness. Alive, his beautiful Kathleen, whom he had adored in secret, but never told of his love! What happiness, when he and happiness had so long been strangers!

[Pg 78]

Her tremulous voice broke the silence:

"Do you understand it all—that I was in a trance that night when you bade me farewell and went away?"

"My God! a trance? Yes, you *did* look natural. Mrs. Churchman remarked upon it before she left me alone with you."

"I heard what she said," Kathleen answered, shuddering, and Ralph Chainey put his arm about her and drew her closer, murmuring:

"Did you hear what I said, too, my bonnie Kathleen?"

"Yes," she answered, trembling in a sort of ecstasy and feeling warm blushes redden her cheeks as she whispered:

"You kissed me—you wept over me—you—said—said—that you loved me!"

"And you, sweet Kathleen? Were you vexed at me for my presumption?" questioned the young man, drawing her closer with a fond but reverent arm.

"No; oh, no!" faltered the girl, shyly, yet blissfully.

"And you will let me tell you the same thing over, darling Kathleen, that I worship you, and you will promise me, dear, to be my own sweet wife? Yes, is it not, my own one? There, do not draw away from me in fear. One kiss, my own love, my beautiful treasure, given back to me from the grave itself!"

Then one kiss became a dozen. He pressed her close to his heart, and she rested there with a blissful sigh, happy in this haven of rest.

Presently:

"Now, darling, you may tell me all your story; then I have a startling proposition to make to you," he said.

[Pg 79]

From what she had said to him about taking her home to her father, he perceived that she was entirely ignorant of all that had transpired since her supposed death.

She was mercifully ignorant of her father's loss at sea, and the will made in London just before he sailed, disinheriting his only daughter, and giving her portion of his wealth to Alpine Belmont.

Poor little Kathleen, who believed that she had still a loving father and was the heiress to all his wealth, was in reality orphaned and penniless—a beggar in reality.

But Ralph Chainey, in the greatness of his noble heart, decided to spare her the pain of knowing all this yet, and he could see but one way out of the difficulty—one very agreeable to himself, and not unkind to the lovely waif so strangely thrown on his protecting care.

He knew well that the selfish Belmonts would refuse to care for the homeless girl, would deny her identity, refuse to admit her claims on them. He determined to propose an immediate marriage to Kathleen, by which her future could be made secure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

KATHLEEN'S DISAPPEARANCE.

"Ay, call her on the barren moor,
And call her on the hill;
'Tis nothing but the heron's cry,
And plover's answer shrill."

Kathleen told her lover, between sobs and tears, while she rested close in the shelter of his loving arms, all her sad story.

Ralph Chainey listened with bated breath, his eyes dim with moisture, to the story of Kathleen's persecutions.

"What stupid people they must have been at the asylum not to listen to your strange story! I will have them indicted for unlawfully detaining you!" he exclaimed indignantly. [Pg 80]

"Never mind that, as they can never find me again," she replied, happily.

"They could not take you if they did," he answered; and then he unfolded to her, gently and tenderly, his wish to make her his wife at once, and asked her if she would consent. "It is the most proper thing for us to marry at once," he said. "Unfortunately, we can not be married in Philadelphia without a license, which, as it is near midnight now, I could not procure until to-morrow. But we can take a train within the hour for Washington, and be married, without the necessity of a license, by the first minister we can wake up there. Do you think you can agree to this, darling?"

She hesitated; she said, anxiously:

"Had we not better go straight to Boston and ask papa's leave? Perhaps he would not like it if we were married without his consent."

Why did he not tell her the truth—that there was no use in going to Boston; that her father was dead and she had no home there; that her step-mother and her selfish daughter had inherited the Carew millions?

He could not bear to inflict this shock upon her so soon. She had suffered so much already, poor little darling! that he would save her this added blow for a little while. He could fancy how hard she would take it, to come back to the world, fatherless, penniless, homeless. Let him make her his wife first, and she would have love, wealth, and position almost equal to what she had lost. Then he would have the right to comfort her with his devotion.

So he began to urge his suit with all a lover's devotion, picturing to her the possibility of her father's refusal. [Pg 81]

"You are so young, dear Kathleen, he might want us to wait years and years, and there are so many things that might come between our love," he urged, anxiously.

She shuddered and thought of Alpine Belmont's cruelty. The remembrance decided her; she consented to his wish.

They were driven to the station to take the train for Washington.

"In about three hours we shall be there, and then you shall soon be my little wife," he whispered, joyfully.

They learned that the train was more than an hour late. They went into the reception-room to wait.

Then it suddenly occurred to him that the members of his company at the hotel would be so alarmed at his non-appearance that night that they would think he had been foully dealt with, and raise a great hue and cry.

He hastened to explain these facts to his lovely, girlish *fiancée*.

"Do you think you would mind staying alone here, long enough for me to go and excuse myself to them?" he inquired, tenderly.

Her throat ached with the impulse to sob out to him that she was frightened—that she did not wish for him to leave her there alone.

But she was ashamed of her weakness; she would not confess it to her bright, handsome lover.

In a low, tremulous voice, and with a sad little smile on her quivering red lips, she bade him go.

"It is only for a little while, my own little love!" he whispered; but her heart sunk heavily with fear and dread. He found her a secluded seat in a dim corner. "You can sit here quietly and unobserved until I return," he said, and stole a parting kiss from the sweet red lips that smiled at him with such pathetic love. [Pg 82]

Then he was gone, and she no longer tried to check her bursting sobs. Leaning far back in the corner, her little cobwebby handkerchief was soon drenched with her raining tears.

She told herself that he would soon return and laugh at her for being such a great baby, but she could not help it. A terrible presentiment of coming evil weighed down her spirits.

Ralph Chainey entered a cab and was driven rapidly to his hotel. He explained that business of great importance called him in haste to Washington, but that he would return the next day in time for the evening performance, "Beau Brummel."

Then he drove as fast as possible back to the depot, where his little darling, as he called her in his fond thoughts, was impatiently awaiting his return.

"My little darling, so soon to be my adored wife," he murmured, as he hurried eagerly into the

waiting-room, where the second great shock of his life awaited him.

Kathleen Carew was gone!

He stared with dazed eyes at the empty seat where he had left his beautiful young sweetheart less than an hour ago.

She was gone!

Then commenced a frantic search that lasted so long that by and by the train that was to have taken the pair to Washington thundered into the station and away again, while he still pursued his unavailing quest.

CHAPTER XIX.

[Pg 83]

"RALPH CHAINEY IS A MARRIED MAN!"

"Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot on sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never."

When Ralph Chainey had led Kathleen into the waiting-room of the depot he had been so absorbed in her that he failed to notice any one around him.

So he did not observe a pretty and showily-dressed blonde beauty who was walking restlessly up and down the room, evidently bent on attracting attention to herself and her dress by these maneuvers.

When Ralph entered with Kathleen, the young woman gave him a curious glance that speedily changed to one of dismay.

Then she shrunk back hurriedly into the shadow and watched the pair with bright, steel-blue eyes that glittered with the light of hate.

"A love affair," she muttered, angrily, and noted keenly every movement of the two. She saw how they looked at each other with the light of love in their beautiful eyes. She stole nearer and overheard their words; she saw their kiss, their tender parting.

Her white hands clinched themselves tightly, her face paled beneath its rouge, and she muttered indistinctly to herself—muttered words of hate and menace.

When Ralph Chainey had left Kathleen alone the stranger boldly approached the weeping girl.

Standing before Kathleen, she touched her on the shoulder, and when Kathleen shrunk back and lifted her white face in piteous fear and entreaty, the stranger almost started at its wonderful beauty.

"Ralph Chainey is deceiving you," was the startling sentence that fell on Kathleen's ear.

"Oh!" the girl exclaimed in bewilderment; but the blonde beauty went on:

[Pg 84]

"He has promised to marry you, but he does not mean it, you poor, pretty child. It is only a plot to betray you."

"You speak falsely," Kathleen managed to stammer in a choking voice, her dark eyes flashing indignantly.

"You do not want to believe it, I know, but I can prove to you that I speak the truth. Ralph Chainey is a married man. *I am his wife!*"

Kathleen grew as pale as she had been in her coffin that terrible night; her dark eyes stared as if fascinated into the pretty painted face of the woman. She could not speak; her head seemed to be going round and round; her poor heart throbbed as if it would break.

"Perhaps you have heard that actors are wicked people," continued the pretty stranger. "It is true of the whole class, and most especially of this Ralph Chainey. He is always seeking for a new love, and leaving some other woman to break her heart for love of him. Although I am his wife, he tired of me months ago, and left me to starve or die of a broken heart, he cared not which, so that he was well rid of me. My kind parents took me home, and since then I have watched his career in amazement and despair. Many and many a fair and innocent young girl I have saved from his clutches."

"Oh, Heaven! must I believe this?" came in a low, sobbing under-tone from Kathleen's pale lips.

"You are the youngest and fairest of them all and it would break my heart to see you fall into Ralph Chainey's power," continued the blonde, anxiously. "Be warned in time, my poor girl. Fly from this spot and go home to your friends."

"I have no friends in this city, and my home is in far-off Boston," sobbed Kathleen, clasping her little hands in despair.

[Pg 85]

"Then come home with me, and stay all night, and you can go on to Boston to-morrow morning early," was the quick reply.

She waited for an answer, but none came. Kathleen's head had drooped on her breast. A fatal unconsciousness had stolen over her, and the hour of her enemy's triumph was at hand.

The blonde beauty laughed low and maliciously, as she realized how deeply her words had struck their poisoned arrows into the young girl's heart.

Coolly signaling a stranger who had hurriedly entered the almost deserted waiting-room, she said:

"My friend has fainted from grief at receiving a telegram containing news of the death of her lover. Will you assist me to carry her out to my carriage before she revives? I know she will go into hysterics as soon as she recovers, and that would be so embarrassing in this public place."

The gentleman, a slight-built, genial-faced man of about thirty years, courteously acceded to her request, and gazed with deep compassion at the beautiful face of the unconscious girl he was carrying in his arms.

"What a lovely creature! and so young—scarcely more than a child; yet she had a lover, and he is dead," he thought, pityingly, as he placed her in the carriage.

"I thank you for your kindness," said the blonde beauty, with a dazzling smile. The carriage door closed upon her after she had said "Home" to the driver, and then Samuel Hall, the kind-hearted, smiling-faced young man, stood under the gas-light, gazing after them with dazed blue eyes.

[Pg 86]

"Quite an adventure, Sammy, was it not, eh?" he muttered, talking naïvely to himself. Perhaps his arms thrilled yet with the pressure of the beautiful form that had lain heavily in them a minute ago. His mild blue eyes looked soft and dreamy.

"How lovely she was!" he mused. "So lovely and so sorrow-stricken! The other one was handsome, too, in her way, but not like the younger. Grand, rich people, I suppose," he ended with a sigh; for, having once known "better days," our friend "Sammy" did not very much enjoy his position as a hard-working clerk in one of Philadelphia's immense dry-goods emporiums.

He went home to his lonely room in a great, rambling boarding-house, and though he was not usually impressionable, his mind kept running on his little adventure. He said to himself that it was because he was so sorry for the beautiful young girl who had fainted when she received the telegram that her lover was dead.

"I wonder what their names were?" he mused, curiously. "The blonde I did not quite like. There was something theatrical and made-up about her. She did not in the least resemble the fainting one, so they could not be sisters."

Still musing on his little adventure, he retired. Sleep came to him, made restless by uncanny dreams.

It seemed to the young man that he was standing on the verge of a precipice, looking down into a dark gulf where a turbulent river rushed along in foam and fury. Struggling in the gloomy waves was the young girl he had carried fainting to her carriage, and her white face was upturned to him; her great, piteous dark eyes were fixed on his with unutterable reproach. Tossing her white arms up toward him, she cried, bitterly:

[Pg 87]

"*You* helped that wicked woman to destroy me!"

Then she sunk beneath the waves, and they closed forever over her white face and shining hair.

Sammy Hall awoke in anguish, his forehead beaded with perspiration.

"Oh, what a strange, weird dream! How vivid it is still in my mind! What does it mean? Is it a warning? That can not be, however, for I was doing her a kindness, not an injury, and my heart ached with sympathy for her sorrow."

He could think of nothing else next day, and at noon, when a heavy storm came up and kept customers from crowding into Haines & Co.'s great store, he told the bright, pretty young salesladies about it, dream and all.

They listened to him with the liveliest interest; their eyes grew dim with pity for the beautiful young girl whose heart had broken for the death of her lover.

"But it was so strange for her to reproach me in that dream!" he said, in a troubled voice—"so strange! Because, you see, I was only kind to her, and did nothing wrong."

"Mr. Hall, I have a theory to explain your dream," cried Tessie Mays, a romantic young girl; and every one turned to her with interest as she went on: "The blonde was a bad, wicked creature who frightened that pretty, innocent young thing into a faint, and then carried her off to some wretched fate—the spider and the fly,' you know."

"It is very likely, indeed!" chorused all those romantic young girls, and Sammy Hall's heart sunk like a stone in his breast.

He brooded over that night's adventure, and in his sleep that strange dream kept recurring. He feared that Tessie Mays was right. The blonde woman was a wicked creature who had made him a tool to help her in her nefarious plans.

[Pg 88]

Two days later, as he was going along Ninth Street to dinner, he came suddenly face to face with the blonde, made up carefully and gaudily attired. He stopped in front of her and stammered:

"Oh! ah! miss—madame—excuse me; but how is that unhappy young girl?"

"Why, you must be crazy! I don't know you. I don't know what you mean. Get out of my way!"

She pushed him roughly aside, and had disappeared before he recovered from his surprise.

CHAPTER XX.

KATHLEEN MAKES A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

"Who that feels what Love is here—
All its falsehood, all its pain—
Would, for even Elysium's sphere,
Risk the fatal dream again?"

When Kathleen Carew recovered consciousness she found herself on a bed in a shabby garret bed-room, with the eyes of the blonde beauty looking into hers.

"So you are come to at last? I began to think you were dead, child. Here! smell this, and you'll soon be better," she exclaimed, vivaciously, as she held a bottle of camphor under Kathleen's nose.

Kathleen pushed it away like a petulant child.

"What am I doing here?" she sobbed, in a frightened voice.

"This is my home, you know. I offered to bring you here to save you from Ralph Chainey, that wicked actor. Oh, my! what a scene there was after you fainted. He came back, and I can tell you, he was frightened at finding *me* there. I told him he must go away, that I had told you all, and you hated him. He tried to brazen it all out at first, but presently he was humble enough, and I made him carry you out and put you in my carriage. Then he went away, vowing he would get you into his power some day."

[Pg 89]

Kathleen shuddered from head to foot, and cried, appealingly:

"Oh, madame, is he really your husband? For the sake of Heaven, do not tell me an untruth, for it is more bitter than death to lose faith in one's lover!"

"Alas! if it is so hard to lose faith in a lover, how much worse to be deceived by a husband?" cried the blonde, pathetically.

She dashed her white hand across her dry eyes, and Kathleen caught the glitter of a diamond ring flashing like a little sun. In her small, pink ears there were magnificent diamonds, too, and Kathleen began to watch them with fascinated eyes.

"What a beautiful diamond ring! Won't you let me try it on, please?" she asked, humbly.

The blonde, flattered by the admiration for her ring, slipped it off with some difficulty, and allowed Kathleen to take it in her fingers.

She held it up and gazed inside the gold circle, reading aloud:

"Kathleen Carew!"

"Why, I never knew before that a name was cut——" began the woman, then bit her lip and checked herself, abruptly.

"Where did you get this ring?" asked Kathleen, excitedly.

[Pg 90]

"My husband gave it to me."

"And your beautiful ear-rings?"

"They, too, were gifts from my husband."

"From Ralph Chainey?"

"Of course. Didn't I tell you he was my husband? Do you want to see my marriage certificate?" holding out her finger for the ring.

"Presently," said Kathleen, sitting erect, with a strange fire in her eyes. "Is this," she continued, in a strange voice, "*your* name inside the ring?"

"Of course," airily answered the blonde.

Kathleen's slumbrous eyes began to glow with an angry light, and she exclaimed, passionately:

"It is false! It is my own name, and the ring is mine! The ear-rings also are mine! My father gave them to me!"

"You must be crazy, girl!" exclaimed the blonde, in honest surprise. She snatched the ring and slipped it back on her finger.

"I tell you I am in earnest," stormed Kathleen, roused to a sudden fury by the thought of her wrongs. "I tell you I am Kathleen Carew, and those jewels were stolen from me by a man who choked me and left me for dead on the ground, while he tore those gems from my bleeding hands and ears. And you say it was your husband——" she stopped, shuddering violently. Was she criminating Ralph Chainey?

WAS RALPH CHAINEY A VILLAIN?

Roses have thorns, and love is thorny, too;
 And this is love's sharp thorn that guards its flower,
 That our beloved has the cruel power
 To hurt us deeper than all others do.

SARAH C. WOOLSEY.

Kathleen, pale, shuddering, startled, gazed in horror at the face of the bold, handsome creature who declared to her that these gems for which she had been almost murdered were given to her by Ralph Chainey.

Was it true that the woman was Ralph's wife, and that he had given her the jewels?

If so, what an awful vista of suspicion and crime opened back of these two facts!

Could it be that Ralph Chainey was the fiend who had robbed and murdered her that night, and then by his clever acting thrown off suspicion from himself?

The terrible suspicion made her tremble like a leaf in the wind; and meantime the woman, whom we will call Fedora, was gazing at her with suspicious eyes.

"I don't know what to make of you, girl," she said, impatiently. "Come, now; I want to hear your story from beginning to end."

Kathleen did as she was asked. She related the whole story of her life, from the first meeting with Ralph Chainey until now.

Fedora listened with eager attention.

She was especially interested in Mrs. Belmont and her son Ivan.

"And she wanted you to marry *him*?" she said.

"Yes; but I will never do it. I hate him, and so does papa. He is a spendthrift, and dissolute," said Kathleen, quoting words that her father had used of his step-son.

Fedora frowned and said, hastily:

"But he is very handsome, isn't he?"

"I believe some people think so, but I don't. I guess Daisy Lynn thought so, or she would not have gone mad for love of him;" and the whole story of Daisy Lynn came out. [Pg 92]

It proved very interesting indeed to the blonde, who asked many questions, and seemed disappointed that Kathleen could not answer them all.

When she had elicited all that Kathleen could tell, she returned to the subject of Ralph Chainey.

"I knew he was false to me, but I did not believe he was wicked enough to do murder," she said.

Kathleen shuddered as with a mortal chill, and said faintly:

"There must be some mistake."

The blonde gazed in silence for several minutes at the lovely face of the hapless young girl, then asked, abruptly:

"What shall you do about it?"

"Nothing," Kathleen answered, sorrowfully; and she thought to herself that she would give the world to blot out of her life all memory of the man she had loved so dearly and so well; yet she knew that his memory would haunt her all her life long, and that her heart would break because he had proved unworthy.

She looked pleadingly at the woman before her, and exclaimed:

"Will you please take me home to my father?"

"To-morrow," answered Fedora, soothingly. She rose as she spoke. "Lie down and sleep; it is late," she added. "To-morrow I will go home with you and restore you to your friends."

She went out, carefully locking the door behind her.

Alone in her own room, she looked at the beautiful jewels that had cost Kathleen so dear, and muttered: [Pg 93]

"He did it for me—to get these for me. How he loves me! But this girl! her life is a menace to his liberty. If I let her go home and tell what she knows, suspicion will fall upon *him*. Why did he bungle so, if he must do that ghastly job?" Then she laughed. "Oh, I have paid *you* out, Ralph Chainey!"

CHAPTER XXII.

RESCUED.

"Hame, hame, hame! 'tis hame I fain wad be—
Hame, hame, hame, in my ain countree!"

Sammy Hall was bitterly sorry that he had missed getting any information from the blonde about the beautiful girl he had seen with her that night at the station.

The beautiful white face and closed eyes of the young girl haunted him with strange persistency. And after his accidental *rencontre* on the street with the insolent blonde he felt more apprehensive than ever.

"I wish I knew where she lived: I would find out more about her," he thought; and fell to watching for the bright, steel-blue eyes and golden hair every day.

He was rewarded for his efforts when one day he saw her at the trimming counter buying some gold passementerie from Tessie Mays.

Sammy Hall waited till she had sailed out of the store, then went across to the young salesgirl.

"It's that woman—the one that carried off the girl that night. I saw her give you her address. What is it?" he queried, excitedly.

As much excited as himself, Tessie gave it to him, and he began to set his wits to work to find out the mystery of that night. [Pg 94]

To Kathleen's indignation and dismay, Fedora had kept her a close prisoner in the shabby little garret chamber ever since that night—now five days ago—when she had been brought there.

To quiet the complaints of the girl, Fedora told her that she dare not let her go outside the house, because her aunt's emissaries were searching for her everywhere, and that, if found, she would be arrested and taken back to the asylum.

"You must remain quietly hidden here until the search blows over," she said; and no entreaties could move her jailer's heart; there was always a plausible excuse; but Kathleen, looking into the flippant, insolent face, began to distrust the woman.

"She hates me—hates me because Ralph Chainey said he loved me," she thought, uneasily; and she grew frightened in the miserable little garret room in which she was kept a prisoner, seeing no one but Fedora, who brought her food with her own hands—food which tasted palatable enough, but which seemed only to sap the young girl's strength.

For with each day Kathleen grew weaker and weaker.

At first she had been wont to pace the chamber restlessly for hours. Now her limbs grew weary; her brain seemed to reel. She rested in the chair, then upon the bed, and her burning brain was full of the thought of Ralph Chainey's treachery.

"I loved him so, I loved him so—yet he was wicked, false and cruel beyond all men!" she sobbed; and the knowledge was killing to her. She thought that now, at last, she was going mad, like poor Daisy Lynn, over a lover's falsity. [Pg 95]

She did not know that it was death, not madness, that was approaching; but the food brought her by Fedora was drugged, so that in a short time it must cause her death if she kept on taking it.

She did not dream what a terrible interest the woman had in her death, and that she had decided that Kathleen Carew must never go out of that house alive.

"He did it for *me*, and I must not let her go free," she decided, grimly, and went unflinching about her plans for ending that sweet, innocent young life.

Kathleen found her imprisonment here more galling than it had been in the home of Miss Watts. There was here no pretty, dainty room filled with a young girl's dainty books and pictures, but only squalor such as might have surrounded an uneducated servant.

She wondered much over the house she was in, and if her jailer, the gaudily attired blonde beauty, inhabited such a shabby apartment as she allotted to her guests. But she was not likely to have her curiosity gratified on this point, as Fedora always locked the door on leaving, and there was only one window—a small one, very high up—that gave an uninteresting outlook on the walls of other houses—poor ones, it seemed, from their moldy bricks.

A day came when Fedora did not bring her any dinner, and the whole day wore away dully and gloomily. It was the day when Samuel Hall saw her shopping in the store of Granville B. Haines & Co. Kathleen did not dream of what had happened, but Fedora had moved out of the house that day, leaving her victim to her fate.

Kathleen ate so little of the drugged food prepared for her that she had lived longer than the woman anticipated, so she decided to leave her to starve to death in the unoccupied house, where she was locked into the wretched garret. [Pg 96]

When she gave her address to the pretty saleslady at Granville B. Haines & Co.'s, it was in a fit of absent-mindedness that saved Kathleen's life.

Instead of giving her new address, she gave her old one, and, as we have seen, Samuel Hall at once secured it from Tessie Mays.

So excited was the young man, and so fearful that harm had befallen the beautiful young girl of that night's adventure, that he actually secured the services of a policeman, and finding the house closed and seemingly unoccupied, the doors were broken open and a strict search

instituted.

When they had almost begun to despair of success, the beautiful victim was found by the delighted young clerk, who at once recognized her as the fainting girl he had placed in the carriage that night.

She fainted again when she learned that she was saved, and the policeman and Sammy had some difficulty in restoring her to consciousness. When they had done so, they were filled with grief and horror at the story she had to tell.

"Oh, let me go to papa!" she begged them, pathetically, and Samuel Hall, melted by her beauty and distress, assured her that she should be sent at once to Boston. A closed carriage was secured, and Sammy and the sympathetic policeman escorted her to the station, where a first-class ticket was bought and Kathleen placed in a Pullman car.

"God forever bless you!" sobbed the young girl, weeping over Sammy's hand, and overwhelming him with promises of what her rich father would do to reward him for his nobility. [Pg 97]

Then the train steamed away out of the station, and there were tears in the eyes of both men, through which they saw dimly the pale and lovely face, on which a little hopeful smile was budding into bloom.

The policeman made Sammy promise to keep a sharp lookout for the perfidious blonde, and to let him know if he found her, so that she might be arrested and punished for kidnapping the girl. Then the two separated, the policeman returning to his regular beat, and Sammy to the store, where he told the sympathetic young girls the story of his knightly deliverance of Kathleen, and became quite a hero in their admiring eyes.

But gladdest of all was our beautiful Kathleen, speeding as fast as steam could carry her back to Boston and to papa, who must surely have come home ere now, and who would be so glad to see his little girl.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"PAPA, DARLING, IT IS I, YOUR LITTLE KATHLEEN!"

The world says now I am dead; but, oh,
Lean down and listen. 'Tis all in vain!
Again in my heart bleeds the cruel blow;
Again I am mad with the old-time pain!
CARLOTTA PERRY.

It snowed in Boston that night when Ivan Belmont came home on his usual mission—to extort money by begging, coaxing, threats or curses—he usually tried all in succession before he succeeded—from the rich widow, his mother, and the heiress, his sister.

And he was wont to say on these occasions that he would almost rather *work* for the money than to extort it from those two penurious women, they were so close-fisted and quarrelsome. [Pg 98]

It was quite true what he said. Money he *would* have, but he was so spendthrift and reckless that his mother groaned in spirit over his excesses, and often flatly refused him a penny.

Then he would have recourse to Alpine, and he never left until he secured it, although he invariably had to raise a storm before he succeeded.

His periodical pirating visits grew to be deplored by the whole household, even by the servants, who knew that the effects of his demands were to be dreaded for days, in the increased harshness and ill-temper of the two women they served.

To-night the contest had raged hotter than ever before and only the threat of criminal deeds, unless his demands were met, had sufficed to draw gold from the pockets of his relatives.

Chuckling over his success, he left the house and prepared to face the raging storm outside on his way back to the distant city whence he had come.

Crushing his hat down over his face, he hurried down the marble steps, pausing at the bottom in surprise at seeing the cloaked figure of a female in the act of ascending the steps.

The glare of a street-lamp shone full on the scene. Curiosity prompted him to stare at the beautiful white face upraised timidly to his own.

As he did so, his own face whitened with horror, his eyes dilated, his limbs trembled with fear.

"My God!" he muttered, hoarsely; and turning, fled from the spot in mad haste, like one pursued by fiends.

He believed that he had seen a veritable ghost, for it was the pale, lovely face of Kathleen Carew into which he had gazed so wildly—Kathleen, whom he believed dead. So he fled from the spot as wildly as his trembling limbs would permit. [Pg 99]

Kathleen had always disliked and despised Ivan Belmont, so she only smiled scornfully at his precipitate flight, and began to ascend the marble steps, her heart beating with joy at the thought of meeting her father again.

"I wonder if James will be frightened, too, and run away, thinking me a ghost?" she murmured, with a sad little smile, as she rang the bell.

But it was not James who opened the door to her; it was a total stranger, who stared in surprise at the sight of a beautiful, refined-looking young girl out alone on such a stormy night.

All the old servants had been discharged after Kathleen's death, because they had irritated Mrs. Carew by grieving after their young mistress.

So the man looked in wonder at the strange young girl with the rich golden hair and flashing dark eyes who stepped across the threshold as if she belonged there, and said to him with gentle imperiousness:

"Tell your master there is a young lady to see him."

Without waiting for a reply, Kathleen brushed past the astonished servant, entered a small reception-room on her right, and sat down to await the entrance of her father.

She had not mentioned her name, because she wanted to take him by surprise.

She wanted to see the joy-light flash into his handsome face when she should throw herself into his arms and cry out, tenderly:

"Papa, darling, it is I, your little Kathleen, come home to you again!"

[Pg 100]

How glad he would be to see her again! He had always loved her so fondly that his heart must have almost broken when they told him she was dead.

And how glad he would be to have her back again. How his eyes would flash when she told him how wretchedly she had been treated. He would certainly call in the strong arm of the law to punish her persecutors. Only she did not want them to do anything to old Mrs. Hoover, the kind matron who had befriended her in the asylum.

She sunk down into a beautiful satin chair with a sigh of relief at getting back to papa and home again—her beautiful home, so warm, so luxurious, filled with the rich odor of hot-house flowers, in strong contrast to the storm raging bleakly outside.

The man-servant, somewhat amazed at her coolness in entering the reception-room, but supposing her to be some intimate friend of the family, went in search of his mistress.

"A young lady is in the small reception-room asking for Mr. Belmont," he said.

He had naturally supposed that Kathleen meant Ivan Belmont, as he was the only man connected with the house.

"Did you send Mr. Belmont to her?"

"He had just gone out, madame, and she did not wait for me to tell her, but brushed past me and went into the room," he replied.

"Impertinent!" exclaimed the lady, in angry surprise. "I will go and see what she wants," she added, rising and throwing down her novel to go.

She was already in a towering rage, because she had been bullied by Ivan into giving him five hundred dollars a few minutes ago, and the idea that a woman, one of his low associates, most probably, had had the effrontery to follow him here, added fuel to the flame of her fury.

[Pg 101]

Kathleen heard the swish of a silken robe, and the heavy curtains parted and fell behind the tall and stately form of her handsome step-mother.

The girl rose up—grieved that it was not her father, but so glad to be safe at home again that she was almost glad to see again the wicked woman who was the cause of all her trouble.

"Mamma!" she faltered, using the name she had been taught to give her cruel step-mother, and Mrs. Carew, who had been advancing angrily toward her, recoiled with a smothered cry and starting eyes.

Kathleen came toward her with eager, imploring hands outstretched in greeting.

"Do not be frightened, mamma, I am not a ghost, I am human," she said, sweetly; but Mrs. Carew, who had sunk down on her knees in mortal terror, waved her back.

"Back, back!" she breathed, hoarsely; and Kathleen saw that she believed herself haunted by the spirit of her dead step-daughter.

She went back to her seat and began to explain her appearance in soothing tones:

"It was all a mistake, mamma. I was in a trance, not really dead, and I came to myself in the coffin that night, and dazed and frightened lest they should bury me alive, I ran away into the woods. Some people caught me and put me into a lunatic asylum, from which I have just escaped!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

[Pg 102]

TURNED OUT INTO THE STORM.

The poor too often turn away unheard

From hearts that shut against them with a sound
That will be heard in Heaven.

LONGFELLOW.

Mrs. Carew drew a long, sobbing breath, and struggled up to a chair, keeping her eyes fixed fearfully on Kathleen, who went on sorrowfully:

"I can not tell you mamma, what I have suffered since I went away last spring. The recital would be enough to melt a heart of stone. You never loved me, I know, but you would have pitied me if you could have known how I was suffering from the stupidity of those people, who took me for another girl, and kept me a prisoner so many months. Thank Heaven, it is all over now, and I am at home again. But where is papa? I want to see him so much, and I am sure he can not be out this stormy night."

While the young girl talked, the color had been coming back to Mrs. Carew's lips and a malevolent gleam to her blue eyes. Straightening herself up in her chair, she looked across at the girl, realizing that it was indeed Kathleen Carew come back from the portals of death.

She had always hated the lovely, innocent girl, and now she thought triumphantly that Kathleen's day was past. Her father was dead, and she was disinherited. She had no part nor lot in the home to which she had returned.

The cruel woman looked at the lovely young suppliant, and sneered:

"You can not impose on me with your false claims. You are not Kathleen Carew, and your resemblance to her is very slight—not strong enough to bear out your assertion. My step-daughter is dead."

"No, no!" Kathleen cried, piteously. "I am your step-daughter, indeed I am, mamma, and I have told you the truth. I have been so ill and unhappy all these months, it is that which has changed my looks and made me look so unlike the Kathleen you remember. Where is papa? He will know me, he will be glad that I am alive!" She made a movement to leave the room, but as suddenly Mrs. Carew barred her way.

[Pg 103]

"You lunatic! you shall not leave this room!" she hissed, savagely.

Kathleen's hot temper, held at bay so long, flamed up at once.

"I *will* go to papa!" she uttered, angrily; and in a low but perfectly clear voice her tormentor answered:

"Vincent Carew is *dead*!"

She saw the girl start and tremble as if she had been struck. Her sweet face, flushed a moment ago with anger, went deathly white, and she clutched the back of a chair for support.

"Vincent Carew is dead!" repeated the pitiless woman before her. She heard a moan of mortal agony issue from Kathleen's pale lips, but she continued, heartlessly: "My husband was lost at sea in the *Urania*, that was burned to the water's edge the very week after my step-daughter was murdered in Pennsylvania. By his will, made in London just before he sailed, he disinherited his daughter for her intimacy with an actor, and left his whole fortune to me and my daughter."

"It is monstrous, impossible! You are telling me a falsehood!" moaned Kathleen, with difficulty, for her senses were leaving her under the shock of her step-mother's words. A low gasp came from her lips, she staggered blindly forward, then fell insensible upon the carpet.

Mrs. Carew spurned the senseless form with her foot and threw wide the velvet *portière*, calling:

[Pg 104]

"Jones, lift this woman up and put her out into the street. And be careful never to admit disreputable characters inside my doors again, or you may lose your place!"

The man, who had been lingering about very near, approached with profuse apologies and excuses.

"Carry her out into the street!" repeated his mistress, angrily.

Jones took up the light, unconscious figure in his arms and moved toward the door, but he muttered, deprecatingly:

"She'll die out there in the snow."

"What is that to you? Creatures like *her* ought to be dead! Do as you are bid, or you will rue it!" stormed his mistress; and Jones, dazed and frightened by her violence, hastened to obey her commands.

The door had hardly closed on him as he bore poor Kathleen out into the stormy night, when Alpine Belmont, disturbed by the noise, came gliding down the stairs, demanding the cause of the excitement.

Mrs. Carew was pale and trembling in every limb, and she answered, reluctantly:

"It's something not fit for a young girl's ears, my dear."

"Oh, bosh! I'll find out from the servants if *you* don't tell me," retorted Alpine; and then Mrs. Carew said, cunningly:

"Well, if you must know such awful things, a woman came here demanding to see that disreputable brother of yours! You can imagine the sort of woman, crazy with drink, that would follow *him*! So I made Jones put her out into the street, and the whole disgraceful thing will be

[Pg 105]

talked over by the servants by to-morrow."

Alpine shivered with horror and disgust, and muttered:

"I wish Ivan was dead! He is too wicked to live! The idea of that woman's effrontery!"

Mrs. Carew thought to herself:

"That was a good idea of mine! She believes every word. Good! for I would not like for her to know the truth. She has been so soft over that girl ever since her supposed death, that there's no telling what pity would lead her to do!"

CHAPTER XXV.

TEDDY DARRELL AGAIN.

The snow lies white and the moon gives light,
I'll out to the freezing mere,
And I'll tell my mind to the friendly wind
Because I have loved her so.

INGELOW.

Mrs. Carew's servant, Jones, was a very humane and tender-hearted man, and his heart swelled with anger as he obeyed the command of his mistress, and bore the fainting young girl out of the splendid abode of luxury and wealth into the cold and stormy night.

He stopped under the flaring street-lamp and looked pityingly into the lovely white face that had fallen back against his arm.

"Why, what a pretty young thing she is—little more than a child—and looks as innocent, too!" he soliloquized. "I'll bet my life that if she's ever done any harm, she's been betrayed into it by that scoundrelly Ivan Belmont that she came here to find! He ought to be hung, so he ought!"

He glanced anxiously up and down the almost deserted avenue. The snow lay white and deep upon the ground, and the great flakes swirled through the air, striking him coldly in the face. [Pg 106]

"If I put her down here on the ground she will freeze to death, poor girl, that's certain!" he murmured, uneasily. "I just can't do such a wicked thing—no, not even if she *is* bad, as Mrs. Carew said. Why, even if she was a murderess it wouldn't be right to leave her out here to die in the cold! But, land, what be I to do with her? That's what I want to know!"

The whinny and stamp of an impatient horse attracted his attention at that moment. He turned his head and saw a smart cab waiting at the next door. The driver, half asleep, sat on his box, his head sunk into the collar of his great-coat.

A sudden temptation came to the troubled Jones, and he did not fight against it, but rather welcomed it as an inspiration.

Walking noiselessly across the snow, Jones placed his burden inside the cab upon the cushions, and closed the door so softly that it did not attract the attention of the tired and sleepy driver on the box.

"God bless you and raise you up a friend this awful night, you poor little wretch!" apostrophized Jones, as he returned from the scene and re-entered the Carew mansion.

He had not been gone ten minutes before a servant came from the house before which the cab was waiting and roused the sleepy cabby.

"The lady as you brought here has decided to stay all night with her sick mother, so she told me to pay you and send you away," he said.

"All right, but I wish she had made up her mind afore she kep' me a-waitin' here all night! I be frozen with the cold, that's what I be!" grumbled the driver, accepting the double fee ungraciously, and driving away at a high rate of speed, all unconscious of the silent passenger inside. [Pg 107]

He went rattling down to a large hotel, hoping he might get a fare for the theater.

A tall, handsome young man came down the steps and hailed him.

"Take me to the Opera House," he said, opening the door and springing lightly in.

"All right, sir," and away they went.

Teddy Darrell, the new fare, pulled up the collar of his long, fur-lined overcoat about his ears, and was about to settle himself comfortably when he received a violent shock.

He discovered that he was not alone in the cab. A slight girlish form, shrouded in a heavy cloak, was huddled up on the opposite seat, and low moans were issuing from its lips.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I WOULD LAY DOWN MY LIFE TO SERVE YOU!" SAID TEDDY.

How was any one to know
That those eyes had looked just so
On a hundred other women with a glance as light and strange?
There are men who change their passions
Even oftener than their fashions
And the best of loving always, to their minds, is still to change.

JOHN T. TROWBRIDGE.

Teddy Darrell had had some adventures in his day, and was not given to nerves, so he did not let the shock of his discovery overcome him.

The thought flashed over him that some drunken woman had crept into the cab, unknown to the driver, and fallen into a troubled slumber.

The flaring lanterns on the outside of the cab did not afford much light, so Teddy struck a match and held it over the face of his unknown companion. [Pg 108]

Then indeed he had a shock much greater than the first one.

The lighted match fell from his hand and he recoiled with a startled cry.

"Good heavens! what a likeness!"

He sunk upon the opposite seat, actually trembling with surprise and emotion.

In the pale and lovely face lying unconscious on the cushions the young man had recognized a haunting likeness to one he had loved very dearly, and whose tragic fate, six months ago, had thrilled him with unutterable horror. Although other lovers had succeeded Kathleen in Teddy's young, impressionable heart, he had never ceased to regret the fact that she had rejected him.

"The sweetest, loveliest girl in all the world!" he had always thought of bonny, dark-eyed Kathleen.

And he trembled with pain when he saw in the poor street waif, as he believed her, the awful likeness to his lost loved one.

Kathleen, who was beginning to recover consciousness, moaned and stirred, half lifting herself toward the young man.

He bent toward her kindly and said:

"Are you ill, madame?"

That voice! It was one from her happy past. It stirred a pulse in Kathleen's heart, and she turned toward him wildly, her dark eyes opening wide upon his anxious face.

The flaring lights from some place of amusement shone into the cab and showed her his features.

"Teddy Darrell!" she murmured, in a feeble tone of amazement.

[Pg 109]

"Good heavens! you know me!" he exclaimed. "Who are *you*?"

She held out her white hands to him with an entreating gesture.

"Don't you know me? Don't you remember Kathleen Carew?" she cried, faintly.

"Kathleen Carew is *dead*!" he answered, blankly.

"No, no; she lives! It was a mistake. I was in a trance, and I escaped from my coffin and ran away into the woods," whispered the girl, rapidly regaining the strength to speak.

"Good heavens! So that's what became of you!" cried Teddy Darrell. He seized her little white hands and pressed them rapturously. "Welcome back to life, my dear girl!" he laughed, happily, and she exclaimed:

"You know me—you believe me?"

"Of course I do," he replied, joyously. "But how came you to be here in this cab, alone and unconscious?"

"I do not know," she answered, in a puzzled voice. "I went home, and mamma told me my father was dead, and that he had disinherited me in his will. Then she denied my identity, and the last thing I remember I fell fainting on the carpet. Oh, Mr. Darrell! will you do me one favor? Take me to my dear friend, Helen Fox."

"Helen Fox is in Europe," he replied, reluctantly.

"In Europe? Oh, good heavens! what am I to do, then? Helen is the only friend I have to turn to in my distress!" exclaimed the young girl, clasping her beautiful hands in the keenest despair.

Teddy Darrell looked at her reproachfully.

"You seem to forget *me*, Miss Carew. But I would lay down my life to serve you!" he exclaimed, impetuously. [Pg 110]

She glanced up and met his eyes. They wore the most killing expression of devotion—and Teddy's dark eyes could be very expressive when he chose.

Kathleen blushed vividly, and answered:

"I—I—did not know—if I might call you my friend or not. Some men—might not like a young girl

after—after—” She paused in confusion.

"After she rejected him," finished Teddy, coolly. "Well, I hope I am not as mean as that, Miss Carew. I shall be only too happy to be your friend and brother if you will allow me."

"You are too good to me," she whispered, gratefully, as she held out her little white hand to him, adding, sadly: "'A friend in need is a friend indeed,' and I am poor in everything now, with not even a shelter for my head."

"Don't say that," exclaimed the sympathetic young fellow, with a break in his voice. "I am going to take you to my cousin, one of the kindest ladies in the world, if you will allow me to do so;" and, pulling the check-string, he gave the driver orders not to proceed to the opera house, but to the street where his cousin lived.

Kathleen acquiesced gratefully in his decision. Her heart went out warmly to this cordial friend, and she regretted in her heart that she had ever laughed with Helen Fox over the young man's flirting proclivities.

CHAPTER XXVII.

[Pg 111]

ALPINE'S RENEWED HOPES.

And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams.

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

Alpine Belmont, all in a flutter of surprise and delight, was making herself beautiful, with her maid's assistance, for the eyes of a caller who was waiting for her in the drawing-room.

Ten minutes ago a card had been brought to her bearing the name of "Ralph Chainey."

"He asked for Mrs. Carew first, but I told him she was out; then he sent his card to you," said Jones.

Alpine's heart leaped with wild delight.

She was as romantically in love with the gifted and handsome young actor as was possible to one of her vain and selfish nature.

After Kathleen's death she had cherished some hope of winning him, but his coldness and indifference had been so marked, and his despair over Kathleen's loss so deep, that in angry pique she had given up her hopes, and determined to console herself with her newly acquired wealth.

The novelty of her position as a great heiress had for a time diverted her thoughts, but of late they had returned to him again, and rested longingly on her desire to win his heart.

So the sudden announcement of his presence filled her with joyful anticipations.

Her maid was hurriedly summoned to array her mistress for the coming interview.

In the servants' hall, a little later, she expressed the opinion that the gentleman must be a very particular beau, as the lady was so hard to please.

Meanwhile, Alpine, palpitating in a light-blue silk that set off very becomingly her blonde beauty, was entering the drawing-room to meet her caller. [Pg 112]

Ralph Chainey, dark, stately, handsome, the incarnation of a romantic young girl's idea of a lover, rose and bowed with courtly grace over Miss Belmont's hand.

He had been searching vainly for Kathleen more than a week, and at last it occurred to him that perhaps she had come home. He hastened to Boston in a fever of anxiety.

Alpine could never remember afterward in what words he told his story, it came on her so suddenly, it found her so unprepared, but presently she knew it all—knew that Kathleen, whose death had so softened her heart, was alive, and that but for some strange happening of fate, she would that moment be Ralph Chainey's beloved wife.

With that knowledge, Alpine's heart grew cold as ice again; the old jealous hate revived.

She could not speak for some moments, but sat staring with burning blue eyes at the unhappy young man, who was pouring out his whole heart.

"Oh, Miss Belmont, think what an awful shock it was to me, losing her in that mysterious fashion. I have scarcely eaten or slept since, I have been so wretched, I employed detectives, but they seem to be all at sea. They even believe that I was mistaken—that it was not Kathleen Carew at all, but really Daisy Lynn, a lunatic. Miss Watts, from whom she had escaped, had been found, and she declared that the girl was her niece."

A wild hope came into Alpine's mind, and she faltered:

"I believe the detectives are right. Kathleen can not be alive. Remember we saw her in her coffin, [Pg 113]

cold and dead."

"Not dead, for I have seen her alive!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Miss Belmont, do not discourage me—do not turn unbelieving ears to my story, for I swear to you that Kathleen Carew is alive to-night—alive, but given over to some fate, perhaps, worse than death!"

Alpine's heart beat wildly as he fixed his great burning brown eyes so sorrowfully upon her face. Oh, God! she thought, what would she not give for Ralph Chainey to love her as he did Kathleen Carew, her hated step-sister!

Some burning words of the Virginia poetess, Mittie Point Davis, came into her mind:

"If your heart could throb for me,
Even for a moment's space,
With the love I feel for thee
Gazing on that glorious face;
If the passion that I feel
Found response within your breast,
Years of anguish could not steal
Memories that I had been blest.

"If those eyes so darkly glorious,
Kindled as with mine they met,
I could hold myself victorious
Even though you did forget.
I could give the lifelong passion
Of a thousand meaner souls
For one hour's brief adoration
Over thine to sway control."

Ralph Chainey did not dream what a wealth of love for him had blossomed into full flower in the young girl's heart. Men are blind, or they would never confide to one beautiful young girl the story of their love for another one. Few girls are noble enough to listen without being piqued and jealous.

Alpine Belmont's heart burned within her, and she said to herself that she hoped he was mistaken, and that poor Kathleen was dead. She believed it herself, and she and her mother had long ago agreed that Kathleen's body had been stolen from the doctor's cottage for purposes of dissection. She had shuddered at the thought of that beautiful body being so desecrated, but Mrs. Carew had seemed quite indifferent, and congratulated herself that she had escaped the expenses of a fashionable funeral and a costly monument.

All the sorrow she had felt for Kathleen's death died out of Alpine's heart as she beheld the trouble of the handsome young actor, and she said to herself that if Kathleen could rise from the grave and stand before her, she would be tempted to strike her dead at her feet.

While these cruel and jealous thoughts ran through Alpine's mind, Ralph Chainey was looking at her with pathetic eyes that mutely craved her sympathy. At last she began to understand this, and a clever idea came to her. Why not pretend to sympathize with him in his sorrow? It would bring them closer together, and perhaps win her some kind thoughts from him.

[Pg 114]

Following out her thought, Alpine moved to a seat beside the young actor, and laying her soft, ringed white hand lightly upon his, she gave it a sympathetic pressure, and murmured:

"No words can tell you how deeply I sympathize with you in your sorrow. I hope, for both our sakes, that your belief may prove true, and Kathleen be restored to your heart."

Her sympathy pleased him, as she knew it would, and he answered, eagerly:

"You loved her. I know. How could any one live in the house with her and not be devoted to one so sweet and lovely?"

Alpine withdrew her hand and played nervously with her many rings.

"Yes. I was fond of Kathleen," she murmured. "You did well to come to me. You have all my sympathy, and oh! how I wish I could find her and restore her to you. Is there nothing I can do? I am rich, you know, and if you wish it, I will employ a detective to find Kathleen;" but even as she breathed the tender words, the wily girl knew that she would rather employ a detective to hunt her rival down to her death.

Ralph Chainey, blind mortal that he was, looked at her gratefully, without detecting the hollow ring in her voice.

"God bless you for your noble offer, Miss Belmont, but I can not accept it," he replied. "I have detectives already employed. I, too, am rich, and my whole fortune shall be devoted to finding her, if it costs that much. All that you can do is to write to me at once if you hear from our poor lost darling. I shall be moving from one city to another, but I will keep you informed of my whereabouts."

[Pg 115]

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Chainey, and I will write you if I have the least bit of news!" exclaimed Alpine, with sparkling eyes, for she began to see a prospect of getting up a correspondence with the great actor. She would write to him often, asking if *he* had any news, and he would be obliged, in common courtesy, to reply.

He rose to go, and Alpine poured out eloquently her sympathy for him and her sorrow for Kathleen.

"We both love her; it is a link between us," she said. "Try to think of me as a sister, and remember I shall often be thinking of you in your sorrow."

He thanked her gratefully and hurried away, after promising to call again the first time he came to Boston.

Alpine told her mother on her return of the young man's visit, and his startling disclosure, but Mrs. Carew pooh-poohed the whole story.

"Kathleen is certainly dead," she said. "Ralph Chainey has been imposed on by a pretty lunatic, that's all. I thought he had more sense."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TEDDY DARRELL'S PLANS.

"You are all that I have to live for,
All that I want to love,
All that the whole world holds for me."

Teddy Darrell kept his promise to Kathleen. He took her immediately to the home of his cousin, a widow lady of about thirty-eight years—a woman of good circumstances and social standing, but whose divided devotion to two pretty children and literary pursuits caused her to live a very retired life. [Pg 116]

Mrs. Stone must have been very fond of her cousin Teddy, for she accepted his story of the finding of Kathleen in good faith, and made the young girl welcome to her luxurious home. She saw that the hapless girl was nearly fainting with fatigue, and leaving Teddy alone in the pretty library, carried her off to bed, after first coaxing her to take some tea and toast.

"Bless you, my dear, your name has been a familiar one in this household for more than a year. Teddy was so madly in love with you once that he could talk of nothing else but Kathleen Carew whenever he came. Even the children knew all about it!"

Kathleen blushed at receiving so much kindness from Teddy's cousin, after having rejected *him*, so to clear herself she said:

"But he got over it directly. Helen Fox told me he proposed to her the week afterward."

Mrs. Stone, who was warming a dainty lace-ruffled night-gown before the fire for her guest, threw her head back and laughed heartily.

"Teddy Darrell is the worst flirt in Boston! Actually, Miss Carew, I've known that boy to be engaged to three girls at the same time!" she exclaimed, merrily.

"I suppose he can never be really in earnest," said the young girl.

Then Mrs. Stone replied, more seriously:

"I have never known him to be in earnest but once, and I have been his confidante, I believe, in all of his love affairs. He has had many fancies, but he never really loved any one but *you*, my dear girl."

Kathleen did not know what to say to this, and the lady rattled on:

"Well, Teddy is a good catch, if I do say it myself, for he is a real good boy, and very rich. His wife, if he ever gets one, will have a happy life; and I hope he will soon marry, for that would cure him of his little fads."

"Fads?" observed Kathleen, inquiringly. [Pg 117]

"Yes," replied her new friend; "he is full of them. Some time ago it was to be an author, and I believe he wrote up whole reams of foolscap in the six weeks while the fever lasted. He came here every day, bringing dozens of pages of the thrilling romance over which he had been wasting the midnight oil. Finally he sent it off to a publisher, and a prompt rejection cooled his ardor. Now his fad is to be an actor."

"An actor?" Kathleen exclaimed.

Her thoughts flew with exquisite pain to Ralph Chainey—so beloved and so false!

"He has been stage-struck ever since he saw Ralph Chainey act last winter," continued the communicative hostess. "He tells me now that he is studying to go upon the stage, but I'm sure he will fail. He will certainly have stage-fright."

"I hope not," answered Kathleen; and then the gentle lady tucked her kindly into bed as if she had been a little child.

"Good-night, my dear," she said, with a kiss, and then she went away, saying she must go downstairs and see Teddy Darrell.

He was waiting for her alone. The children who had been amusing him, had gone off to bed, and

he settled himself for a long, confidential chat.

From his talk she soon learned that his love of a year ago for bonny Kathleen had revived with fuller intensity than ever.

"Cousin Carrie, I'm bound to marry that girl!" he exclaimed, with sparkling eyes.

"But she rejected you last winter, Teddy."

"I know; but everything is different now. She was a belle and heiress then; now she is poor, and friendless but for us. When she learns that I love her in spite of her changed position, and that I want to marry her as soon as she will have me, she will be touched by the romance of the affair, and—now don't laugh so, Cousin Carrie—it *is* romantic, is it not, my devotion?"

"Certainly," she agreed, merrily; then added: "But I'm afraid you will find it hard to convince her of your devotion; for she told me when I spoke of it just now that you had proposed to Helen Fox the very week after she rejected you."

[Pg 118]

Teddy made a grimace.

"Oh, that was all fun, and I think it was very shabby in Helen telling all the other girls about it. Of course, I only wanted the engagement for a few weeks, then to pique her and get discarded, as I've done with other, girls," he said, carelessly, having a very elastic conscience in matters of love.

But he added, rather lugubriously:

"But I'm in earnest, Carrie, with Kathleen Carew. Positively, she is the only girl I ever loved in my life—that is, real, sure enough love—and it will break my heart if I don't get her for my wife."

"You didn't break your heart when you believed that she was dead," his cousin reminded him, cynically.

"Oh, that's different!" he replied, vaguely. "I've set my heart on getting her now, and I could never get over it, if I failed. Look here, Cousin Carrie," leaning toward her, his bright, dark eyes full of tender pleading, "help me, won't you? Speak a good word for me to her. I'm not such a bad sort, am I?" wheedlingly. "I would make a nice young girl a good husband, wouldn't I, now?"

"Yes, Teddy, I believe you would."

"Then help me, won't you? It's not selfish in me, is it, to want to marry this poor girl who has been so strangely despoiled of home and fortune, and make up to her for all her cruel loss?"

He was deeply, romantically in earnest, and Mrs. Stone could not help admiring his nobility.

"No, Teddy, it's not selfish, for you *are* a good match, and I'll help you with sweet Kathleen, if I can. I used to be called a good match-maker in other days when I went more into society, and I'll exert my powers now for your benefit."

"Thank you over and over!" he exclaimed, fervently.

[Pg 119]

Thus in two homes in Boston plans were being made to keep Ralph Chainey and Kathleen apart. Teddy Darrell meant to marry his old sweetheart, if she was to be won, and Alpine Belmont was scheming to marry Ralph. These two hearts, that had gone out so tenderly in love to each other, seemed but footballs of fate, tossed relentlessly hither and thither. Well might Kathleen, tossing restlessly on her soft bed, wet the pillow with bitter, burning tears for her lost love—her false love, as she believed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FEDORA'S ESCAPE.

Let me see him once more, for a moment or two;
Let him tell me himself of his purpose, dear, do;
Let him gaze in these eyes while he lays out his plan
To escape me, and then he may go—if he can!

FRANCES SARGENT OSGOOD.

Kathleen had promised to write to Samuel Hall and let him know when she arrived safely in Boston, and the next morning, although she felt really weak and ill, she kept her promise.

She wrote a kind and grateful letter to the noble clerk, again thanking him for his goodness to her, and telling him of her terrible disappointment on reaching home.

"I can not understand it all, I am so dazed with my trouble," she wrote. "But papa is dead—lost at sea—and the strangest thing I ever heard of, he made a will just before he sailed for America, and disinherited me—his only child. Think of the strangeness—the cruelty of it. But he is dead; I must not harbor unkind thoughts of him. I am sure some malignant influence was brought to bear. But I am homeless, penniless, but for this friend, Mrs. Stone, with whom I am staying. I can not now repay you the sum of money you so nobly advanced me to return home on, but I shall never forget it, and the time may come when I shall be able to restore it fourfold. Till then God bless you is the

Sammy Hall was all excitement over the letter, and at the first opportunity confided the news to his sympathetic girl friends. [Pg 120]

Of course they talked it over at that quietest hour in the day when the throng of shoppers are out at lunch or gone home to dinner.

Tessie Mays, who had the news direct from Sammy, retailed it all to the eager listeners; and no one noticed a handsome, showily dressed young woman who had entered the store and come up to Tessie's counter—Fedora, who, having given the wrong address the other day, had now returned to complain that she had never received her package of gold passementerie.

Just as she was approaching the counter she heard the name of Kathleen Carew called, and drawing back with a great start, pretended to be examining some gorgeous brocade silk that was displayed on the end of the counter. The pretty, animated young girls did not observe her, and went on talking.

Fedora did not lose a word.

Pretty soon she became aware that her prey had escaped her through the efforts of Sammy Hall, and that she was now safe in Boston with a friend, although her father was dead and had disinherited her, and her step-mother had denied her identity.

"It is just like a novel, isn't it?" commented one of the young girls. "I would give anything I own for one good look at the beautiful Miss Kathleen Carew, with the bronze-gold hair and proud dark eyes that Sammy raves over."

"Tessie Mays, I'd think you would be jealous!" exclaimed another girl, with a meaning laugh.

Tessie tossed her dark curly head carelessly.

"Why, Sammy Hall is not my beau! I think it was you, Dolly Wade, that he took to church Sunday night—wasn't it?"

It was Dolly's turn to blush and bridle. She laughed.

"Oh, pshaw! Mr. Hall's only a friend of mine, and I don't think he wants to marry you, anyhow! He is cut out for an old bachelor if ever a man was!" [Pg 121]

"Have you ever seen that woman again, Tessie?" asked another girl, turning the conversation.

"What woman?"

"Why, the one that Sammy recognized and is going to arrest, if she ever comes in here again, for kidnapping Miss Carew."

"Why, no; and it's strange, too, for she made a mistake, gave me the address of a vacant house, and her gold passementerie came back here. I was certain she would be back here, fussing about it; and I tell Sammy it's lucky she made the mistake, so she will *have* to come back here. He has the warrant for her arrest, and she'll never get out of Haines & Co.'s without a policeman's escort!"

"Won't she?" muttered Fedora, with a low, gurgling laugh of sarcastic amusement. She tripped away in a hurry, in spite of her pretended mirth, and did not breathe freely until she was out of the store and in the cab that was waiting for her near the sidewalk.

"Whew! what a narrow escape!" she muttered. "So I have been watched and almost trapped while I believed myself triumphant!"

An ugly look crossed the pretty blonde face, and she continued, angrily:

"I wonder who Sammy Hall can be that those girls talked about so familiarly? He must be the man that helped me put the girl in the carriage, and that I met afterward in the street, and snubbed so coolly. He has taken revenge on me by ferreting out the place where I left Kathleen Carew, and rescuing her from her fate. Heigho! I think I had better leave for New York right away. Philadelphia will be too hot a place to hold me for a while. If I had the money I would go to Boston and look up my runaway bird, and Ivan at the same time. He promised to send me three hundred dollars this week. He had better do it, for I've got a hold on him, now, thanks to that girl's disclosure, that he can't shake off."

CHAPTER XXX.

[Pg 122]

"MY DARLING GIRL, I'M AS FOND OF YOU AS EVER!"

Sweetheart, name the day for me,
When we two shall wedded be;
Make it ere another moon,
While the meadows are in tune.

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

"You must cheer up, dear Kathleen, and feel yourself quite at home with me," Mrs. Stone said, affectionately, to her sorrowful young guest.

Kathleen looked at her wistfully with her sad, dark eyes.

"But I have no claim on your kindness, dear lady," she sighed.

"Why, aren't you my cousin Teddy's friend? and isn't he one of the best boys in the world? and didn't I promise his dead mother that I would always be kind to the boy she was leaving so lonely in the wide world? for his father had died years before. Yes, indeed, you have a claim on me, not alone because Teddy loves you so passionately, but for your own dear sake—because your trouble and your helplessness make it my duty to love and care for you," exclaimed the kind lady, feelingly.

"You are so good and kind! May Heaven reward you!" sobbed the unhappy girl.

She leaned her beautiful curly head on Mrs. Stone's shoulder and wept bitter, burning tears from the depths of her overcharged heart.

Poor Kathleen! She was surely the most unhappy girl in the world.

So young, so lovely, and so loving, yet pursued by a cruel, unrelenting fate, that had wrested from her little hands all that she held dearest in life!

Her young heart was torn with agony for the death of her beloved father, and the thought of Ralph Chainey's sin added poignancy to her grief.

In the long, dark watches of the sleepless nights, poor, unhappy Kathleen lay wakeful and wretched on her pillow, thinking wildly of her lost love—the man who had seemed like a demi-god in her eyes, so handsome, and so gifted, and so noble, but who had been deceiving her all along—who had a wife while he was pretending he meant to marry her.

[Pg 123]

And—but when it came to this thought Kathleen's hysterical sobs almost choked her, and she said to herself that she would not permit herself to believe it—the thought that it was Ralph Chainey who had robbed her that night, and given her jewels to *that* woman, was unendurable. That way lay madness.

But it was no wonder that each morning, when the kind eyes of her hostess scanned her face so anxiously, she found it paler and paler, while the dark eyes were somber and heavy from the tears that always lay so near them, and the sweet, red lips had always a tremulous curve, as if from repressed sobs.

Mrs. Stone's kind heart ached for the unhappy young creature who only wept at all her attempts at comfort.

She said to herself that she did not believe there was much chance for Teddy Darrell, after all. The girl did not show the least interest when she spoke of her cousin.

Her whole heart seemed to be absorbed in grief for her father's death, and in wonder over the fact that he had been mysteriously angry with her, and given her share of his wealth to her step-sister.

"Papa always loved me, and I never did anything to vex him, so why did he hate me? Why did he leave his poor Kathleen alone and penniless in the cold world?" she would sob, piteously.

Mrs. Stone had no answer ready for that oft-repeated inquiry. It was a mystery to her, too, why Vincent Carew had done such a cruel and wicked thing. She did not know that Mrs. Carew had brought about the whole thing by her malicious cablegram. If she had only waited until that strange telegram from Ralph Chainey had been explained, how different Kathleen's fate would have been!

Ill and penniless, the dead millionaire's beautiful young daughter was as poor and wretched as any beggar in the streets, only for this kind friend.

"Cheer up, my dear, cheer up!" she urged, kindly; but Kathleen could not even bring a smile to her poor, stiff lips. Teddy Darrell came every day to inquire after her, and he was shocked at the change in beautiful Kathleen.

[Pg 124]

"She looks awfully ill—almost as if she were going to die," he confided to his cousin after a week, in a troubled tone.

"She *is* ill; I'm sure of it; for she eats no more than a little bird, and she gets weaker every day. I think I had better have the doctor up, don't you?" she answered, anxiously.

"Yes; I'll send him when I go out," Teddy replied; and then he went back to the young girl, who was lying back in an easy-chair, trying to interest herself in a little book of poems he had brought her with some flowers.

"Do you find anything pretty in it?" he asked, tenderly.

"I—I don't know. I'm afraid I've not tried," she answered, penitently, ashamed that she could not seem happier to these kind friends who were so good.

He took the book from her hands and began to read aloud some pretty bits here and there, in a musical and well-modulated voice.

"Listen to this. I am sure you will agree with me that it is pretty," he said, and read, softly:

"Oh, Love, so sweet at first,

So bitter in the end;
Thou canst be fiercest foe
As well as fairest friend.

"Ay, thou art swift to slay,
Despite thy kiss and clasp,
Thy long, caressing look,
Thy subtle, thrilling grasp!

"Yet, cruel as the grave.
Go, go, and come no more!
But canst thou set my heart
Just where it was before?

"Go, go, and come no more!
Go leave me with thy tears,
The only gift of thine
That shall outlive the years."

Kathleen's face was bent on her hand. Teddy heard a smothered sob, but he did not know with what terrible directness the words had gone to her heart. He believed that she was heart-whole and fancy-free.

"It is too sad for you, is it not?" he exclaimed. "I will read you something brighter:

"They may talk of love in a cottage,
And bowers of trellised vine,
Of nature bewitchingly simple,
And milkmaids half divine.

"But give me a sly flirtation
By the light of a chandelier—
With music to play in the pauses,
And nobody very near."

Kathleen actually gave a soft little laugh, for Teddy had read the lines with such gusto that he plainly betrayed how much the sentiment was to his mind.

He started, flushed, then said, with his unvarying good nature:

"Ah, how cruel! But never mind, so that I've made you feel brighter. Have I, Kathleen?"

"You are too good to me," the girl answered, gratefully, moved by his kindness.

"Too good! Ah, not one-half as good as I would like to be, if only you would let me," cried the young man, ardently. "Ah, Kathleen," he continued, impulsively, "do you remember how I used to love you—how I begged you to be my wife? My darling girl, I'm as fond of you as ever. Won't you try to love me? I would be the proudest boy in Christendom if you would marry me!"

"Don't talk to me of love—please don't!" cried Kathleen, keeping her ardent lover at bay with two entreating white hands. [Pg 125]

"Well, I won't—at least not to-day; and I beg your pardon, dear, if I've intruded on your grief with my selfish love. But I thought—thought it might please you to know that there was one who loved you even better since your reverse of fortune than before," Teddy explained, humbly.

"You are too good to me," she repeated as before, incoherently, touched by his devotion, and contrasting it in her mind with the treachery of that other one so dearly loved, so deeply false.

"Then may I hope, Kathleen?"

"Oh, no, no, no! I shall never love nor marry any one!" she answered, vehemently; but Teddy Darrell did not in the least believe her. He thought that all young girls were sure to love some day, and almost certain to marry. He determined to keep on hoping and trying to win this peerless beauty.

Kathleen guessed what his thoughts were, and it made her very uneasy.

"If I remain here with his cousin he will expect me to marry him," she thought. "I can not do it, for I do not love him. I must go away again;" and that very day she wrote to her mother's relatives in Richmond—the ones to whom she was going when overtaken by such an awful fate at Lincoln Station.

Kathleen was so weak that it tired her now even to write a letter, and the pen dragged wearily before she finished the recital of her sorrows, and pleaded with these unknown kin to let her come to them just for a little while—until she was strong enough to go out into the wide, cruel world and earn her own living with those weak, white hands.

KATHLEEN'S WEARY WAITING.

Oh! you tangled my life in your hair;
 'Twas a silken and golden snare,
 But so gentle the bondage my soul did implore
 The right to continue your slave evermore.

MILES O'REILLY.

Teddy Darrell sent up a doctor to see Kathleen, and he was startled when he found that the young girl was suffering from arsenical poisoning.

"It is quite well that you sent for me, because if this had gone any further, she might have died. But I will go at once to work to remove the effects of the poison from her system," Doctor Spicer said, gravely.

Mrs. Stone was shocked, but she readily comprehended that the woman Fedora had placed the deadly drug in Kathleen's food, intending to compass her death by slow degrees. What mystified her was the woman's motive.

Kathleen, while confiding the rest of her harrowing story to these kind friends, Teddy Darrell and his cousin, had withheld the story of Ralph Chainey's connection with her trouble. She could not bring herself to mention his name. Something in her heart pleaded mutely for the culprit. What if the woman had lied to her? What if she had been lured from Ralph by a cunning ruse? Her brain reeled sometimes with this suspicion, and she felt that she should go mad with the miserable uncertainty of it all. Where was Ralph? Oh, if she could only see him—find out the real truth!

So she did not tell her friends anything about Ralph, and Mrs. Stone had no clew to the mystery of this attempt on her life.

"She does not dream of it, and perhaps it will be as well not to tell her, she has already suffered so much through her unknown foes," thought the kind lady.

Several weeks passed, and Kathleen began to grow stronger and better under the physician's treatment, but in all this time no reply to her letter to her Southern relatives had been received. Neither had the fact of Kathleen's return to Boston ever transpired among her former friends in the city.

Mrs. Carew was the only one who knew that Kathleen really lived, and it was to her interest to keep it a secret. [Pg 127]

Teddy Darrell remained silent on the subject, because the natural selfishness of a lover made him wish to keep away all other lovers until he had had his own chance

"To win or lose it all."

Mrs. Stone's quiet and retired life helped to keep Kathleen's presence in her house unknown. She was a rising authoress, devoted to her children and her pen. She had first commenced to write after her husband's death as a solace to her loneliness and grief. Success had made literature her life work, and she devoted herself to it, going but little into society and receiving few friends.

Kathleen began to look better, but she chafed bitterly in secret over the strange silence of her relatives.

Why would they not write her a few lines, even if they did not want her with them? Did they care nothing, then, for the unhappy child of their poor dead Zaidee? She had written to them so frankly, so appealingly, tried to open her whole heart to them, but there came no response.

And dearly as she loved her good friend, Mrs. Stone, Kathleen chafed at her enforced dependence on her kindness. She saw so plainly through her little matchmaking scheme, and she was so touched by Teddy's devotion, silent and unobtrusive since that day when he had spoken out so impulsively, but still patent to all observers.

She was so lonely, so friendless; and she knew it was nobler in him to cling to her now when she was no longer a belle and heiress, but only a waif tossed back almost from the grave into a world that denied and disowned her. Teddy never seemed to remember that. He was as courteous and deferential as he had ever been to Miss Carew, the courted heiress. Every day he brought her gifts of books and flowers; often he came with a carriage to take her and Mrs. Stone to ride. He did not speak to Kathleen of his love again, but his great black eyes looked unutterable things, and she knew that, despite his usual variableness, he was true, at least, to this love. [Pg 128]

Yes, Teddy's heart was touched for once, and he loved bonny Kathleen even more warmly than in the former time when:

"She had all that love could give, all that makes it sweet to live—
 Fond caresses, jewels, dresses; and with eloquent appeal
 Many a proud and rich adorer knelt—in metaphor—before her."

Teddy could not realize but that Kathleen would return his love some time. He knew he was "a catch," in worldly parlance, and he knew that he was good to look upon. Why, then, should not beautiful Kathleen learn to love him? Other girls had found it easy to do so—girls for whom he had not cared an iota, only to amuse himself.

This was different. Teddy—flirting Teddy—had found heaven at last in a girl's eyes!—deep, dark eyes like shady pools in their thick fringes. Her glance thrilled him; the touch of her soft, cool little hand burned like fire. He could think of nothing but his love for her, and his desire to marry her and lift her again to her old proud position.

"Once my wife, she should queen it over that *fat* Alpine Belmont, who got all her money," he said to his cousin. "She should have one of the finest houses in Boston, horses and carriages, jewels and fine dresses, and I would worship the very ground she trod on!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

"WE HAVE MET—WE HAVE LOVED—WE HAVE PARTED!"

Farewell, farewell! for aye, farewell,
Yet must I end as I began,
I love you, love you, love but you.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

Kathleen gave up all hope of ever hearing from her Southern relatives.

"They do not care for me, and I must not expect anything of them," she sighed, and the thought came to her that now she had been at Mrs. Stone's six weeks, and grown well and strong again, she must seek a situation as a teacher and support herself. [Pg 129]

"I suppose I could teach little children, and I must try to find some place. It is unfair to my kind friend for me to remain here longer," she sighed, and stole softly down to the library for a morning paper to consult the advertisements.

As the girl glided softly across the floor a low murmur of voices reached her through the falling curtains from the adjoining parlor.

The girl gave a violent start, and sunk tremblingly into the nearest chair.

She was pale as death, and her heart beat violently against her side.

What was it? What had startled the young girl so much?

The sound of a voice had pierced her heart like a sword-thrust.

It was Ralph Chainey's voice, so deep, so sweet, so mellow, that, once heard, it could never be forgotten, especially by one who loved him so despairingly as did our poor Kathleen.

He was speaking to Mrs. Stone, and for one wild moment Kathleen believed that he had traced her here, that he had come to inquire for her. Surely then he could not be guilty, or conscience would have kept him away.

She strained her ears to catch every tone of that deep, sweet voice, and then she heard him speaking to Mrs. Stone of her literary work. He had been so struck with the force of one of her books that he wanted her to dramatize it for him, or write him a new play.

All unaware of Kathleen's nearness to him, the young actor had come here to this house, seemingly led by the subtle hand of Fate.

Kathleen glided to the falling curtains, and, drawing one ever so lightly apart, gazed with eager, yearning eyes into the room.

Her hungry eyes feasted on the sight of her false lover as he sat in full view, opposite Mrs. Stone, in a large velvet arm-chair. [Pg 130]

Never, it seemed to bonny Kathleen, had she seen him look so grandly handsome, not even in his spirited impersonation of Prince Karl, in which he had so thrilled her girlish heart.

But Ralph Chainey was pale, and in his splendid, thoughtful brown eyes lay the haunting shadow of a cruel pain. He was tortured by his failure to find lost Kathleen.

But the conventional smile that played over his handsome face as he talked to the gifted woman before him deceived Kathleen. It seemed to her that he was well and happy, that he had forgotten that she ever lived—the girl he had pretended to love so dearly.

"I have the plot of a new story upstairs in my study, and I believe it is just the thing you want, Mr. Chainey," said Mrs. Stone, vivaciously. She rose, and added: "I will go and get it, but if I am some little time away, please go into the library, and amuse yourself with a book. I must confess that I am very careless, and often misplace my manuscripts."

Mrs. Stone vanished through the door, and Ralph Chainey, who was so unhappy that he dreaded nothing so much as his own sad thoughts, immediately turned toward the library.

Kathleen gave a gasp of surprise and terror, and turned to fly.

She was too late. Even as her hand fell from the curtain Ralph Chainey swept it aside and entered. The strangely parted lovers were face to face.

For a moment the young man was only conscious that Mrs. Stone's library was occupied by a beautiful young girl.

But the moan that burst uncontrollably from Kathleen's white lips made him glance more closely at the young girl's face, and then he saw that it was his missing love.

A cry of joyful astonishment broke from him, and he sprang forward, crying, eagerly:

[Pg 131]

"Kathleen, my darling!"

His arms closed about her; he pressed her closely to his throbbing breast.

Kathleen's eyes closed, and her golden head sunk heavily on her lover's breast.

She had almost fainted with the shock of seeing him so suddenly, combined with the exquisite rapture and pain of his fond embrace.

But even while he showered kisses on her fair face and closed eyes, memory and reason began to assert themselves. She struggled faintly in his clasp, and he perceived that she was trying to free herself.

Instantly he opened his arms and allowed her to go free, for Ralph Chainey was one of the proudest of men, and would not force his caresses on any one.

But he said eagerly, although with a slight tone of reproach in his voice:

"Kathleen, my dearest, how came you here, and why was it that I found you gone that night when I returned to the station?"

The color flushed hotly into her pale face, but she stood apart, looking at him with burning eyes, and not uttering one word.

"Kathleen, why do you look at me so strangely?" exclaimed her lover, in reproachful wonder. "Has your heart changed toward me? Did you repent your promise to marry me that night, and run away, or did your enemies find you, as you feared they would? Tell me the truth, my darling."

But still she did not speak. In truth, she could not. There was a hysteric constriction in her throat that held it tight as with iron bands. She gazed with unwilling fascination into the large, pleading, brown eyes of her lover, her young heart throbbing wildly in her breast.

"Kathleen, what have I done that you will not even speak to me?" he asked, piteously, and all her heart thrilled at the words; her will was hardly strong enough to restrain her from springing into his arms. His glance, deep, reproachful, loving, and magnetic, all in one, held her like a charm:

[Pg 132]

"It shot down her soul's deep heaven
Like a meteor trailing fire."

A long, long, troubled sigh breathed over the girl's sweet lips, and with a great effort of her will she drooped her eyelids so that they could not encounter his gaze.

"For I dare not, or—I should *risk* everything for his dear love," she thought, wildly.

She mystified him so by her strange behavior that he forgot his pride, and again advanced toward her side.

"Kathleen, my love, my darling, speak to me, if only one word!" he cried, yearningly, passionately.

And finding her voice at last, she faltered to him, in a despairing tone:

"Did you ever—ever—know—a woman named—Fedora?"

"My God!" cried Ralph Chainey.

He flung up one hand to his brow and reeled backward from her side like one wounded to the death.

"So it is true?" Kathleen cried, in a hollow voice full of bitter anguish.

Ralph Chainey looked at her with sad eyes from which all the brightness had strangely faded.

"Who has told you?" he asked, in a dull voice.

"She told me herself," Kathleen answered, and shot him an indignant glance, pride coming to her rescue. There could no longer be any doubt of his guilt. His looks confessed it.

But he faltered in a dazed voice:

"That is impossible! She is dead!"

"You can not deceive me like that, Ralph Chainey!" cried Kathleen, in tempestuous anger. Her eyes flashed lightning on her recreant lover, and she continued, bitterly: "Your wife came to me that night in the station and told me all. She—she took me away."

"What was she like?" demanded the young man, hoarsely. He seemed dazed by sudden misery.

"She was a beautiful blonde with a haughty manner," answered Kathleen; and he groaned as if there could be no longer any hope.

[Pg 133]

"I have been duped, deceived! I believed that Fedora was dead long ago," he said, angrily. Then his voice grew softer. "Kathleen, will you let me explain it all?" he pleaded, humbly.

But in the heart of the beautiful, passionate young girl there had suddenly leaped into life the devouring flame of jealousy—jealousy and hate for the woman who had thrust her rival into the pit of a black despair. And he had deceived her. It seemed to her she must go mad with her wrongs. In this moment she hated her lover.

She turned on him with a tigerish glare in her splendid eyes.

"I will hear nothing!" she said, bitterly. "You will never have the chance to deceive me again!" and she rushed angrily from the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RALPH CHAINEY'S ANGER.

I can not break the cruel net,
And yet—
My eyes with scornful tears are wet—
Release me, teach me to forget.

CELIA THAXTER.

Kathleen gained her own room, locked the door, and fell prostrate on the floor in a passion of blinding grief and jealous anger. Tears came to her relief, and rained down her cheeks in a tempest of emotion.

"Will he go away, or will he remain, tell Mrs. Stone my whole story, and beg her to plead his cause with me?" she asked herself, and hoped unconsciously that he would.

She did not know the young man's sturdy pride. He had waited for Mrs. Stone, transacted his business with her, and gone away without a word.

"She did not love me, or she would have let me explain it all, as I wished. She did not care to have the barrier between us swept away. So be it. Let her go. She is not worthy such love as I gave her," he thought, with scorn of the heart that could trample on such devotion:

[Pg 134]

"The spirit of eager youth
That named her queen of queens at once, and loved her in very truth;
That threw its pearl of pearls at her feet, and offered her, in a breath,
The costliest gift a man can give from his cradle to his death."

His brow clouded with a heavy frown as he thought of the woman who had turned the heart of his fair young love so cruelly against him.

"Does she really live? Have I been duped by a cunning lie—a trick to extort the price of a costly funeral? I almost believe it. Let me find out if it is true, and bitter shall be that fiend's punishment," he mused with almost savage intensity.

He had reached Boston only that morning, and he had promised Alpine Belmont, who had written to him almost every day since he left, that he would call upon her very soon. Wondering if she knew of Kathleen's presence in the city, he bent his steps toward Commonwealth Avenue.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Stone, full of elation at the compliments paid her by the gifted actor, and eager to share her pleasure with Kathleen, went upstairs and tapped softly on the door.

Kathleen opened it, and her friend started with surprise at seeing her face flushed and her eyes swollen with weeping.

"Do not mind me; it—it—is nothing," was all she would say in reply to Mrs. Stone's sympathetic inquiries; and at last the authoress plunged into her own affairs, telling Kathleen all about Ralph Chainey's visit, and his wish that she should write a play for him.

"He has taken away the plot of my new novel to read, and he will return in a few days to tell me how he likes it. If I succeed in pleasing him, I shall be famous!" she exclaimed.

"I hope that you will succeed," Kathleen said, earnestly.

"Have you ever seen Ralph Chainey act, my dear, and did you like him?"

[Pg 135]

"I have seen him, and I think he is a grand actor," the girl replied, quietly.

"How would you like to go and see him to-night? He plays 'A Parisian Romance.' I am sure he will be splendid in that, as he is in everything. We will take Teddy with us. What do you say, my dear?"

Kathleen hesitated, her heart throbbing wildly with the blended love and hate she now felt for the handsome lover who had so wickedly deceived and betrayed her girlish trust.

Then a sudden temptation came to her to stab his heart as cruelly as he had done hers. Why not go with Teddy, who loved her so dearly, and pretend to return his devotion?

"I should be delighted to go!" she said, unflinching to Mrs. Stone.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ALPINE SOWS THE SEED OF JEALOUSY.

They have told you some false story;
You believe them—all they say.
You are false, but I'll forgive you;
But forget I never may.

Song.

"You startle me! Kathleen really alive? Kathleen here, in the same city with us?" exclaimed Alpine Belmont, in genuine surprise.

Ralph Chainey had been telling her all about his visit to Mrs. Stone and his unexpected *rencontre* with his lost love.

"Some one has been slandering me to her, and she hates me now. She refused to have anything more to do with me," he ended, with a long sigh.

The beauty's lashes fell to hide her blue eyes' exultant gleam.

"Oh, how cruel of Kathleen!" she exclaimed. She sighed, and added, in a low, tender voice: "How could any one be cruel to *you*?"

He hardly noticed the purport of her speech, he was so absorbed in thought.

[Pg 136]

"You will go to her, Miss Belmont? You will bring her home?" he pleaded.

"But perhaps she will not come with me. Is it not a little strange that she did not come here at first, Mr. Chainey?"

"Yes, it is strange. There is something very mysterious about this affair. But go to her, Miss Belmont, and no doubt she will give you her confidence. Be her friend, if she needs one," pleaded the lover, forgetting his wrath against Kathleen in anxiety over her welfare.

"I will go to-morrow," promised Alpine, soothingly.

"And you will bring her home with you?"

"If she will come," answered Alpine. Then she gave a violent start, exclaiming: "Oh, I've just remembered something!"

"Well?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"Mrs. Stone is own cousin to Teddy Darrell, and he was Kathleen's lover last winter. Can there be any connection between her being there with Mrs. Stone—whom I'm certain she used not to know—and Teddy Darrell?"

The shaft went home. She saw him pale and tremble with jealous dread.

"I know Teddy Darrell," he said, trying to speak carelessly. "Did—did she ever care for *him*?"

"Yes, I believe so. There was a flirtation anyway, and we thought once it would be a match; but suddenly it all came to nothing. I don't know who was to blame, but I'm afraid it was Teddy. He's known to be fickle-minded and a wretched flirt."

How sweetly and artlessly she spoke; but every word was a sword-thrust in the hearer's heart. Wan and haggard with misery, he rose and began to pace the floor restlessly.

Alpine watched him under her down-drooped lashes, her breast heaving with its love and pain. Yet she knew that she was no more to him than a hundred other girls whose names he barely knew, save and except that she was Kathleen's step-sister. She "was not the rose, but she had lived near it."

[Pg 137]

It was cruelly hard, when she loved him so dearly. The temptation seized her to fall at his feet, to cry out to him that she could not live without him, that she was going mad for his dear love.

She recoiled with horror from the thought. No, no; he would despise her. Let her show him tenderness and sympathy, but not love. By and by he might turn to her when he became convinced that Kathleen was lost to him forever.

"And she is, she shall be!" vowed the girl; and after watching Ralph in silence for some moments, while he strode up and down, seemingly oblivious of her presence, she moved to his side, and slipping her hand timidly within his arm, murmured, softly:

"Do not worry over it, please, dear friend. Even if Kathleen is lost to you, there are hundreds of other girls as well worth the winning."

He did not answer; he was dumb with despair; but he suffered Alpine to cling to his arm and walk up and down by his side, murmuring low words of sympathy all the while.

"I shall scold Kathleen for her cruelty to you; you did not deserve it, for you were true to her," she said, and sighed. "Ah, how sad it is for one's love to prove false—false and fickle!"

He turned on her almost fiercely.

"You believe that she loves this Darrell?" he exclaimed.

"I believe she does," answered Alpine, with pretended reluctance, exulting in the pain she saw on his face.

It gave her a savage joy to wound him in his love for Kathleen. She longed to make him hate the hapless girl as bitterly as she herself hated her.

"I must go," he said, abruptly; then as she clung to his hand: "Do not forget your promise to go to

her to-morrow. And—you will send me a note? I play here all this week."

"Yes, you shall hear from me. I shall see you again, too, for I'm coming every night to see you act," she answered, sweetly. [Pg 138]

"Thank you," he replied, dropped her hand, and went away, never remembering how lovingly the blue eyes had looked into his, nor how tenderly she had spoken. It was Kathleen of whom he was thinking—his sweet, estranged love.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALPINE'S FALSEHOOD.

So dearly loved, so deeply false,
Ah, why should I regret thee?
'Twas fatal to my peace of mind
The hour when first I met thee!

MRS. A. McV. MILLER.

When the curtain rose that night on Ralph Chainey in the beautiful play, "A Parisian Romance," there were seated in opposite boxes the beautiful rivals for the handsome actor's love—Alpine Belmont in one box with her haughty mother, and in the other Kathleen Carew, chaperoned by Mrs. Stone and with Teddy Darrell hanging adoringly over her chair.

Kathleen was all in white—a simple form of mourning—and white flowers, set off by their own green leaves, were her only adorning.

And Teddy Darrell? Well, the young swell "was gotten up regardless," as one of his friends remarked—"a golden youth" like himself. His evening dress was faultless, and his button-hole bouquet matched Kathleen's white flowers. His diamonds were magnificent, and his whole air was so hopeful and exuberant that when Ralph Chainey from the stage first caught sight of him his heart sunk with despair. He felt that "flirting Teddy" was a rival to be dreaded.

"Why need she have come to torture me with the sight of all I have lost?" he thought, despairingly; but he went on splendidly with his part in the play. A stubborn pride came to his aid. She should not see how he was suffering, this lovely, scornful girl leaning back in her chair to look up into the handsome face so close to her own as attentive Teddy wielded the white ostrich feather fan. She scarcely seemed to see what went on upon the stage; she did not look across into the box where her step-mother and Alpine were staring in angry surprise. She looked only at Teddy Darrell; she smiled only at him. It was such a pronounced flirtation that the crowded house observed it and smiled indulgently at the handsome pair, declaring that it would certainly be a match. [Pg 139]

Whispers, too, were circulating among the people who had known Kathleen Carew in her lifetime. Who was this girl with the face and smile of the dead heiress?—that luring face so subtly beautiful that no one had dreamed the world could hold a copy.

Curiosity moved a gentleman, when the curtain fell, to go and ask Mrs. Carew about it.

"I am as much amazed as you are," she replied.

"Then you can not tell me who she is," he said, regretfully.

"She is masquerading under the name of my dead step-daughter, and pretends to be resurrected from a trance, or something like that. We first heard about it yesterday," was Mrs. Carew's curt reply.

"Then you have not seen her until to-night?"

"No," nervously.

"Shall you acknowledge her, Mrs. Carew?"

"No. She is an impostor, and we will have nothing to do with the minx."

"Speak for yourself, mamma," said Alpine, pertly. "I'm not sure she's an impostor, for it is Kathleen's face and her very gestures. I am going over to Mrs. Stone's box and find out the truth for myself, if Mr. Layne will take me."

She rose, drawing the blue wrap about her white shoulders. Mrs. Carew stared aghast.

"You will not, you *must* not!" she exclaimed, angrily.

Alpine bent down and whispered rapidly in her ear:

"What does it matter? I have her money safe; she could not get it if she lived a thousand years, and I have my own plans. You must not interfere with them." [Pg 140]

When Alpine took that tone, her mother knew that protest was useless.

"Do as you please," she muttered, angrily, and tossed her head as Alpine went out leaning on Mr. Layne's arm.

"What is the girl up to, I wonder?" she mused, uneasily. "She always had a sneaking fondness for

Kathleen, and would be just silly enough to bring her home to live with us. She shall not do it, no matter what the world says. I always hated the girl for the look she has of her dead mother."

Mrs. Carew was jealous of the very memory of poor Zaidee, and could not bear the sight of her beautiful daughter. She writhed with anger when she saw Alpine embrace Kathleen.

"Kathleen, is it really you? Oh, you darling, let me kiss you!" she cried, effusively, and put her arms impulsively about the young girl.

Kathleen recoiled from her at first. She thought that Alpine knew all about her mother's cruelty; but as Alpine held her in that warm embrace, she exclaimed:

"Kathleen, why did you not come home to us?"

Kathleen released herself from Alpine, answering, bitterly:

"I came, but your mother denied me, and put me out into the street, unconscious, to perish in the snow."

"Impossible!" cried Alpine. But there came to her all in a rush the memory of that night when her mother had told her that a woman had come to see Ivan, and she had driven her away.

"She deceived me; it was Kathleen," she thought, and exclaimed, eagerly:

"My dearest girl, she did not tell me anything about it, but of course she believed you were an impostor. You believe me? you will let me be your friend, Kathleen?" anxiously.

"Come and see me at Mrs. Stone's to-morrow, Alpine," her step-sister answered; and then turned to the gentleman. [Pg 141]

"How do you do, Mr. Layne? Will you, too, take me for an impostor?" she inquired, holding out her little hand to him.

"No, indeed, Miss Carew, for I am sure there can not be a copy of your beautiful face in all the world," he replied, gallantly. Being an elderly widower, he felt privileged to pay broad compliments.

Kathleen blushed and smiled, and the curtain rising at that moment showed Ralph Chainey that Alpine had seized the first opportunity to go and see Kathleen.

He was intensely pleased with Alpine's loyalty.

"She is a better girl than I used to think," he decided, and made up his mind to go to her box the first opportunity to thank her for her goodness.

He did not dream that Alpine was whispering at that moment little poisoned arrows into Kathleen's ear about himself, nor of the cruel pain that tore Kathleen's heart as she heard of her lover's liking for Alpine.

"When he came yesterday, he told me of your being at Mrs. Stone's. What a shock it was to know you were really living! But I must go back to mamma now, and to-morrow I'll come and see you, and hear all about your little romance," tearing herself away.

Just as she expected, Ralph hurried to her box as soon as the curtain fell.

"What did she say?" he whispered, eagerly; and Kathleen, who was watching them, felt her heart thrill with renewed bitterness as she saw the curly brown head bent low over Alpine's straw-gold one.

"He is doing it to pique me," she thought; but she could not turn her burning dark eyes away from the sight.

Alpine looked up smilingly into the pale, anxious face.

"She told me to come to-morrow and see her and hear her story; there was not time to-night," she replied.

He was disappointed; she read it in his speaking countenance, and added:

"She gave me one bit of news, but I am not sure that I ought to tell you."

[Pg 142]

"Please do so," he urged.

"It will pain you, I fear," sighed Alpine.

"I am strong enough to bear anything except—suspense," setting his teeth firmly.

Mrs. Carew was looking at them curiously:

"Mamma, will you please excuse us for whispering? I have something to tell Mr. Chainey—a secret."

"You are excusable," the lady replied, sourly, turning away her head.

Alpine whispered to Ralph:

"Kathleen is engaged to be married to Teddy Darrell, and is the happiest girl I ever saw!"

He was silent a moment, then murmured, bitterly:

"She has no heart! How could she turn so quickly from one love to another?"

"She is fickle as the wind," Alpine answered, with a contemptuous shrug.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CRUEL STAB.

My ship sails forth with sable sails
Over Life's stormy sea;
Thou knowest how heavy is my woe,
And still thou woundest me.

H. HEINE.

Alpine had come and gone. Under a mask of sweetness and love, she had tortured Kathleen's heart.

"My dear girl, how fortunate you are to have caught Teddy Darrell!" she exclaimed, after Kathleen had told her the story of her adventures, save and excepting about Fedora's claim that she was Ralph Chainey's wife. That one dread secret the girl kept locked close in her heart.

"Fortunate!" Kathleen echoed, dully.

"Yes," Alpine answered. "He is rich, and unless you are going to marry him, it does not look well for you to remain with Mrs. Stone."

"But, Alpine, I have no other place to go. Mrs. Stone is my only friend."

"She is your friend because her cousin wants to marry you, and if you refuse Teddy, she will be very angry." [Pg 143]

"Do you think so, Alpine?" the young girl exclaimed, startled at the idea.

"I am sure of it. My advice to you is to marry Teddy."

"But I do not love him, Alpine. I—I loved Ralph Chainey—once—so dearly that I feel that I can never love another."

"Why have you turned against Ralph?" asked her step-sister, curiously.

"I can not tell you," faltered Kathleen.

"Do you love him still?"

"No," Kathleen answered, spiritedly; but Alpine did not believe one word.

"Kathleen, how would you like to come back home?" she asked.

"Your mother would not permit it," sighed the young girl.

"It is because she does not believe you are really Kathleen. She thinks you an impostor. I have been talking to her, trying to get her consent to bring you home."

Kathleen looked curiously at her step-sister, puzzled by her odd air of hesitancy.

"Well, go on. What is it?" she asked, with that little imperious manner inseparable from herself.

"She would not agree except on one condition."

Kathleen looked at her in silent wonder, and, with pretended sorrow, Alpine said:

"The condition was that you come as a housemaid—as a paid servant."

She saw, with silent, secret malice, the angry crimson mount to Kathleen's pearly cheek, and remained silent a few moments to enjoy the sensation of proud Kathleen humiliated.

Kathleen was indeed furious with resentment, and for a moment she could not speak for the great lump in her throat.

Then she fought down her emotion with an iron will and looked straight at her tormentor, saying, coolly: [Pg 144]

"I suppose it is so hard for your mother to forget the position she once occupied in my father's house that she would be glad to sink his daughter to the same level."

Alpine crimsoned. She always hated to remember that her mother had been Zaidee Carew's governess, and that it was hinted that her arts had driven the artless child-wife to despair and death.

But it was not her policy to seem offended with Kathleen. To propitiate Ralph Chainey, she must still seem to be the friend of the girl he loved so dearly.

So she looked at her lovely rival with a sad, sweet smile, and said:

"Of course, I knew that you would not come—that way—and I told mamma so. But she made me promise to tell you what she said. You must not be angry with me, dear, for I have a better plan for you."

The young girl looked at her in angry silence, asking herself: "What new insult?"

"You know, of course, that your father, in a fit of anger against you, left me all his money in a will?" asked Alpine.

Kathleen nodded coldly.

"I am going to make you an allowance to live on, Kathleen. I told mamma I meant to do so, and she said your father did not intend for you to have a penny of that money. Of course, I knew that.

But it makes no difference to me, for I can not bear to have you living on Mrs. Stone's charity. It is better for you to depend on me for your support than on a stranger. Don't you think so yourself?"

Kathleen rose up, white-faced, indignant, goaded to fury.

"No, I do not think so," she said, angrily. "I would rather starve in the streets than support life on an allowance from you, made out of the money that should be mine, but which you cheated me out of by some cunning trick known only to yourself and your mother. I believe you are deceitful, that you are only pretending a kind feeling for me to serve some purpose of your own. Go, go, and leave me to myself and my misery!"

[Pg 145]

There was something in the looks and words of that frail, beautiful young girl that compelled obedience from Alpine. She rose instantly.

"Well, good-bye, since you will not let me be your friend," she said, and glided from the room.

Kathleen walked up and down the floor in a passion of insulted pride, her cheeks burning, her little fists clinched in impotent wrath, her heart on fire with the longing to avenge herself on those two insolent women.

It was a dangerous time to her for Teddy Darrell to enter—handsome, loving Teddy who adored her, and who was wild with anger over the insult she had received; for Kathleen could not keep back her grievance; she told Teddy frankly of Mrs. Carew's message and of Alpine's offer.

"Great Heaven! how mean some women can be! It was done purposely to humiliate you!" he exclaimed, angrily.

He looked at beautiful Kathleen, with the fire of her dark eyes dim with tears, and her cheeks burning with resentment, feeling himself hardly able to refrain from taking her in his arms and kissing away the tempestuous tears.

Suddenly his repressed passion burst forth:

"Kathleen, my darling, do marry me! Can't you learn to love me just a little? I would be so fond of you, so devoted, that you could not help but learn to love me. And I am rich, you know. I would help you queen it over those insolent women."

Her heart leaped at his words; pride carried the day.

"I would do it—if—if—I—thought I *could* learn to love you; and that ought to be easy, because you have been so good to me, and I am so grateful," she murmured.

It did seem easy at the moment. Teddy was true, Teddy loved her, while Ralph Chainey was false and cruel. Why should she wear the willow for *him*? Why lie down in the dust, while her heartless step-mother and step-sister trampled on her rights and her feelings? So in a fury of resentment, Kathleen gave Teddy her promise to marry him and to learn to love him.

[Pg 146]

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RALPH CHAINEY IS DRIVEN TO DESPERATION, AND TURNS ON HIS FOE.

Even now, I tell you, I wonder
Whether this woman called Estelle
Is flesh and blood, or a beautiful lie
Sent up from the depths of hell.

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

Ralph Chainey went from Alpine's presence to his home in Sumner, one of the beautiful suburbs of Boston, and to the presence of his gentle widowed mother, who presided over a lovely home that was shared with her by an older son and his small family.

"Ralph, dear, you look pale. You are ill!" she exclaimed, anxiously.

"My head aches severely. I will go to my room and lie down for an hour to get my nerves steady for to-night," he said; and kissing her affectionately he left her to seek seclusion for his aching heart and brain.

He leaned his aching head on his hand, and a rush of bitter memories swept over him.

He saw himself five years ago a boy of twenty-two, brilliant, ardent, and impetuous, just beginning his dramatic career. At the very outset he had fallen into the toils of a beautiful actress years older than himself. By a clever playing of her cards, she had entrapped him into a marriage; but scarcely had the honey-moon waned ere he learned to his horror the true character of his wife. She was false, light, and wicked, and no entreaties could win her from her wicked ways.

A separation ensued, and Ralph, ashamed to court publicity by applying for a divorce, agreed to support the false woman if she would promise not to annoy him by venturing into his presence. She accepted these terms, but instead of retiring to seclusion, as he desired her, Fedora, as she called herself, joined a ballet troupe, and scandalized her unfortunate young husband by her wild career. Still the marriage was wholly unknown to the world, and in hopes of maintaining this

[Pg 147]

silence, the young actor suffered on patiently, his pride wounded, his fancy dead, his soul thrilled with disgust, but one solace left to him, and that the knowledge that his false wife had kept faith with him in preserving his secret—kept faith because he had threatened her with exposure and divorce upon its betrayal.

At last she had broken faith, and, bitterest of all, had betrayed his miserable folly to the one woman that he wished never to know it—to beautiful, proud Kathleen, the idol of his very soul, for whom he had felt all the passion of the poet's plaint:

"I love you. That is all. Life holds no more.
Here in your arms I have no other world.
Where is the mad ambition known of yore?
All fled away to some far-distant shore,
And lost forever. Yes, I love you, sweet—
You only—you alone. My heart, my life
I lay—a meager offering—at your feet."

It had fallen on him like a crushing blow, the knowledge that Fedora lived, when he had been duped, deceived into believing that she was dead and he was free.

A telegraphic message from Richmond, where she had been playing, had summoned him to her death-bed; but when he reached the city her friends told him she was dead and buried.

They showed him a new grave in the beautiful shades of romantic Hollywood, and presented him with a long bill for her funeral expenses. He paid it without a murmur, and could not help feeling glad that he was rid of his terrible incubus. He did not dream that it was only a clever plot of the wicked woman to extort money, and that she enjoyed very much the liberal sum he had handed over to liquidate the expenses of her interment.

He realized it all now—saw how cruelly Fate, in the shape of the heartless Fedora, had used him, and, with a bitter groan, stared his cruel destiny in the face.

Fedora—his false wife—lived! She had parted him forever from his beautiful, dark-eyed love.

"We have parted—I have loved thee;
But for me all hope is o'er!
We have parted, and forever;
I must dream of thee no more!"

He believed that Kathleen was going to marry Teddy Darrell, as Alpine hinted, but he was not so sure that it was for love. He remembered, with a thrill of blended rapture and despair, how he had caught Kathleen to his heart this morning, and how she had lain passive in his arms at first. [Pg 148]

"She did not repulse me at first," he thought. "Her heart throbbed wildly against mine, and she lay yielding and passive in the utter *abandon* of a pure woman who truly loves. Then she *remembered* all at once, and withdrew herself from me in stinging scorn."

He groaned bitterly at the memory of her cruel words.

"My poor, proud darling! if she would but have listened to me, she might have pitied and forgiven me," he thought, with the fluctuating hopes of a lover's heart. He loved Kathleen so dearly that he could not remain angry with her, although he tried to do so. In his heart he made excuses for her. She was so young, so inexperienced, and there was no telling what lies Fedora had told the young girl.

"I will punish that fiend, at least," he cried, starting to his feet. "No more squeamishness shall deter me from seeking a divorce, and I shall do so at once. Who knows but that Kathleen may pity me, may relent, when she learns all that I have suffered?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"I HAVE COME FOR MY DIAMONDS," KATHLEEN SAID TO THE JEWELER.

We love but once. A score of times, perchance,
We may be moved in fancy's fleeting fashion—
May treasure up a word, a tone, or glance—
But only once we feel the soul's great passion.
E. W. WILCOX.

Mrs. Stone was charmed when she heard that Kathleen was to marry Teddy.

"You will be as happy as the day is long!" she exclaimed, fondly kissing the beautiful girl.

"Do you think so?" asked Kathleen, anxiously.

Proud as she was, she began to feel frightened at what she had done.

She found her wayward heart going out in a passion of regret after her lost lover, instead of leaning fondly on her accepted one. [Pg 149]

She was alarmed lest it should always be so, and so she timidly asked the question of Mrs. Stone: "Do you think so?"

Mrs. Stone did not know anything of that lost lover—did not guess at the pain in the young girl's heart.

She honestly believed that, given a fair opportunity, her cousin might win this girl's pure young heart.

So she encouraged Kathleen to look forward with pleasure to her marriage.

"And I should let it be soon," she said. "Teddy wishes it very, very much, and has begged me to plead his cause."

"Oh, not soon!" cried the young girl, in alarm.

"Why not, my dear? As well one time as another, if you mean to marry him at all."

"I—I want to wait until Helen Fox comes home. She always promised to be my bride-maid."

"You can write to Helen. It will take a few weeks to get your *trousseau* ready, and by then she can come home."

The big, dark eyes were dilated with terror.

"I should not like to *hurry* Helen home. I want—want—her—to enjoy her trip as long as she likes," faltered Kathleen, piteously.

"You dear, timid child! you are determined to make Teddy wait for his happiness," laughed her friend. "Well, never mind: let it be as long as you choose. Only you will not mind if I begin to get your *trousseau* ready? You know there are always so many delays."

A burning blush stole over Kathleen's pure cheek.

"Dear Mrs. Stone, Teddy will have to take me as I am. I have no money for a *trousseau*," she sighed.

"Let that be my care. Surely I may make a wedding gift to my cousin's bride!"

"Let it be as simple as possible, then, dear Mrs. Stone," answered proud Kathleen.

But that night she thought of the necklace she had left with Golden & Glitter. It was worth five thousand dollars, and they had advanced her one thousand on it. Perhaps they would let her have more—enough to buy her simple wedding garments, and save her the humiliation of accepting them from Mrs. Stone. [Pg 150]

She was not afraid of startling them. The story of her return had leaked out; the Boston papers had given it publicity. So she went in Mrs. Stone's carriage the next morning to the great jewelers, and was received by them with the greatest affability. They overwhelmed her with congratulations on her resurrection. But when she asked about her diamond necklace they told her an amazing story. Ivan Belmont had come to them soon after her supposed death, and redeemed the necklace by the payment of a thousand dollars, acting, he claimed, under the instructions of his mother.

Kathleen gazed at him in astonishment.

"But I never told any human being about selling the diamonds! How could they know?" she exclaimed.

The jewelers were as much puzzled as she was. They had told no one, either, but were intending to acquaint Mrs. Carew with the truth, when Ivan Belmont had forestalled them by presenting himself and redeeming the necklace.

They advised the young girl to go to Mrs. Carew and demand the return of the jewels. They did not doubt that she would be glad to return them to the hapless girl they had stripped of everything.

Kathleen's eyes were flashing with anger. She passionately gave the order to drive to Commonwealth Avenue, determined to demand her rights.

When Jones opened the door to the imperious young beauty his face lighted with instant recognition and he rejoiced to see that she had survived the horrors of that dreadful night when Mrs. Carew had cast her forth to die.

But he remembered the orders of his mistress, and firmly barred her entrance.

"Mrs. Carew's orders was not to admit you, miss, if you came again," he said, resolutely. [Pg 151]

"How dare she!" exclaimed Kathleen, her eyes flashing.

"But, really, miss, you know 'tain't right for you to follow Mr. Belmont right into his mother's house," remonstrated Jones, uneasily; and as she stared at him, he added, coaxingly: "You better go wait down there at the corner while I go tell Mr. Belmont that you want him."

"Why, what do you mean?" inquired Kathleen, sharply.

"Why, ain't you Ivan Belmont's—sweetheart, miss?"

"How dare you?" cried the girl.

The lightnings of her eyes seemed almost to scorch him, and he faltered:

"You—you asked for him that night when you came before; and Mrs. Carew—begging your pardon, miss—said you were *bad*, and told me to take you and throw you in the street."

"So it was you that did it?" the girl cried, sharply.

"No, miss. I could not have treated a dog like that," whispered Jones, glancing over his shoulder, lest he be overheard. Then he told her how much he had pitied her, and how he had placed her in the carriage, hoping some one would care for her.

"God bless you for your pity!" cried the girl, melted almost to tears; and, in her turn, she told Jones who she really was, and that when she had asked him for his master that night, she had meant her father, not knowing that he was dead.

"Mrs. Carew told you a willful falsehood," she said, angrily; then paused, remembering that it was not dignified to discuss her step-mother with a servant, no matter how great the provocation.

"And you must really let me come in, because I have important business with your mistress. If she discharges you for permitting me to enter, I will get my friends to procure you another situation," she added, kindly.

The man stood aside in respectful assent.

"Thank you kindly, Miss Carew. You will find my mistress with her son and daughter in the library," he said. [Pg 152]

"So *he* is here. So much the better," thought Kathleen.

She swept, with an aching heart, down the superb hall of her old home, Jones gazing after her in respectful admiration.

"My! what a high-stepping beauty! A regular goddess!" he ejaculated; and breathed a silent prayer that the disinherited daughter might yet oust these heartless people out of her old home and come into her own.

Kathleen, pale with passion, flung back the library curtains with a shaking hand, and stood revealed to the inmates.

Ivan Belmont had read with horror in a distant city the marvelous story of his step-sister's resurrection and return. Trembling with fear, he recalled the night when he had encountered her upon the steps and fled away from her, believing she was a ghost.

He had come home to find out the truth, and was even now listening to the story, as told by his mother and sister, when the curtains parted, flung back by an angry hand, and Kathleen, beautiful and imperious in her righteous wrath, stood revealed to their astonished eyes.

A gasp of astonishment, and Mrs. Carew rose, tall, stately, insolent.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" she demanded. "I told Jones that he was not to admit the likes of you to this house!"

Kathleen's lightning glance almost transfixed her, and she flushed with sudden uneasiness.

"I came here for my diamonds. Give them to me, and I will go," the young girl answered, defiantly, and she saw Ivan Belmont whiten to a deadly pallor.

"Diamonds?" echoed Alpine, in surprise.

"I have just come from Golden & Glitter's," said Kathleen. "I went there for my diamond necklace that I left there as security for a thousand dollars when I went away. They told me that Ivan Belmont had redeemed the necklace for his mother." [Pg 153]

CHAPTER XXXIX.

KATHLEEN BEFORE HER FATHER'S PORTRAIT.

Oh, that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me.

COWPER.

Kathleen's declaration was almost equal to the bursting of a bomb-shell in the handsome library of the Carew mansion.

Alpine sprung excitedly to her feet with a scream of surprise, and fixed her dilated blue eyes almost wildly upon Kathleen's pale, angry face.

Her mother, who was so crafty and wicked that one could scarcely charge her with any meanness of which she was not guilty, had the novel sensation of being falsely accused for once, and recoiled with a nasty and indignant disclaimer from her insolent and threatening position toward the intruder.

"Your accusation is entirely false!" she cried, hoarsely.

But it was upon her dissipated son that Kathleen's words fell with the most crushing power.

This slender, handsome Ivan Belmont, with his straw-gold curls and seraphic blue eyes, was a cold and brutal villain who utterly belied his gentle looks. He had all his mother's evil traits intensified, and would not stop at murder if there was anything to be gained by it, provided he was not to be found out. He was a coward, and afraid of punishment.

So when Kathleen made her bold charge against him, and he realized that possible detection and punishment hung over his head, his coward heart gave a thump as if it would burst the confines of his narrow chest, his brain reeled, his fair face whitened to an ashy hue, his limbs trembled beneath him as he clutched the back of a chair, and with an inarticulate groan of feeble denial, he sunk in a senseless heap upon the floor.

[Pg 154]

"Ivan is dead! You have killed him with your false words!" shrieked Alpine, running to her brother.

Mrs. Carew followed, and they knelt down over Ivan, exclaiming and lamenting, although much of it was for effect, for they did not waste much affection on their black sheep.

Kathleen, readily comprehending that Ivan had fainted from terror, curled a scornful lip, and turning her back on them, walked across the room to where a life-size portrait of her dead father filled a panel near his writing-desk.

Vincent Carew had been a singularly handsome and imposing gentleman, and the fine artist had done full justice to his noble subject. The dark eyes seemed to hold the very fire of life and the smiling lips almost about to breathe a blessing on his wronged, unhappy orphan child.

As Kathleen paused in front of the magnificent portrait of her lost father, the hard, defiant look on her face faded as if by magic, and the burning light of her large Oriental dark eyes was softened by a rush of tears. Almost unconsciously she sunk upon her knees and lifted her clasped white hands appealingly.

"Oh, father, dear father, if only you could speak to me, if only you could tell me why you turned against your unhappy child?" she sighed, pathetically.

It was a sorrowful picture—pathetic enough to move anything but the heart of a fiend—that unhappy girl kneeling there in tears and love before the portrait of the father who had disinherited her and left her to want and misery.

But no one noticed her. Mrs. Carew and her daughter were busy over Ivan, whose swoon was a deep one. Kathleen's raining tears fell unnoticed and unpitied, save by the great All-seeing Eye.

Kathleen's heart was thrilling with all the pathos expressed in Cowper's beautiful lines:

"Oh, that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last!"

[Pg 155]

Alas! how cruel it was to think that this dear, loving father had turned against her at the last! What was the mystery of it? Who was to blame?

"Not you, papa darling!" moaned the girl, loyal to her love for him despite everything. "Some one deceived you, lied to you, made you believe me unworthy of your love. I will not lay it up against you. I forgive you, dear, because you were always so good and loving!" her voice broke in a hard sob, ending with, "But, oh, papa, papa, I wish you could come back from the grave as I did, to comfort your poor girl! Dear Lord, I pray Thee send papa back to me!"

Had Heaven answered her earnest prayer?

She turned wildly toward the door, for a strange voice had sounded from it—strange, yet not strange, for it had a tone of her father's voice in it, although louder and less refined than Vincent Carew's polished tones.

A stranger had entered the library—a tall old man in shabby genteel clothes that had seen much service, and wearing a long gray beard that matched his bushy gray curls. A pair of smoky glasses hid a pair of dark eyes that twinkled with curiosity as he advanced, exclaiming:

"Hey-day, good friends! what's the matter with the pretty young man? Sick?"

Ivan Belmont had at that moment opened his light-blue eyes on the faces of his mother and sister, and they turned languidly on the new-comer, while Mrs. Carew exclaimed, almost ferociously, her eyes gleaming like blue steel:

"Who are you, and what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"My name is Ben Carew, at your service, Sister Carew. Howdy—howdy do, all of you? These your children? Is your son sick much?" replied the stranger, in a loud, familiar tone.

"Impertinent!" muttered the lady, angrily. She rose to her feet. "See here, old man, you have made a mistake coming here, certainly. I don't know you, and have no business with you, so clear out at once!"

[Pg 156]

The old man stood his ground, undismayed by the virago.

"Not so fast, ma'am, not so fast," he said, soothingly, with a wave of his hand. "Now, ain't you Vincent Carew's widow?"

"Yes," she snapped.

"And I'm Vincent Carew's brother Ben."

Every eye in the room turned on him in amazement, and Mrs. Carew exclaimed:

"My husband did not have a brother at all!"

"No brother that he owned, maybe, but an older brother, for all that, living down on the farm, poor and humble, so maybe his proud, ambitious brother didn't own up to his folks about Ben; but all the same he was good to him, and many's the year Vince sent money down to the old farm to help out when the crops failed and prices fell on live stock—many's the day, God rest his soul!"

Brother Ben drew his hand across his eyes and the sound of suppressed sobs filled the room.

"My husband is dead, if he was any relation to you; so we don't want you here," Mrs. Carew said to him, brutally.

He started back as if she had struck him, and said, sadly:

"Yes, I heard that he was dead, and I wished it had been me instead. I ain't much 'count in the world, no-how; but the neighbors said: 'Ben, you ought to go up to Boston and get your share of your brother's property.' Vince left me something, I know. He always said he would without my ever asking."

"He left you nothing. I don't believe in you, anyway. You're an impostor, I'm sure. So get out of this at once!" insisted Mrs. Carew. But he did not stir.

"I want to stay and visit you, sister-in-law, and see the city sights," he pleaded.

"Go; I won't have you here! You are a disgrace to the house!" she said, angrily, but still inwardly appalled, for, in spite of his rough looks and country manners, he was wonderfully like the dead brother he claimed. In voice, features, and gesture he recalled the dead. [Pg 157]

He stood staring in pained amazement at the inhospitable woman, when suddenly a little hand stole into his, and a tearful voice murmured:

"Uncle Ben, I believe in you and I love you, for you are so like my dear, dead papa that it makes my heart glad just to see and hear you."

He looked down into the face of a lovely, dark-eyed girl, whose lips were trembling with a hushed sob, and exclaimed:

"Why, this is Vince's girl. I know by the favor! God bless you, honey! give your old uncle a hug;" and he put his honest arms around her, and pressed the curly golden head against his breast.

"Did you ever see such impudence, mamma? Kathleen is utterly shameless!" cried Alpine, in a high key of disdain.

"You'll let me stay, won't you, sissy, dear? I'm too old to travel straight back to the country," said Uncle Ben, coaxingly, while he turned a glance of meek pleasure and triumph on the others.

"Alas! dear uncle, this is not my home. I can not invite you to remain, much as I wish to do so," sighed the young girl.

CHAPTER XL.

A NEW-FOUND RELATIVE.

As I came through the Valley of Despair,
As I came through the valley, on my sight,
More awful than the darkness of the night,
Shone glimpses of a past that had been fair.

E. W. WILCOX.

Uncle Ben Carew stared in surprise at his niece when she made her strange declaration; but she continued, sadly:

"Uncle Ben, you must not blame papa for his seeming cruelty to you and me when I tell you all. But—but dear papa, when he died, disinherited me, and left his wealth to these two heartless women here." [Pg 158]

"Good land! my child, what had you done to turn Vince against you?"

"Nothing, dear uncle! but I believe that cunning arts were employed by some other people to turn my father's heart against his child," answered Kathleen, spiritedly.

"Mamma, will you permit Kathleen to belittle us in our very presence, and in our own house?" exclaimed Alpine, angrily.

Kathleen looked at her step-sister, who stood at the back of the chair into which she had assisted the pale and trembling Ivan.

"I have no desire to remain in your house a moment longer than is necessary," she said, proudly.

"I am going at once, and I will take my uncle with me as a guest in my friend's house. But before I go, Mrs. Carew, please give me my diamond necklace."

"There is some mistake. I know nothing about your diamonds. I did not take them from the jewellers," answered Mrs. Carew, angrily; but there was such a ring of truth in her voice that Kathleen believed her for once.

She turned to Alpine.

"Perhaps *you* have the diamonds?" she said, interrogatively.

"I have *not*. I thought you took them with you when you went away, and that they were stolen from you when you were robbed that night," answered Alpine, earnestly.

"I believe you," said Kathleen, and her burning glance fell on Ivan Belmont as he cowered before her in his seat.

"It is you," she said, shaking a disdainful finger in his face; "it is you to whom I must look for my jewels! Where are they? What have you done with them?"

He tried hard to stammer a weak denial of all knowledge of them, but even his own mother and sister knew that he was lying. Kathleen's great flashing eyes surveyed him in bitter scorn.

"Do not deny it—I can see that you are speaking falsely," she said. "You can not deny it in the face of the jewelers' assertion. Perhaps you have sold them to get money to go on with your dissipated habits. Listen: I will give you one week in which to return the diamonds, or four thousand dollars in lieu of them." She paused, and he muttered another disclaimer, but Kathleen persisted: "I can not afford to lose the small fortune that is all that remains to me of my father's gifts for a scruple of pity to those who have been pitiless to me. So unless you return the jewels or their value in a week's time, I shall hand you over to the law."

[Pg 159]

With a heightened color she took the old man's arm.

"Come, Uncle Ben, let us go," she said, and swept from the room with the air of a dethroned princess, Uncle Ben following humbly in her wake.

Jones let her out with an air of distinct approval, having hovered near the library door and heard all that transpired within.

Kathleen, going down the steps with her shabby, newly found relative, came face to face with a man going up—Ralph Chainey. A start on either side, a cold, stiff bow, then Kathleen stepped into the carriage and sunk half-fainting against the cushions.

"Who was that, my dear?" inquired her uncle, observing her agitation.

Kathleen stifled a sob, and answered:

"It was Ralph Chainey, the great actor."

"Um-hum! I have heard of him. But what made you feel so bad at seeing him, honey?"

"Oh! uncle, I used to love him, and expected to marry him; but, alas! that is all over now," sighed the young girl; and there came into her mind some of the words of Laura Jean Libbey's sweet, sad song:

"Lovers once, but strangers now,
Though pledged by many a tender vow;
Still I'd give the world to be
All that I was once to thee."

She leaned her bright head lovingly against the old man's kindly shoulder and sobbed out all the pain in her heart.

[Pg 160]

"Tell me all about it, dearie," said the old farmer, gently.

But Kathleen's heart was too full. The sight of her handsome, perjured lover, fascinating Ralph Chainey, was too much for her. Her tears flowed unrestrainedly until Mrs. Stone's house was reached.

But here Kathleen's uncle decidedly declined her invitation to enter.

"No, honey; not just now. I'm shabby looking by the side of fine city folks, and I'll go and buy me some better clothes—a new hat and a white shirt—then to-morrow I'll come back here and see your friend and yourself," he replied, and left her at the door.

Kathleen told her friend all about the morning's events, and received her very sincere sympathy.

"I always felt that those Carews were mean, especially Ivan," she said. "But, never mind, dearie. When your uncle comes to-morrow we will make him remain for a long visit."

CHAPTER XLI.

RALPH'S LETTER.

The world is naught when one is gone
Who was the world; then the heart breaks
That this is lost which once was won.

ARLO BATES.

But before the old gentleman called in the morning, Kathleen had a great shock of surprise.

The morning papers had not had anything so exciting to chronicle for a long time as the news

that Ralph Chainey, the great actor, and the idol of the hour, had been secretly married to a beautiful ballet dancer who was no better than she ought to be, and that he had publicly applied for a legal divorce to free him from his galling fetters.

Of course the public had to know all about it, so the reporters had besieged Ralph Chainey, and he had talked freely with them, giving them all his sad story, hoping in this way to reach the obdurate heart of beautiful Kathleen. [Pg 161]

Surely, he thought, when she heard his story aright—when she heard how cruelly he had been betrayed by the false and wicked Fedora—she must pity and pardon her unhappy lover.

Ralph Chainey was not much of a praying man, but in these hours of awful suspense his thoughts took almost the form of a prayer to God that He would help him to win his proud young love who had scorned him in such disdainful fashion.

So he told the reporters his sad story in his most eloquent fashion, and they reproduced it in glowing paragraphs, denouncing Fedora in unmeasured terms for her sins and her hypocrisy, and hinting at the beautiful love affair that had been broken off by Fedora's resurrection from the grave in which her young husband believed her resting. They did not tell the name of the actor's beautiful young love, because Ralph Chainey had been very careful not to tell them; but they dwelt eloquently on the actor's love for her, and his hope that, in the event of his securing a divorce, she would become his worshiped wife.

Kathleen read this moving story with heaving bosom and dilated eyes, and while she was yet reading it, the bell rang and a package was handed in for her with a letter.

Ralph Chainey—forgetting, like any true lover, his pride in his love—had sent to Kathleen marked copies of the morning papers and some brief, pathetic lines.

"Oh, my lost love," ran the note, "will you not read, and reading, pity and forgive me, the story of my sorrows? Oh, Kathleen! they say that you are pledged to wed another. Tell me that it is not so! My one great hope is for freedom, that I may yet have the hope of winning you. Life without that hope would be a living death. Oh, Kathleen, my love, my darling! pity me—pity yourself! You have not learned to love the man you have promised to marry. Send him from you. Wait a little, my darling, and happiness will come to us!

[Pg 162]

"RALPH."

"Oh, my poor boy—my poor boy!" sobbed Kathleen.

She forgot herself, she forgot Teddy Darrell, to whom she had promised herself, and she kissed Ralph Chainey's letter with red, clinging lips, as if it had been his handsome face.

"Why did I not listen to him that day when I was so wild with jealousy that I would not let him explain?" she cried, self-upbraidingly. "I was foolish and silly. It is a wonder that he could ever forgive me. No. I can not marry Teddy now. But—will—he release me—from—my promise?"

CHAPTER XLII.

"YOU SHALL NOT MARRY RALPH CHAINEY!" UNCLE BEN CRIED, VIOLENTLY.

Adown my cheeks in silence
The tears came flowing free,
And, oh! I can not believe it—
That thou art lost to me.

H. HEINE.

While Kathleen was still weeping over Ralph Chainey's appealing letter her uncle was announced.

She dried her tears and went down to welcome the old man.

Mrs. Stone had taken the children out for the morning, so Kathleen had a long interview with her new-found relative.

He was so much like her dead father in his voice and looks that he won Kathleen's heart at once, and when he expressed his love and sympathy for her in moving terms, the unhappy young girl gave him her confidence in the fullest measure.

She told him the story of her young life from the beginning—her step-mother's cruelty, Alpine's unkindness, and Ivan's attempts at courtship, which she had repelled with scorn. [Pg 163]

Then her indignant voice softened as she murmured over the story of her happy love-dream—her first romantic meeting with Ralph Chainey, when he had saved her life, and her later acquaintance with him, down to the moment when she had repulsed him with scorn, and, in a fit of pique, engaged herself to Teddy Darrell.

"I was wrong—all wrong!" she cried, self-upbraidingly, and gave him Ralph's letter to read.

Benjamin Carew listened in dead silence to all that Kathleen told him of the young actor, and if

she had observed him closely, she would have seen that his brows were drawn together by a heavy frown.

Once or twice he seemed about to speak to her, but checked himself abruptly and waited.

Kathleen, as soon as he had finished the letter, cried out, eagerly:

"Do you not see that I was wrong to judge him so hardly?"

Uncle Ben looked gravely into his niece's face and answered, almost sternly:

"No; you were right, for appearances were against him."

"But, dear Uncle Ben, all that is explained away now, and I know that I was wrong not to trust my lover," cried the girl, anxiously.

But he answered, firmly:

"You must not call that actor your lover. You are betrothed to Mr. Darrell."

"But Teddy will release me if I ask him."

"Would you wound your true lover so cruelly?" asked the old man, almost angrily.

The beautiful dark eyes were raised to his, swimming in tears.

"Oh, how unhappy I am!" cried poor Kathleen. "I am the most wretched girl in the whole world! Every one is against me!"

The old man did not answer. He regarded her with sad, troubled eyes through his smoky glasses. [Pg 164]

"You, too, Uncle Ben, have turned against me just when I thought you would be such a comfort to me," sobbed his niece.

"You are willful and unjust, my child, if you expect me to counsel you to throw over your lover for the sake of a man who has a wife already," was the mild reply.

"But he will be divorced, uncle, and then we will be free to love each other."

"And this honorable young man, Mr. Darrell, will be thrown over remorselessly for the world to laugh at as a jilted man!"

"Uncle Ben, I can explain it all to Teddy. He is so good and kind he will forgive me. He would not want to marry me if he knew that I loved another man."

Her heart, thrilling with the intensity of her love, lent fire to her eyes and passion to her voice. She felt that it would be a sin to marry Teddy with her heart so full of Ralph.

But the old man she had thought so kind and gentle rose up angrily and caught her hand.

"You are mad—mad, girl, to think of throwing over Teddy Darrell for this miserable actor! You shall not do it!" he cried, violently.

Kathleen tore her little white hand from his clasp in haughty amazement.

"You have no right to control my actions!" she exclaimed; and he sunk back into his chair and covered his face with his hand.

"True, true!" she heard him murmur, dejectedly. "I have no authority over my brother's child. I am only a poor, humble old farmer, and my advice is not desired, even though I would save my brother's only child from wrecking her life for the sake of an unwise love! So be it. I will go now, a sadder, wiser old man."

The pitiful words touched the girl's heart, melting her resentment.

She knelt by him and drew the hand away from his moist eyes, murmuring, remorsefully: [Pg 165]

"Dear Uncle, forgive me. I was hasty, and am sorry that I wounded you. What would you have me do?"

"To marry Mr. Darrell," he replied, firmly.

"How can I?" she moaned, wearily.

"At least say nothing to any one of your change of mind just yet, Kathleen. Think a moment. Ralph Chainey may not get his divorce. Then, were it not better, child, for you not to compromise yourself by declaring your love for him?"

"Perhaps so," she replied, dejectedly.

"Then you promise me not to have anything to say to Ralph Chainey until the divorce is secured?" he went on, eagerly.

"I promise," answered the girl, with a long, heart-breaking sigh. "Oh!" she thought, "how cold and cruel old people are! Surely they forget they were ever young, or that they ever loved!"

But she could not bear to grieve the poor old man, and so she gave him her promise.

"It is not for long, anyhow," she consoled herself with thinking, for she thought it could not be long before Ralph secured the divorce.

"Then nothing on earth shall keep us apart," she thought, blissfully. "Poor Teddy! he will soon get over his disappointment and love some other girl."

Mrs. Stone came in at this juncture, and Kathleen began to feel quite conscience-stricken over the treachery she was meditating to the kind lady's cousin.

Strangely enough, after she had cordially welcomed Uncle Ben Carew, Mrs. Stone plunged into the subject of which they had been speaking—Ralph Chainey.

"I've just met the young actor," she said; "and congratulate me, my dear, for he likes my plot, and I am to write him a play. Won't that be nice? For he will make it famous. Teddy has been begging me to create a part in it for him, and to ask Mr. Chainey to take him into the company. Isn't it ridiculous in that spoiled boy? Why, he will be a married man then, with no time for acting."

[Pg 166]

Kathleen turned the subject as quickly as she could, and then Mrs. Stone devoted herself to Uncle Ben, persuading him to become her guest for a week.

"I shall be delighted to have you, and Teddy will be glad to have the pleasure of showing you the great sights of Boston," she declared.

So it was arranged, and Mr. Darrell manfully fell into the line of duty, escorting Uncle Ben to all the places of interest in the city, feeling fully rewarded for all his trouble by the murmured thanks of his beautiful betrothed.

So three days passed by peacefully, and although Kathleen wept bitter tears, when alone, over the dear letter her uncle had forbidden her to answer, she managed to preserve a calm aspect before her friends, and they did not guess how her heart was aching with its secret pain. It grieved Teddy that she seemed to shrink from him a little, but he kept on hoping he would win her love in the end.

Toward the middle of the week a great surprise came to Kathleen.

The long-hoped-for letter came at last.

The Southern relatives, so long deaf to her loving appeals, wrote at last to say that they wanted Kathleen to come and live with them. They were rich now, and could make her life as gay and luxurious as it was before her father's death.

"I should like to go and visit them. My heart always yearned for my mother's people," Kathleen said, wistfully.

Uncle Ben was thoughtfully perusing the letter. He answered:

"I will take you to them, my dear. I should not like for you to travel alone any more."

"Oh, how good you are, dearest uncle!" cried the girl, gladly. "But do you see they want me to come right away? They want me to be there at the celebration of my grandmother's birthday, which, she says, will be quite an event in the Franklyn family, so that all the clan will be gathered at the old homestead, and I can see all of them."

[Pg 167]

"We can start for Richmond to-morrow," her uncle answered, smilingly.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE OLD HOUSEKEEPER'S STORY.

I can not rise, my darling,
My breast is bleeding—see!
I stabbed myself, thou knowest,
When thou wast reft from me!

H. HEINE.

"But my diamonds, Uncle Ben. I must wait here for them, you know," said Kathleen.

"Pooh! We can leave that affair in the hands of a lawyer," he replied, carelessly.

He was determined that nothing should hinder this opportune trip.

He was anxious to get Kathleen away from Boston, where Ralph Chainey was playing every night to crowded houses. It would seem as if Uncle Ben had as vigorous a dislike for actors as his dead brother had cherished.

So he carefully smoothed away all her objections, declaring that he had money enough to take them both to Richmond, and that she could repay him, if she insisted on it, when she got back her diamonds.

"I wonder if papa thought, when he gave them to me, that some day they would be my sole little fortune!" sighed the young girl.

Uncle Ben did not answer. He was looking out of the window at the country scenery, for they were on their journey now. Kathleen was sitting opposite to him in the parlor car, with a big bouquet of roses in her lap, the gift of the adoring Teddy, from whom she had just parted at the station.

"A noble young fellow," Uncle Ben had said, and his niece answered, with a little sigh:

"He has been very good to me; but, Uncle Ben, he is called the greatest flirt in Boston, and I shouldn't wonder if he threw me over at any time for a newer fancy."

[Pg 168]

"You are just wishing he would!" the old man exclaimed, curtly, and she replied only by a roguish

laugh.

The train rushed on and on through the wintry landscape, and both of them grew very thoughtful. At last Kathleen touched her uncle's arm with a timid hand.

"Uncle Ben, this going home to my mother's people makes me think so much about *her* to-day. Tell me, did you ever see mamma?"

The man's strong arm trembled under the pressure of her little white hand, and he answered in a voice that was hoarse with emotion:

"Yes, I knew little Zaidee—poor little darling!"

"Was she as beautiful as the portrait a great artist made of her? There is one that hangs in my room at my old home. It is beautiful as an angel, and papa used to come there often to look at it. I don't think he cared for my step-mother to know how often he came."

"Zaidee was more beautiful than the portrait," answered the old man, in a low voice.

He pressed her little hand tenderly as it rested on his arm, and said:

"Tell me all that you know about your mother, my child."

"They have told me that she died by her own hand. Was it not terrible?" whispered the young girl, with paling lips.

"Terrible!" he echoed, with emotion; and then she asked:

"Uncle Ben, who was to blame for that awful tragedy?"

"No one," he answered, sadly. "Zaidee was passionate, willful, jealous. She became madly jealous of a governess—a young widow who was employed in the house to teach her painting and music. Before poor Vincent at all comprehended the situation, his young wife, in a fit of anger, destroyed herself by thrusting a little jeweled dagger into her breast."

"And you are sure no one was to blame?" she persisted and after a moment's hesitation he replied: [Pg 169]

"Perhaps Vince was to blame; but he did not realize it then, poor fellow! You see, Kathleen, he worshipped his lovely little bride, and it grieved him that she was lacking in certain accomplishments familiar to most young girls in his cultured set. To remedy this, he employed teachers and Zaidee learned rapidly until——" he passed the back of his hand across his eyes and groaned.

"Until——" repeated Kathleen.

"Quite unexpected by him—for she was probably too proud to betray herself to him—Zaidee became quite jealous of that pretty young widow, Mrs. Belmont, and in a fit of madness took her own life, and nearly broke her husband's heart."

"He married the young widow in a little more than a year," the girl replied, unable to resist this bitter fling at her dead father's memory.

He winced, the poor old man, as she spoke thus of her father, and answered, almost excusingly:

"He was so wretched, and Mrs. Belmont comforted him. She, too, had loved Zaidee, and shared his grief with him. That was how she made herself so necessary to the unhappy man."

"The fiend!" broke hissing from Kathleen's white lips.

He turned to her in amazement.

"What do you mean?" he asked, hoarsely.

It was well that they were alone in the car, for Kathleen's excitement was terrible. Her eyes blazed, her cheeks paled, her heart beat violently against her side.

"Uncle Ben, I am speaking of that woman who so unworthily took my dead mother's place!" she exclaimed. "Yes, she is a fiend! *She* to pretend that she loved the memory of the woman she goaded to madness—perhaps murdered; for no one saw my poor young mother drive the fatal steel into her heart. Oh, God! what deceit—what treachery!"

He grasped her wrist with steely fingers, his eyes flashed with a fire akin to hers, and he whispered: [Pg 170]

"Hush! You must not dare accuse *her* so! You drive me mad! Oh, it can not be!"

"You take that false woman's part, then, Uncle Ben, against me and my poor young mother? Listen, then; let me tell you all I know—a secret I kept from my dead father, because I believed in him, trusted him, in spite of the servants' gossip that accused him of complicity in his young wife's death."

"They dared, the hounds! accuse m-my brother thus?" he breathed, fiercely, the perspiration starting out on his brow, his strong frame trembling.

"Yes, they accused him," answered the girl. "Do not take it so hard, Uncle Ben. He was innocent, I know; but that fiendish woman played her part to perfection. She made my mother believe that Vincent Carew wished her out of the way, so that he might wed *her*, the traitress! She made the servants believe the same. She even plotted——" But suddenly the girl paused with clasped hands. "Oh! uncle, dear, it will wound you if I mention this; it will blacken my father's memory in your eyes—and I always loved him—I love him still, in spite of what he has done to me, and I

ought to spare him."

"Go on, Kathleen. I command you to tell me everything. I have a sacred right to know," commanded the agitated man by her side.

"Listen, then, dear uncle: Just a few months before my father went away on that foreign tour, from which he never returned alive, I received a message from an old woman calling me to her death-bed in the suburbs of the city. I went, taking my maid with me. In a secret interview that followed the dying woman told me she had been housekeeper at the Carew mansion in my mother's time. She could not die easy without revealing to me a secret she had carried untold for sixteen years."

"That secret?" questioned Benjamin Carew, wildly.

"Was this," replied the girl, solemnly: "On the day of the tragedy, Mrs. Belmont sought the housekeeper, pretending to be overcome with grief, surprise, and indignation. She confided to the woman that Vincent Carew had been making secret love to her ever since she first entered the house, and that day had openly declared his passion, begging her to fly with him to Europe, saying that his ignorant child-wife would then secure a divorce, and he could then marry his heart's best love. With tears and shame, Mrs. Belmont owned that she could not help loving her handsome employer, but that she had repulsed him with scorn, and resigned her situation to take leave immediately. Mrs. Belmont was too much overcome to explain to her pupil, and wished the housekeeper to tell Mrs. Carew the whole cause of her leaving."

[Pg 171]

"My God!" groaned the old man at Kathleen's side; but the girl hurried on, with blazing eyes.

"The housekeeper, after the fashion of most servants, was too ready to believe a tale of scandal, and to excite a sensation. She did not think of doubting Mrs. Belmont then, although grave doubts assailed her after the tragedy. Well, with her heart on fire with sympathy for her wronged mistress, she did not think for a moment of sparing her the whole cruel truth. She blurted it all out in burning words, and advised the outraged wife to forsake her monster of a husband and return to her own relatives. Within the hour mamma was found dead."

CHAPTER XLIV.

GRANDMOTHER FRANKLYN.

I dreamed that the moon looked sadly down,
And the stars with a troubled ray;
I went to my darling's home—the town
Lies many a league away.

H. HEINE.

Kathleen's awed voice died away in a hushed sob, and in the grand parlor car there was a dead silence, broken only by the clatter of the car-wheels as they rushed over the glistening steel rails.

Old Benjamin Carew crouched silently in his seat, with clinched hands and half-averted face, but Kathleen could see that he was pale as death, and beads of dew stood on his forehead and around his pain-drawn lips.

[Pg 172]

"How dearly he must have loved his sister-in-law—my unhappy young mother!" she thought, tenderly; and just then his hand moved and sought hers, clasping it fondly, but with a grasp as cold as ice.

"Oh, Uncle Ben, I ought not to have told you this distressing story!" she exclaimed, remorsefully. "I am so glad to think that I never told papa the story I had from the dying housekeeper. It would have been so cruel for him to know that the woman he had loved and trusted had plotted away the life of my mother."

"Hush, child! you drive me mad! This is too cruel!" groaned the old man.

He leaned his gray head forward on the seat, and sobs, all the fiercer for being suppressed, shook his slight frame. Kathleen wept, too, and altogether it was a sorrowful journey they had to the home from which Vincent Carew had carried Zaidee, his fair young bride, to meet so dark a fate. They talked but little, for a heavy cloud of trouble hung over their spirits and shadowed the future, and the young girl at length became conscious of a strange dread of arriving at the end of the journey so long ardently desired. She ascribed it to sudden timidity at meeting strangers. She did not dream it was a warning presentiment.

She was glad that the cars went straight through Lincoln Station without changing. She could not bear to be reminded of that terrible night when the talon-like fingers of her unknown assailant had closed stranglingly about her white throat, and of all the sorrows that had followed after. The girl, so young and tender, shuddered as with an ague chill, wondering how she had lived through it all.

"And poor Daisy Lynn! poor Daisy Lynn! what ever became of that unhappy girl?" she wondered, pitifully, and her thoughts wandered to the girl's sad love story. "How sorrowful it is to go mad for love!" she sighed. "And yet, how sad it is to lose one's love and remain sane and conscious in the midst of all the cruel pain. Oh, God! am I fated to lose Ralph, my own true lover? How shall I

[Pg 173]

bear to give my hand to another man while I love Ralph so dearly?" And when the train ran into the station at Richmond she was weeping bitter, burning tears for her love, Ralph, from whom she was so cruelly parted. "Oh, the pity of it that I did not believe in him that day that I sent him away from me in scorn, when he was already so sorrowful! Oh, Ralph, my darling! I did not think then that I should ever be suing for your forgiveness for my cruel words; but now—now I could fall at your feet for pity and pardon!" sobbed the unhappy young girl; and there came to her a memory of some verses she had read in the poems of Mittie Point Davis—sweet, sad verses from a loving heart:

"I did not think that I should say it first,
That summer evening when we quarreled so
About some trifle you had magnified—
Men are so harsh, you know.
I said some bitter words of hate and scorn;
My pride was up, my temper too, indeed—
But now I know that I perhaps was wrong,
And, dearest, I am brave enough to plead:
Forgive me!

"I did not think that I should say it first,
Not even when you stayed away so long;
I thought I could be proud and stubborn, too,
I did not know that love could be so strong.
I did not think that life could seem so long
Without the love I reckless cast away;
But now I know that I perhaps was wrong,
And, dearest, I am brave enough to say:
Forgive me!

"I did not think that I should say it first,
That summer evening when we quarreled so—
I hated you, I know you hated me;
But, darling, that seems long and long ago—
So long, and I, oh! I have missed you so!
While you, perchance, have shared my silent pain.
We both were wrong, but love has conquered pride,
Forget the past; let us be friends again—
Forgive me!"

"Richmond!" shouted the conductor, and Kathleen roused with a start from her sad musings, and drew her heavy wraps about her, for the opening of the car door had let in a blast of inclement air. It was late in the afternoon—almost twilight—and a long carriage ride was before them; for the Franklyns had written that they lived on the suburbs of Richmond, but would send a carriage to meet Kathleen.

Sure enough, a close carriage was in waiting, the driver an old darky who seemed surprised and even displeased that he had two passengers instead of one.

"Mistis was only 'specting a lady," he observed.

"This is my uncle, who came along to take care of me," Kathleen answered, with assumed cheerfulness, for her heart was beating with a strange suspense and dread. The old negro put her trunk up, and they entered the carriage, and set out on a long ride that did not end until night had wrapped its sable pall of gloom around the earth.

"Oh, uncle, how glad I am that you came with me! I should have felt so frightened all alone!" whispered the girl, nestling close to her relative's side.

He answered only by a silent pressure of her little hand. He had been strangely moody and silent ever since she had told him the story of her mother's tragic death.

The dark, gloomy exterior of the old brick house standing alone in thick, shrubberied grounds was not inviting, but presently the front door opened and a gleam of light stole forth. In its ray there appeared a witch-like old woman huddled in a gray blanket shawl, who stood shivering in the hall while they alighted.

"Howdy, granddaughter? Glad to see you!" She gave Kathleen a cold peck on the cheek and peered curiously at her companion. "Who's this? I warn't expecting anybody but you, my dear. Oh, your uncle! Howdy-do, sir? Walk right in, both of you, to the parlor. Folks all out at a party but me. You'll see them in the morning."

She ushered them into a prim, old-fashioned sitting-room that did not show much pretension to the wealth the Franklyns had written they were possessed of; but Kathleen was so glad of the great glowing fire that she ran to it and held her numb fingers to the blaze, with scarcely a glance at her surroundings. Uncle Ben followed her with a strange sinking at the heart.

His impressions of Mrs. Franklyn—Kathleen's grandmother—were not favorable, it seemed.

She was unprepossessing in her looks and manners, and she certainly regarded him in the light of an interloper. She had not extended to him the warm welcome that Northern people are led to believe is characteristic of Southern hospitality.

Mrs. Franklyn pulled out a little table on which was arranged a tempting little supper.

"I kept oysters and coffee warm for you," she said beamingly. "Now lay off your things, both of you, and eat before they get cold, won't you?"

"I am so tired—my head aches—I don't think I can swallow a mouthful!" pleaded Kathleen, on the point of hysterical tears.

Oh; why had she come? She was alarmed, somehow, and she wondered why her heart had failed to go out warmly to this new-found relative, as she had expected. Instead, she experienced fear and repulsion.

But the old woman was not to be denied. She almost forced her reluctant guests to swallow some of the food, and then she bundled them off to their rooms with an alacrity that savored of anxiety to be rid of their company. [Pg 175]

"You must be dead tired and wanting to rest, and I'm free to confess that it's long past my usual bed-time," she declared.

"Good-night, Uncle Ben. I hope you will rest well," Kathleen said, kissing the old man with quivering lips. Then they parted, each to their separate rooms.

But there was no rest for Uncle Ben; his pillow was one of thorns, and he rose and paced the floor at midnight, restless and unhappy.

"My heart is on fire! Oh, God, I can not bear this pain! Let me go out into the cold, dark streets and walk it off!" he muttered, restlessly, and hurried into his clothes. "I suppose I can easily slip out of this old, ramshackle house without arousing any one," he thought as he proceeded to open the door.

But he recoiled with a start, for the door was locked on the outside! He was a prisoner in this strange house!

CHAPTER XLV.

IVAN RECEIVES A CHECK IN HIS CAREER.

Full many a thankless son has been,
But never one like mine.
His meat was served on plates of gold,
His drink was rosy wine.

THOMAS HOOD.

When Kathleen and her uncle had left the house on Commonwealth Avenue, Mrs. Carew turned to Ivan with angry eyes.

"Is it true? Have you got that girl's diamonds?" she inquired.

"Of course he has. You can read it in his guilty face!" chimed in Alpine, contemptuously.

Ivan glared back at them with defiant eyes.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked, insolently.

"You must return them. There will be a terrible scandal if you do not," replied his mother. [Pg 176]

"I have sold them and spent the money," he returned with inimitable coolness.

"Good heavens! what will you do?" she cried; and to her indignation he laughed out aloud as he said:

"You and Alpine will have to make up the four thousand between you, and pay Kathleen!"

"I will not!" came in a burst of rage from Alpine's lips, and her mother echoed it.

"I will not!"

The son leaned back indolently in his chair, not a whit moved by their anger. They always *had* come round to his demands. They would have to do it now.

"Would you bring disgrace on yourselves by having me sent to prison to save a paltry four thousand dollars?" he demanded, with the air of one who is master of the situation.

They glared at him aghast. The two women loved money passionately. It made them almost frantic the way that Ivan squandered it.

"You two are rolling in wealth," he continued, "and yet you begrudge a poor devil of a son and brother a few thousand to get him out of a penitentiary scrape."

The listeners shuddered. Next to money, they loved good repute, and it was the dread of their lives that the dissolute Ivan would bring disgrace upon them. And here it was staring them in the face. The penitentiary, ugh!

"We have spent at least fifteen thousand dollars on you since we came into this fortune!" groaned Alpine.

"And what you ever did with so much money, in so short a time, I can not imagine," added Mrs.

Carew.

"Fast living and cards," laconically replied the villain.

They looked at each other, the two badgered women, and one thought was in the mind of each. Ivan was shameless, defiant. He would never alter his evil courses and if he went on like this, and they had to supply him with money, he would bankrupt them in the end. Disgrace would come to them sooner or later through this black sheep.

[Pg 177]

Alpine turned to him and asked curiously:

"How did you find out that Kathleen had left her diamonds at the jewelers?"

He started and whitened at the suddenness of the question, but answered, doggedly:

"That is my own secret, and I do not choose to disclose it."

"Neither do I choose to help you out of the scrape you have brought on yourself. Not a dollar will I give you!" retorted Alpine, stung to defiance and rebellion by his matchless assurance.

He did not believe her, and smiled as he answered:

"Oh, yes, you will, for your own sake, my dear sister. Perhaps you think I don't see through your little game; but I do. You're trying to marry Ralph Chainey, the great actor, although he does not care a pin for you. However, you are crafty enough to hook him, I'll be bound—only, he certainly would not look at you again if Kathleen sent your only brother to prison for stealing her diamonds."

Her blue eyes blazed on him with the steely glare of a bitter hate; but she said, almost as if begging him to do better:

"But, Ivan, if we helped you out of this, you would be into some new scrape directly."

"Very likely," he replied, taking insolent pleasure in torturing her, not dreaming she would really turn at bay.

But Alpine was reckless, desperate—ready to give up the fierce contest with an untoward fate. A revengeful longing to punish Ivan for his misdeeds, even at the bitterest cost to herself, assailed her and drove everything else out of her mind. Her eyes flashed, her face grew ashen, and, turning to her mother, she said, in a low, tense voice:

"You see how it is, mamma. If we help him out of this, it will be something else directly. How can we bear the strain for years? Do what we will, he will beggar and disgrace us sooner or later. Why not let the end come now? Let—Kathleen send him to prison for his crime, and we—we—can live it down as best we may."

[Pg 178]

Every word fell like a drop of ice on the ingrate's heart. Did she mean it? Would they desert him at last, these two?

He was frightened, and yet incredulous. He had heard and read and believed that there was no limit to the love and forgiveness of a mother's and sister's heart.

But he had gone too far in his insolent assurance, and, to his terror and amazement, his hour of reckoning had come at last.

He did not take into account the fact that he did not have a good woman for a mother. His excesses had turned her heart against him, and to his horror she sided with Alpine, angrily discarding him.

"I wash my hands of you," she said, bitterly. "Kathleen may send you to prison if she will. Alpine and I can go abroad. The affair will soon blow over, and people will forget it by the time we come home from Europe."

He dropped his *insouciance*, and descended to pleading, but it was of no avail. He saw a black fate lowering over him from which there seemed no escape.

In the darkest moment a clever idea came to him.

"If I could only escape to Europe, the whole affair would be over, for I would never come back; but, alas! I have not the means to pay my passage across the ocean," he said, despondently.

Mrs. Carew caught eagerly at the offered bait.

"If you *will* go and never return, I will furnish you the means," she said.

"I swear it," he replied, and left the house presently, the money in his pocket, an evil, sneering smile on his thin lips.

Meanwhile, Jones had said to Miss Belmont:

"Mr. Chainey has been waiting in the drawing-room some time to see you."

"You should have told me sooner," she exclaimed, flashing at the prospect of seeing Ralph.

[Pg 179]

"I did not like to interrupt you, miss," he replied, respectfully, but Alpine did not wait to hear his apology; she hurriedly sought the man she loved.

CHAPTER XLVI.

It matters not its history; love has wings
Like lightning, swift and fatal, and it springs
Like a wild flower, where it is least expected,
Existing whether cherished or rejected.

L. E. L.

Ralph had been waiting many minutes for Miss Belmont, but he had forgotten the lapse of time in his agitation over the meeting with Kathleen, and he rose with almost a start to meet the beautiful blonde, who hurried to him with both hands extended in rapturous greeting.

"So glad," she murmured, with the loveliest upward glance, that was quite lost on Ralph, for he did not notice it, but exclaimed:

"I had quite a surprise coming in just now. I met Miss Carew. So she has repented and come home?"

"Yes, and no—it was only a formal call. Kathleen is so proud she will not come back to us, even for the short time before her marriage," answered Alpine.

She sighed, and he echoed it; but it was of Kathleen he was thinking—bonny Kathleen. Alpine guessed it, and bit her lips, then plunged into an animated account of Uncle Ben Carew, making him appear in the most ridiculous light.

"He was an impostor, of course. Mamma is quite sure that my step-father never had a brother," she said.

"But Kathleen believed in him?" he asked.

"Yes. Was it not strange she should let herself be deceived by such a designing schemer? She carried him off as her guest at Mrs. Stone's."

He was silent, wondering if Kathleen had made a mistake, and suddenly Alpine said, sweetly:

"Now please put Kathleen out of your mind and think of no one but me while you are here. Am I not your friend, and haven't I some claim on you?" [Pg 180]

Something in her tone startled him. He glanced hurriedly into her face and read as in a book all her love and longing. Her eyes met his and held them as if fascinated. While he gazed she started forward and caught his hand in hers, murmuring, hysterically:

"I have betrayed myself. You know my heart now. Oh, Ralph! forgive me that I could not hide my love for you! Forgive me, and try to love me a little in return."

"Good heavens!" cried the young man, aghast, withdrawing his hand hurriedly from her grasp and looking at her in consternation.

But Alpine, already excited and unnerved by the scene with her brother, could not draw back now, having betrayed her secret. She cried out, pleadingly:

"Do not turn from me so angrily. Is it a crime to love you—to wish for your love?"

She recalled him to the fact that he was acting rudely, that he ought not to let this unhappy girl see the disgust with which she had inspired him by her avowal of love.

It was most embarrassing. He longed to get away, for he did not know what to say. He was utterly abashed, and obeying a sudden impulse, sprung to his feet and turned to the door.

"Miss Belmont, I—I hope you will—excuse me, but I have—have just remembered something—er—er—important—a rehearsal. Will you pardon my haste? Good-bye," he stammered, like a bashful school-boy, and instantly fled the scene, leaving Alpine to fling herself upon a sofa in a burst of hysterical tears.

"Oh, why did I betray my bitter secret! I was mad—mad! and now I have driven him from my side forever by my imprudence!" she sobbed in the wildest *abandon*.

As she lay there sobbing, her hatred and jealousy of her beautiful step-sister grew stronger than ever. It was for love of Kathleen that Ralph Chainey had turned from her when she had humbled herself to him and sued for his love.

Some touching verses rang in sad melody through her brain.

"Ah, dearest, had some happier chance,
The force of fateful circumstance,
Some burning thrill of love divine,
But touched your heart and made you mine,
How had my pulses gladly beat
With love's deep rapture wildly sweet;
How had my life so crowned put forth
Life's proudest strength to prove its worth
For love of you!

"But cruel fate that shapes our ends,
Dark doom that poet love attends—
The fate unhappy Petrarch sung
In fair Italia's burning tongue.

Such fate as, reckless, tears apart
The tendrils of the breaking heart
From every prop where it would twine,
Such cruel fate, alas! is mine
For love of you!

"So when my grave is green to see,
You will not let them say of me:
Her talent was a wasted power,
Her life has failed of fruit and flower;
For you will know the hopeless pain,
That palsied heart and hand and brain—
Will know that life has failed alone
Because a blight was on it thrown
For love of you!"

She dashed the tears from her eyes and sat up, the picture of shame and despair.

[Pg 181]

"I could have been a better woman if he had been kind to me—if he would but have promised to try to love me!" she muttered, angrily. "But how fast he hurried away, as if he despised me. How I wish I could hate him in return—hate him as I hate his dark-eyed love! It is for *her* he scorns me. Oh, God! for vengeance on them both!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

A TERRIBLE CRIME.

"Deep and dark the flowing river,
Close to the feet like a serpent glides;
Many a secret lost forever
The deep and beautiful water hides!"

Our Kathleen did not share the wakefulness of her relative.

On the contrary, a strange drowsiness stole over her as soon as she entered the shabby little bedroom to which Mrs. Franklyn conducted her with such alacrity.

"Get a good rest, that's a dear! and in the morning you shall see them all," she said, wheedlingly; and giving Kathleen a cold little kiss on the cheek, she retreated, leaving her guest alone.

Kathleen flung off her clothes, shivering in the fireless room, slipped into her gown, and crept between the sheets, murmuring over her prayers in the bed because it was too cold outside. Then, with the tears still wet on her lashes, she fell into a heavy slumber.

Presently the door opened again noiselessly, and the old woman's head was thrust inside the room. She gave a low grunt of satisfaction as she heard the deep breathing of Kathleen, and closed the door.

Silence again in the old house; but if any one had been listening they would have heard outside, in the chilly night, the stamp of the horses that had brought the uncle and niece to this place. The cab was waiting yet. Why, and for whom?

The night was intensely dark, it was freezing cold, and the driver did not have to wait long.

[Pg 182]

The door opened softly in a little while, and a man and a woman stole out bearing between them a figure wrapped up in a long cloak. They pushed their dead or living burden, whichever it was, into the cab, entered themselves, and were driven a long distance, until the low murmur of a river rushing between its banks was distinctly heard. At a quiet, unfrequented spot they came to a stop; the two people got out again, and carried their burden to the river-bank; then there was a thud, a splash, and then they turned away, their arms empty of the load they had brought. In the silence and darkness of the wintry night a terrible crime had been committed.

Alas! poor Kathleen, poor orphan-girl, the sport of a most malignant fate! Heaven help thee now, drifting upon the dark, mysterious waves of the gloomy river, beneath the pall of the ink-black heavens, unlighted by either moon or star!

Meanwhile, the old man, locked into his room like a rat in a trap, was bending all his feeble efforts toward releasing himself.

He feared to make an outcry, for he comprehended instinctively that treachery lurked in the air of the old house, with its forbidding mistress—treachery and danger to himself and helpless Kathleen.

He sunk back helplessly upon the bed, at first shaken and unnerved by his terrible suspicions. Sweeping his hand across his brow, he muttered:

"My door was locked on the outside by design to bar me out from my child—my bonny Kathleen.

What have they done to her? or what are they going to do?"

He crept cautiously to the window and pushed up the sash. Horrors! it was barred across with iron as closely as a prison; and again he fell to raving of treachery and danger.

"That woman was not Mrs. Franklyn. I did not believe at first that it could be poor Zaidee's mother. She could not have changed so much in seventeen years, I knew; yet I could not speak out then, lest I betray myself. I thought I would wait for the developments of to-morrow. Alas! it was a fatal resolve. We were decoyed here by the trick of some deadly enemy, and every moment that I remain locked up here Kathleen is in the most deadly peril. God in Heaven help me to escape, that I may succor my poor child!"

[Pg 183]

Desperate with fears for Kathleen, he threw himself against the door and shook it with all his might. The sounds rang through the house, but no one came to release him. He shrieked aloud, but no voice replied to his frantic calls.

In his misery an awful suspicion had come to him.

He remembered Kathleen's threat to Ivan Belmont, that she would send him to prison unless she received the value of her stolen diamonds.

What if that villain had laid a deadly trap to decoy Kathleen to this place and murder her to save himself the payment of that pitiful sum! This affair looked like it. Perhaps she was already murdered—his beautiful Kathleen, that he loved so dearly, and whom he had brought here in his mistaken eagerness to get her away from Boston.

Searching frantically about, he perceived with joy an old rusty poker beneath the iron fender of the fire-place. He seized it, and with the strength of a madman wrenched the lock from the door. It flew open. He was free.

Then ensued the most piteous search the world ever knew—the old man's frantic search for missing Kathleen.

It was all in vain. The old house was empty, the girl was gone, the old woman was gone, and the night-wind, as it sighed around the gables of the lonely old house, did not whisper to him of the awful secret the river hid.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

[Pg 184]

"KATHLEEN HAS MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED."

'Tis strange to think if we could fling aside
The mask and mantle that love wears from pride,
How much would be we now so little guess,
Deep in each heart's undreamed, unsought recess.

L. E. L.

Ralph Chainey waited in cruel suspense for an answer to the appealing letter he had sent to Kathleen.

But long days passed and no letter came from his heart's love. Then he saw the announcement in a morning paper that she had gone away with her uncle to visit her Southern relatives.

"Cruel girl! she has gone without a word or sign. She hates me indeed, and will never forgive my boyhood's folly," he groaned, despairingly.

The first shock of pain and disappointment was so great that he could scarcely bear it. He thought vaguely of suicide, wondered which would be the easier way out of life—the dagger, the bullet, poison, or the river. Shakespeare's words came to him:

"Oh, that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! Oh, God! Oh, God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world."

He got up suddenly and shook himself with fierce self-scorn.

"God forgive me for these wild thoughts!" he cried. "No, I can not be such a coward! He is a coward who takes his own life because he can not bear its ills. I must remember that I have a dear little mother to live for, even though the hope of love and happiness be gone forever."

But life was cruel. He longed to get away somewhere—far away from the place where everything breathed of *her*, his cruel, beautiful love, and he decided that as soon as he secured his divorce he would go abroad and seek forgetfulness in constant travel.

Meanwhile, a sorrowful little note came to him from Alpine, praying him to forget her folly, or at least to keep it secret.

"I should die of shame if I believed any one knew but you," she wrote. "But you are so good and great, you can forgive me. Perhaps things like that have happened to you before. I should not wonder. Then do not exclude me from your friendship, I pray you."

[Pg 185]

Forget that one mad moment, and think kindly of me as you did before.

"Your true friend,

"ALPINE."

With the letter was a little perfumed sheet on which were written some sweet, sad verses that touched his heart:

"THE FAREWELL.

"Ah, yes! I can bid you farewell and forever,
No more will I think thy affection to claim,
And hope for thy heart's love again will I never,
Since now I have found that it lives but in name.

"That dream of my life I too fondly have cherished,
Till now I have bitterly wept o'er my woe;
And hope from my bosom has withered and perished
When made the cold blight of desertion to know.

"My way is all dark as it spreads out before me,
And gloomy and sad I must wander alone;
Fain wishing for some fatal blast to sweep o'er me
To still my heart's beating and silence its moan.

"But far as I wander the wide world will dream not
The wounds in my heart that I strive to conceal;
And those who best know me and love me will dream not
The deep crushing sorrow alone that I feel.

"I can not forget thee; where'er I shall wander
Thy image as bright shall abide with me yet;
And though I may roam like the far-speeding condor,
And though thou hast bid me, I can not forget.

"Go thou and be happy; my last, fondest blessing
Shall be upon him that I once loved so well;
And though my heart break at the thought so distressing,
Oh go and be happy! I bid thee farewell."

Ralph read the verses penned in Alpine's hand with deep emotion, but it was not of *her*, it was of another he thought. The sweet, sorrowful strain seemed to express his feelings toward his lost Kathleen.

"Lost to me forever!" he sighed, bitterly. "Teddy Darrell, the boyish flirt, who roves from one beauty to another, like a butterfly from flower to flower, will win and wear the peerless rose, beautiful Kathleen. He is not worthy of her, for he has frittered his heart away in a score of passions, while mine has aye been true to her since first we met."

He could not help hating the fortunate Teddy because he had won Kathleen; and Teddy, who was a versatile youth, envied him, in his turn, his genius and his fame, and was fired with the desire of becoming a great actor. He was always dabbling at some new fad; but Mrs. Stone, who understood him thoroughly, declared that Teddy would never accomplish anything great unless he should lose his fortune and have to work for his living.

It was lonesome for Teddy the first few days after Kathleen went away, and he was fain to console himself with some of his old sweethearts. While pursuing this diversion with the usual alacrity of a young man whose sweetheart is away, he met a new girl who proved "quite a bonanza," as he confided to Mrs. Stone.

"Saw her at Maude Sylvester's. By the way, Maude's novel, 'A Blinding Passion,' is having quite a success, don't you know? Well, as I was saying, this girl, Mittie Poindexter, is a real daisy, and suits me down to the ground—talks about going on the stage."

[Pg 186]

"Kathleen would be jealous if she could hear how you run on!" his cousin exclaimed, warningly.

"Not a bit!" he replied, his frank brow clouding with vexation. "To tell you the truth, Carrie, I don't believe she loves me in the least; it's only gratitude that made her promise to be mine. Only think, now, Carrie: she has been gone three days, and not one line to me, although I've written *her* two letters a day. Why, don't you know, that week I went to New York I began a letter to her as soon as the train started, and, by Jove! I mailed it at the first station. I'm ashamed to think of all the spooony letters I wrote that girl in one week, and—*only one little note in return for all!*"

Mrs. Stone could not help laughing at his half-injured air.

"Well, never mind. You have a special talent for letter-writing, you know, and Kathleen detests writing; she told me so. That accounts for her failure to write oftener," she began, soothingly; but just then the door-bell rang a resounding peal, and she started up in dismay.

"What a deafening ring! Maybe that's the postman now. No, it is too early for *him*. What is it, Mary? Oh, a telegram! Open it, please, Teddy. Those things always startle us women folks so."

His handsome face paled to an ashen hue, and his lips trembled as he read.

It was a telegram from Richmond, and contained these startling words:

"Ask Mr. Darrell to join me here at once, if possible. Kathleen has mysteriously disappeared under circumstances that hint of foul play.

"BENJAMIN CAREW."

"Kathleen gone! Oh, Heaven! my little darling!" groaned the young man, forgetting all about his new fancy in real grief and dismay. [Pg 187]

Mrs. Stone burst into tears, and for a few minutes one could not comfort the other.

But women are more quick-witted than men, and Mrs. Stone, who knew nothing about Ivan Belmont and the diamonds, quickly leaped to a conclusion.

"Those asylum people—the fools!—have captured her again, and carried her off to their old prison!" she exclaimed, brightening and wiping away her tears. "Cheer up, Teddy. No harm can happen your little sweetheart, except another detention at the lunatic asylum, and you and her uncle can soon have her out when you find out exactly where the place is situated."

Her idea was so plausible that Teddy brightened up under its influence and prepared to take leave.

"I must go on the first train," he said, as he kissed his cousin good-bye after the affectionate way he affected with all his female relatives who had the slightest claim to good looks.

The news spread rapidly, and Helen Fox, arriving the next day from Europe, was shocked at the calamity that had overtaken her friend. The news that Kathleen lived had thrilled her with joy, and hastened her return from abroad.

That was not all the news that shocked her, for she soon became acquainted with Ralph Chainey's pathetic story.

Helen was a frank, far-seeing girl, but she could not understand the strange turn matters had taken during her absence. The next day after her return she told her brother George to bring Ralph Chainey home to luncheon.

"I have been dying to see you ever since I got back," she said to him, frankly, her blue eyes beaming with the kindness of her heart. "Now tell me *everything!*"

Luncheon was over, and they were alone in the cozy library together. Helen looked sympathetically at the unhappy young man, remembering how, such a little time ago, she had plotted in her loving fashion to bring about a match between him and her bonny Kathleen. He comprehended her sympathy, and opened his full heart to her with all its pain and anguish. [Pg 188]

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE FRANKLYNS AT LAST!

I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled
Above the green elms that a cottage was near
And I said, "If there's peace to be found in the world,
A heart that was humble might hope for it here."

THOMAS MOORE.

River Cottage was one of the prettiest spots on the banks of the James, and so far away from any other habitation that it was lonely to the last degree; yet embowered in trees and vines and flowers, and lulled by the murmuring voice of the majestic river, its inhabitants were so happy and content that they did not pine for the world that at a little distance surged busily around them. The family consisted of but two—Mrs. Franklyn, a lovely old woman somewhat past fifty, and her grandson, a youth of twenty-three years. Here at River Cottage they lived quietly together on a modest competency, the woman with her sad face and dreamy eyes absorbed altogether in dreams of her past and in tender care for Chester, the blue-eyed boy under whose crown of yellow curls throbbed the restless brain of a genius that was beginning to express itself in dainty bits of verse—the first callow flights of ambition.

The boy was restless. Genius was beginning to burn. Sometimes he walked the floor for hours while the midnight oil burned on his study table. At times he loved to walk on the banks of the river, setting his beautiful thoughts to the music of its melodious rhythm. On that dark, cold night Chester had wandered from the cottage porch down to the river's edge, and so he caught with startled ears the sound of that sullen splash into the waves—caught the sound, and scarce a minute later saw, with keen eyes strained into the gloom, a body floating in the river past the cottage. [Pg 189]

"A suicide!" he muttered, in a voice of horror.

The next minute he threw off his coat and shoes and plunged into the stream.

It was a brave deed, and sometimes in the anguished months that came afterward Chester

wondered if he would have risked so much could he but have known all that was to follow on this night—the full draught of life's chalice filled to the brim with love and pain that he was to quaff. But no presentiment of the future came to him now as he struggled in the almost freezing waves until he caught and held the form drifting rapidly from him, and by almost superhuman efforts drew it with him to the shore.

Mrs. Franklyn always dwelt with loving pride on that night when the cottage door was pushed open and her brave boy staggered in with his unconscious burden, both of them dripping water upon her pretty ingrain carpet, and Chester faltered weakly:

"I—I have saved—some one—from the river!" Then he fell upon the floor, too exhausted to utter another word.

Mrs. Franklyn did not look at the stranger at first. She hastened to revive Chester by pouring some wine between his pale lips and chattering teeth. As soon as he could he sat up, saying, anxiously:

"There, grandma! I'm all right. See about the woman, please."

And then they found that the woman he had rescued was a young girl—the most beautiful golden-haired young creature they had ever beheld. When they had used some little effort at restoring her to consciousness, she opened on their faces a pair of large, dark, wondering eyes, at whose gaze Chester Franklyn's romantic heart leaped up in a sort of ecstasy. He stooped down, almost unconsciously, and pressed his lips to her icy little hand, carried out of himself by some strange, delicious emotion he could not resist.

Tears started to Mrs. Franklyn's eyes as she busied herself about the patient, who did not answer one word when she spoke to her, but lay watching her face with dazed, uncomprehending eyes. The good lady sent Chester up to his room to put on dry garments, and brought some of her own for the strange young girl thrown upon her care.

[Pg 190]

She supposed that this was an attempted suicide, and wondered what terrible sorrow had driven this beautiful young girl to self-destruction.

She ventured to ask the patient the question, but Kathleen seemed dazed as yet, and did not comprehend anything very clearly. She answered to every question that was asked her a feeble: "I don't know."

"I must wait until she gets better," was her thought; and she put Kathleen to bed, carefully spreading out her long gold curls over the pillow to dry. Soon the girl fell asleep, and then Mrs. Franklyn turned down the lamp and slipped away to ask Chester all about it.

He could tell her nothing but that he had heard the dull thud of her body striking the water, and that he jumped into the river to save her. He believed it was a suicide, as he had heard no sound or cry.

"Some poor girl, perhaps, who can not make an honest living and has sought death in her despair," he said, and the gentle lady agreed with him.

"We will keep her here until she gets well and strong, and then we will see how we can help her out of her trouble," she added, kindly.

"Yes, we will take care of her," cried Chester Franklyn, eagerly. "It may be she has some deadly enemies from whom she sought to escape in that terrible fashion. We will say nothing of her being here until she herself tells us what to do."

When the morrow dawned Kathleen was ill with a low fever, and so it chanced that while her friends were frantic with anxiety over her fate, Kathleen lay passive in the river cottage, carefully watched by Mrs. Franklyn, who wondered much over her mysterious guest.

"So young and beautiful; and she can not be a poor girl, for her clothing is of the finest quality," Mrs. Franklyn said to her grandson. "Perhaps there are people who are anxious over her fate. Do you think we ought to let it be known through the papers?" she added.

[Pg 191]

"No, not yet. Let us wait till she gets well and tells us what to do," he replied.

Chester Franklyn had fallen in love at first sight with the beautiful creature whose life he had saved. He was afraid that some one would take her away from him if he let her presence be known.

"Let me have my chance first," he said to himself, with all the selfish ardor of a young lover.

It seemed strange that Kathleen lay passive so long after the fever left her, without seeming to take any interest in anything. They asked her her name; they asked her where her home was, and how she came to be in the river. To everything she answered dreamily:

"I do not know."

They did not know that before Kathleen had been thrown into the river she had swallowed with her food a potent drug intended to produce death. It was entirely owing to the small quantity of food she had taken that she survived at all, but the strange drug had partially paralyzed her faculties. Memory was dormant, or returned in such faint gleams that it threw no light on her present state.

She knew that two beautiful, kindly faces—a woman's old but strangely lovely, and a young man's with deep blue eyes and curls of gold—bent daily over her pillow. She watched them eagerly, she smiled at them faintly and sweetly, but so numb were her reasoning faculties that she did not

wonder at their presence there. She was utterly quiescent.

Mrs. Franklyn became alarmed, fearing the girl was an idiot, but Chester was indignant at the very idea.

"She has had some shock; that is it," he said. "Be patient, grandma. She will come to herself."

It was strange how his heart went out to the girl, who lay so silently on the pillow all day, looking up at him with dark, inscrutable eyes, like an infant's in their wondering expression. [Pg 192]

In a week she seemed stronger. She could sit up in an easy-chair. She even talked a little, but it was just about things that she saw in the room—books, pictures, flowers. She would say, softly:

"How sweet! How pretty!"

At last she was strong enough to walk about the room.

"Grandma, I think she would like it better in the parlor," said Chester, one day. He took her hand and led her into a pretty, cozy apartment.

CHAPTER L.

"SHE WAS MY MOTHER."

"Sweet face, sweet eyes, and gleaming
Sun-gifted, mingling hair;
Lips like two rosebuds dreaming
In June's fruit-scented air."

Kathleen sat down in front of a bright coal fire, and leaned her curly head back against the easy-chair. In doing so, her upraised eyes encountered over the mantel the picture of a young girl done in water colors. It was a life-size head and bust, and represented a beautiful young creature with rosy cheeks, pouting lips, dark-blue eyes, and curly golden hair. The expression of the face was piquant and spirited, and greatly resembled Kathleen's own.

Kathleen gazed with startled eyes at this beautiful picture, and gasped, faintly:

"Who is it?"

She was alone with Chester, and as he looked up she saw a shadow of pain cloud his dark-blue eyes.

Drawing his chair close to hers, he half-whispered:

"She was my cousin. She has been dead many years."

"Her name?" exclaimed Kathleen, excitedly, and he lifted a warning hand.

"Not so loud. Grandma might hear," he said; then, answering the puzzled look in her eyes, he added, softly:

"It was grandma's youngest child—her only daughter, and she met such a tragic fate that it nearly broke her mother's heart. Even now she can not bear to talk of her. We never speak her name, because it makes our hearts ache." [Pg 193]

"It was Zaidee—Zaidee Franklyn," murmured the girl.

"How did you know?" in astonishment.

"No matter. Tell me all about her," answered Kathleen, whose memory had returned to her as by a flash of lightning at sight of that lovely face.

"There is little to tell," he replied. "My poor cousin's story is short and tragic, like her life. My grandmother had but two children, a son and a daughter. The son, my father, died years ago, but Zaidee, his petted young sister, died years before—died, alas! by her own hand."

She shivered like one in a chill, and he said:

"Was it not horrible? She was so young, so lovely, and she had everything, it seemed, to make her happy. But this is her story: When she was barely sixteen, a rich man from Boston married her and took her away from her simple home to his grand, rich one. She loved her handsome husband very dearly, and seemed to be wildly happy. Her people did not hear from her often, but she sent this picture and many gifts to her mother. In a year she had a little daughter, but she did not invite grandma to go and see the child. Vincent Carew was rich and great, and very proud, so the Franklyns believed that he was trying to break his young wife off entirely from her past. The Franklyns were proud, too, in their way. They resented it; and so the communication between the two families almost ceased, until, suddenly, like a clap of thunder, came the news that the young wife had committed suicide!"

"Why?" she gasped.

"We do not know. It was a profound mystery even to her husband. But it broke my grandfather's heart. He died in less than a week after the news came. Grandma came, then, to live with us at River Cottage. My mother died in a few years after, then my father. We two—grandma and I—are the last of the family unless my cousin, Kathleen Carew, Zaidee's child, is yet living. That we do [Pg 194]

not know. We wrote several times. No answer came, and we gave up the hope of ever knowing the daughter of the proud Vincent Carew."

"And she has never written to you?" asked the girl, in wonder.

"Never," he replied.

"There must be some mistake," she faltered.

"No, there is no mistake; but I fancy the proud Vincent Carew is at the bottom of it all. He would not care for his child to know her humble relatives on her mother's side. Why, he was governor of his state eight years, and was in Congress also. The Franklyns were plain simple people; my grandfather and my father were mechanics, although nobler hearts never beat in human breasts, and they were never rich. It is from the life-insurance money they left us that we are enabled to live in comparative comfort now."

Her eager, interested eyes made him go on rather diffidently:

"As for me, I have no taste that way. My desire is for a literary life. I have written some trifles that the critics praised."

"Your name?" the girl asked, curiously, gazing with interest at his handsome face.

"Chester Franklyn," he replied.

"Would you like to meet your unknown cousin—the daughter of the proud Vincent Carew?" she pursued.

His face grew grave.

"I do not know how to answer you," he replied. "She would not care for us. Perhaps her father has never told her about the Franklyns."

She looked at him with a strange expression, and held out to him her little white hand.

"I am your cousin—I am Kathleen Carew!" she said to him; and, while he stared in astonishment, she pointed at the picture of the beautiful girl.

"She was my mother!" she said.

CHAPTER LI.

[Pg 195]

A COUSIN FOR A LOVER.

Ah! love was never yet without
The pang, the agony, the doubt
Which rends my heart with ceaseless sigh,
While day and night roll darkling by.

BYRON.

What a day that was!

Kathleen seemed suddenly to grow well and strong at the wonderful discovery that it was her own cousin who had saved her life, and that the sweet, lovely woman who had cared for her so kindly was her own dear grandmother.

They had volumes to tell each other; and how Mrs. Franklyn was shocked when she heard that a decoy letter, pretending to be from herself, had at last brought Kathleen to Richmond.

She wept bitterly at the thought that her precious granddaughter had so nearly lost her life through this mysterious treachery.

"My dear, I never wrote you a line, nor did I ever hear from you. I thought you were too proud to care about us; so I let you alone, although it nearly broke my poor heart!"

She gazed with untiring love at the beautiful face, trying to trace in it every faint resemblance to her dead daughter.

"You are more like your father than your mother," she said, with vague disappointment. "Your eyes, your features are his; but there is an expression like Zaidee's, and your hair is gold like hers was, only a richer, deeper shade. You are more beautiful even than Zaidee was," she continued, fondly, as she stroked the bronze-gold curls.

Chester had little to say. He looked and listened eagerly, his heart thrilling at the thought that Kathleen was his cousin, and in a measure belonged to them.

"For her father has disinherited her; her step-mother cast her off. We are her nearest and dearest, and she will stay with us and share our lot," he said within himself.

Kathleen, while confiding very freely in them, had held back with a young girl's shyness the story of her love affair and her engagement of marriage. She did not suppose they would care for *that*, and she was so anxious to know what had befallen her uncle that she dwelt constantly on that subject.

[Pg 196]

"Perhaps they murdered him, too," she sobbed. "Oh, cousin! will you not telegraph at once to my friends in Boston, and let them know where I am? Perhaps in that way I may get news of him

sooner. And they will be so uneasy over my fate."

"They?" the young man repeated, with his curious eyes upon her face.

"Mrs. Stone, my friend, and—Mr. Darrell—the man I am to marry," explained Kathleen, with a blush. Her eyes had dropped, so she did not see the ashen pallor that suddenly overspread Chester Franklyn's face. "You will telegraph at once, will you not, cousin?" she repeated, and hastily scribbled down the addresses upon a card.

"I will go at once," he answered, taking the slip of paper and leaving the room. But a terrible temptation had assailed him. "Why not wait a little before I send the telegrams!" he thought. "I can not give her up just yet to the proud, rich man she is going to marry. If she stays with us a little longer, I may, perhaps, win beautiful Kathleen from him. It ought to be so. Grandma and I ought to have Zaidee's child for our own because we have been cheated of her sweetness all our lives. I—will—not—send the telegrams just yet. She will never know."

He had often read the saying that "all is fair in love and war," and it seemed to him that there could be nothing unfair in this. But yet his heart smote him when he went back and met the eager light in the dark eyes he loved so well.

"They will be so much relieved when they know that I am safe and well," she exclaimed. "And as soon as they can they will come for me."

"You are in a great hurry to leave us!" Chester cried, reproachfully.

[Pg 197]

"No, indeed, for I love you both dearly," the girl replied, not dreaming how his heart leaped at the words. "But I am so anxious over the fate of my uncle. Only think, cousin, I do not know if he is dead or alive. Perhaps they drowned him, too;" and her eyes filled with tears.

"Try and bear the suspense as well as you can. I will try to amuse you," and he kept his word as far as lay in his power. He read to her, sung to her, played games, talked, and Kathleen would have really enjoyed his company only for the cruel suspense of her waiting.

"It is strange they do not come. It almost seems as if they did not care for me," she said, wistfully, on the third day.

"They will come to-morrow. Do not think about them now. I want to sing you this sweet little song," he said, going over to the piano and seating himself.

He had found out that the best way to amuse or interest Kathleen was to read or sing to her while she lay quietly on the sofa, her arms over her head, her dark, curly lashes drooping over her sad, dreamy eyes. Many a time when he was not looking, the burning tears ran down her cheeks as she thought of Ralph, her dear, lost lover, who was brought so vividly to mind by Chester's poetry and songs.

So she lay very still now while Chester, who really played and sung very well, poured out in the sweet love-song the passion that filled his heart.

"When nightly my wild harp I bring
To wake all its music for thee,
So sweet looks that face while I sing,
To reason no longer I'm free.
I forget thou art queen of the land,
'Tis thy beauty alone that I see!
And trembling at touch of thy hand,
All else is forgotten by me.

"The spell is upon me asleep,
In the region of dreams thou art mine—
I wake, but, ah! 'tis to weep,
And the hope of my slumbers resign.
Ah, hadst thou been less than thou art,
Or I more deserving of thee,
Thou mightst have been queen of my heart,
Thou mightst have been all things to me."

Tears came to the singer's eyes and tears to the listener's, the words were so wildly sad. Chester thought of *her*, she of Ralph, so strange are love's entanglements.

"Go on," she murmured, unwilling that he should turn and see the burning tear-drops in her eyes, so Chester selected another song:

I've something to ask you to-night, Kathleen,
A secret I fain would know,
Oh, why do you seem so strange, Kathleen,
And why do you shun me so?
Come out on the porch in the starlight, sweet,
And tell me my joy or woe—
Your coldness is breaking my heart, Kathleen,
For, darling, I love you so!

You were never in earnest—were those your words?
Was that what you meant to say?

Your tones were so strangely low, Kathleen,
Yet I fancied I heard you say:
"I never loved you." Was that your voice,
Or the south wind's dreamy sigh?
Kathleen, Kathleen, you are dreaming, love,
Or perhaps it is only I!

Go and forget you? Kathleen, Kathleen,
Your light words were spoken in vain,
The revel was wild, and the wine flowed red,
But it never drowned his pain,
Till under the sod in the autumn days
He pillowed his dreamless head,
With "Twenty" carved on the marble slab
For he was but a boy, *she* said.

And Kathleen goes on her lightsome way,
And smiles at his simple heart,
And dazzles and lures as she dazzled him
With the coquette's Circean art,
While under the daisy-dimpled turf,
A-sleeping light and low,
Heart-broken molder the lips that sighed
Kathleen, I love you so!

He turned around on the piano-stool and looked at her. She was sitting upright, her dark eyes wide and startled.

"Forgive me," he said, gently. "The name was Irene, but I put in yours because it rhymed so well."

"But why do you choose such sad songs?" she said. "They make my heart ache."

[Pg 198]

"Because mine aches already," he answered, impulsively; and, seating himself by her side, he continued, passionately: "Darling Kathleen, I love you, and, unless you will give me your love in return, I shall die of heartbreak, like that poor lad in the song."

She remained perfectly silent a moment, then answered, rebukingly:

"But you are my cousin."

"Cousins often marry," he replied, eagerly.

"But I can not marry you, Chester; I am engaged to marry a young man in Boston. Besides, I don't love you," she replied.

"Do you love *him*?"

"Of—course," she replied; but her voice faltered as she thought how impossible it was for her to love Teddy, because of that other passion in her heart.

"Oh, Chester, please let me alone!" she cried, with sudden petulance. "You have not known me two weeks, and I don't want your love! I do not want anybody's love!"

Suddenly she burst into hysterical tears.

CHAPTER LII.

THE SEARCH FOR KATHLEEN.

Oh! when shall the grave hide forever my sorrow?
Oh! when shall the soul wing her flight from this clay?
The present is hell, and the coming to-morrow
But brings with new torture the curse of to-day.

BYRON.

On the night when Kathleen was so strangely rescued from the river a man and woman left Richmond by a midnight train for New York.

They were Ivan Belmont and Fedora, the woman who had played such a cruel part in the life of Ralph Chainey.

Whatever their mission in Richmond, it could not have been an honest one, since they were leaving the city in partial disguise—Ivan with a luxuriant blonde beard, and his companion with a curly brown wig over her flaxen hair, and a dotted veil drawn over her bold, handsome face.

[Pg 199]

They traveled second class, and seemed to shun observation, conversing with each other in low whispers.

"It was a very ugly thing for us that the old man got away," he observed.

She shrugged her shoulders, and replied:

"Oh, pshaw! I don't think it matters. He can never catch up with us. Who would suspect you of being the old negro hack-driver, or me of being that old witch, Grandmother Franklyn? Ha! ha!"

"True!" he replied; and echoed her laugh of security, forgetting that "he laughs best who laughs last."

They thought that Uncle Ben Carew, the old, downcast farmer, was a simple old fool; but they were doomed to find themselves mistaken. He had his wits about him, as he proved afterward; for as soon as he found that the old house was deserted, he made his way from the gloomy neighborhood into the busiest portion of the city. Within an hour the police were notified of what had occurred, and were organized to search for the missing girl.

They visited the old house, and some one who knew all about it declared that the place had not been tenanted for a year. The owners had died, and the property had fallen to their daughter, who was an actress somewhere, and had never come to claim her inheritance. The conspirators, whoever they were, had probably taken unlawful possession of the place just long enough to carry out their evil purposes, and then fled from the scene.

The weary night passed away, but there was no sign of the missing girl, and at the police headquarters the old man was advised to secure the aid of a detective in the search for Kathleen.

When he agreed to take their advice, and inquired who was the best man for the purpose, they all vied with each other in recommending handsome, dashing Jack Wren, the finest detective in the whole South.

Uncle Ben, who up in Boston had pretended to be such a poor man, had a fat wallet in his breast pocket. He sent for Jack Wren, and, giving him a princely retainer, placed the case in his hands.

[Pg 200]

"Now, tell me everything bearing on the case," said the detective.

Uncle Ben did so, and when dashing Jack heard the story of Ivan Belmont and the diamonds, he started up excitedly.

"That's your man!" he exclaimed. "Poor little Miss Carew! things look dark for her. That miscreant has doubtless made way with his step-sister, rather than restore the diamonds or their value."

Uncle Ben fell back, white and trembling.

"Kathleen murdered! Oh, God! do not hint at anything so horrible!" he gasped. "You must search for her everywhere. It may be he has only made her a prisoner."

CHAPTER LIII.

"OH, SIR, HAVE PITY ON ME!" PRAYED DAISY LYNN.

Misery! we have known each other
Like a sister and a brother,
Dwelling in the same lone home
Many years

SHELLEY.

It seemed almost as if there was a fate in it that poor Daisy Lynn, whose life-path had so strangely crossed Kathleen's, should again become a figure on the scene of her destiny.

Jack Wren having been furnished by Uncle Ben with a photograph of Kathleen, suddenly chanced upon a face that made him think he had found the missing girl.

It was a face at the window of a little cottage in the suburbs of the city—a beautiful face, dark-eyed, golden-haired, with piquant features, so close a copy of Kathleen's that the detective was startled. He consulted the photograph closely, and it seemed to him that the description answered in every particular. So he congratulated himself that he had been mistaken in his theory that Kathleen was dead.

"But why did they leave her alive, and what is she doing here?" he asked himself in wonder.

[Pg 201]

He made some cautious inquiries among the neighbors, and he found that the beautiful young girl was a governess in the family of a young lawyer who occupied the cottage. His wife was an invalid, and had employed the young girl to fill the position of nursery governess to her five tow-headed boys, "the worst limbs in the whole neighborhood," averred the gossiping neighbors.

The new governess Daisy Lynn, as she called herself, had only been there three weeks, they said, and they were sure she would not stay the month out. No one could endure that Perkins tribe more than a month. The oldest boy was twelve, the youngest only four. "But," said the grocery man at the corner, "from the biggest to the littlest, they are all imps of Satan!"

"But why did the girl come here? why does she stay? Evidently she is here of her own free will," thought the puzzled detective.

He made up his mind to a bold procedure: he would go and see the girl.

He rang the bell at the door, and a slatternly negro girl opened it and started at the elegant-looking caller with his shiny hat.

"I want to see Miss Lynn," he said; and she showed him into the little parlor, and went to call the governess.

He did not have to wait long before the face he had seen at the window appeared within the room—such a beautiful face, but, oh! so pale and frightened, the sweet lips trembling as she said, nervously:

"I—I don't know you, sir."

"But I know you, Miss Carew," he replied, as he rose and bowed.

"Miss Carew!" She caught eagerly at the words. "Oh, I knew you were mistaken! That is not my name, sir."

Jack Wren laughed lightly and drew the photograph from his pocket.

"Is not that your face?" he asked.

The lovely girl started with surprise.

[Pg 202]

"Oh, dear! it does look like me; but I never had my photograph taken in my life!" she exclaimed.

The detective smiled unbelievably.

"You are a very clever young girl, but I do not understand your game," he said, bluntly. "Why have you run away from your friends and your bright prospects, Miss Carew, to masquerade under a false name and wear out your life teaching the rough Perkins cubs?"

She trembled and grew deathly pale as she faltered:

"There is—there must be—some mistake. My name is really Daisy Lynn, and I—I have not—I have no friends and no bright prospects, except to earn my own living by unremitting toil."

Tears came into the dark eyes as she spoke. The great Southern detective looked at her with puzzled eyes. "What superb acting!" he thought, admiringly. "But, what the deuce is the matter with the girl, to make her hide herself in this way from her friends?"

"Perhaps you do not know who I am?" he said; and he held before her eyes a card on which was neatly engraved his name and profession.

"I—I have heard of you, Mr. Wren!" gasped Daisy Lynn.

She sunk into a chair, and put her small white hand before her eyes, as if to shut out some dreadful sight, her bosom heaving with frightened sobs.

He remained perfectly silent, and all at once Daisy Lynn slid out of her chair and knelt in child-like humility at his feet.

"Oh, sir, have pity on me!" she prayed. "Go away, and leave me in peace! I am not insane, whatever any one may say. That was but a temporary spell, and, under the care of the kind friend to whom Heaven directed me that awful night, I soon recovered my reason. A wrecked love had made me mad, but that is all over now. Only—only you would not be able to convince them of it. So I—I do not want to go back. Oh, God! I shall go mad, indeed, if I am sent again to that dreadful place! Mr. Wren, perhaps you have a sister of your own. Think of her, and, for sweet pity's sake, do not betray me to my enemies, who, under the guise of friends, would work me the bitterest woe!"

[Pg 203]

A light broke in upon his mind.

"The girl is insane. That explains everything."

He was a stern man, inured to trying scenes, but his heart stirred with pity for her, so young, so beautiful, and—insane.

He went up to her as she rose and sunk feebly into her chair. Touching her kindly on the shoulder, he said:

"I am very, very sorry for you, but it is better that you should return to your friends. They are almost broken-hearted over your disappearance, and have sent me here for you. Now, get your bonnet, like a good girl, and come with me."

"I can not go back to them. I would rather die," sobbed Daisy Lynn; and when he insisted, she grew frantic and rebellious. "I—will—not—go!" she cried. "They will put me in a horrible lunatic asylum, although I am not mad. Oh, Mr. Wren, have pity on a most unfortunate young girl! Go away and tell them you could not find me. Heaven will bless you for your goodness."

He thought it was a very good proof of her insanity that she expected Heaven to bless him for telling a falsehood for her sake, and smiled indulgently as he said:

"My dear young lady, think of the distress of your lover if I go back without you—the rich, handsome young man you have promised to marry."

An expression of blended pain and scorn crossed the lovely face.

"Do not speak to me of *him*," she cried, passionately. "It was his falsity that wrecked my life. But that brief madness has passed. I am sane now, and I scorn him as much as I once loved him."

Oh, the imperial scorn with which she drew her graceful form erect, the fire that flashed from her lovely eyes! He said to himself that she was the most beautiful girl he had ever beheld.

[Pg 204]

"It is not *he*, my false lover, that wants me; I am sure of that. It is my aunt that has sent you," she continued.

"No, it is your uncle, Mr. Carew," he replied.

"But I have no uncle," she replied, in surprise.

He was nonplused at her persistence in deception, and said, with rising impatience:

"You must really go with me and see Mr. Carew. If there is any mistake he will detain you but a few minutes."

"Will you not go and bring him here?" she asked, beseechingly.

"And give you a chance to escape while I am away? No; I am too sharp for that. Get your bonnet and come with me to the hotel where your uncle is staying," replied Mr. Wren, firmly.

With a stifled sob she rose to obey, although she said:

"You are very cruel, and I warn you that if I am sent to the lunatic asylum I shall kill myself."

"They will not send you there," he replied, soothingly.

In a few minutes she joined him in the hall, heavily veiled, and they set forth on their trip to the Broad Street Hotel, where Uncle Ben and Teddy Darrell were staying. He called a hack and assisted her into it, and in a very few minutes they arrived at their destination.

Uncle Ben was so prostrated with grief that he had been unable to leave his room for days. He was now in his private parlor, and Teddy was sitting with him, both men looking very sad and dejected, when the door suddenly opened and Jack Wren entered, the picture of triumph, leading a beautiful, weeping, dark-eyed girl.

"Kathleen, my darling!" cried Teddy, springing to meet her; but she shrieked, in dismay:

"I do not know you!"

CHAPTER LIV.

[Pg 205]

"IS THIS YOUR NIECE?"

My head is wild with weeping for a grief
Which is the shadow of a gentle mind.
I walk into the air; but no relief
To seek—or, haply, if I sought, to find.

SHELLEY.

Teddy Darrell was about to clasp the beautiful, weeping girl in his arms; but at her quick cry of alarm, he recoiled in amazement—not alone at her remonstrance, but because her voice was unlike that of Kathleen Carew.

Uncle Ben, who had also started forward in eager joy, drew back at the sound of the girl's voice, and the great detective looked from one face to the other in astonishment.

"Mr. Carew," he said at last, "is this your niece?"

"No," replied Uncle Ben.

"No," echoed Teddy Darrell.

"I told you so!" cried Daisy Lynn, with a radiant face; and Mr. Wren brought out the photograph.

"But this is her very face!" he exclaimed.

They agreed with him that it was wonderful—the likeness that existed between the girl and the picture—but they assured him that there were subtle differences in the features, and that the voices were quite unlike.

"Then I have to beg this young lady's pardon," said the great detective, rather crestfallen at his mistake; but he added, airily: "There's no harm done, anyhow."

"I beg your pardon, but there is," answered Daisy Lynn, her great, eager eyes brimming over with tears. "I have lost my situation with Mrs. Perkins through your mistake."

"Impossible!" he cried.

"It is, alas! too true," she answered, sadly. "Mrs. Perkins is a very high-tempered woman, and when I attempted to explain to her why I was going out so suddenly, she became terribly alarmed at the idea of my being carried off by a detective. She hinted broadly that I must have committed some dreadful crime, and discharged me on the spot."

"The wretch!" cried all three of the gentlemen in chorus, and Teddy, recalling his native gallantry, hastened to place a chair for the young girl.

[Pg 206]

"Pray sit down, miss," he began.

"Miss Daisy Lynn, permit me to present to you Mr. Carew and Mr. Darrell," said the detective.

Daisy bowed as she sunk into the chair; but Teddy Darrell stopped and stared as if he had seen a ghost.

"Daisy Lynn!" he echoed.

"Daisy Lynn!" cried Uncle Ben.

Both had heard the story of unfortunate Daisy Lynn, and explanations followed all around. The tender-hearted girl ceased weeping for herself to pity the fair young girl who had suffered so bitterly in her stead.

Then Jack Wren, who, now that everything was explained, no longer suspected Daisy of insanity, spoke his mind.

"I have made a great mistake," he said. "But I know that you will agree with me that it was very natural under the circumstances. I beg your pardon, and am ready to propose to you a plan by which to atone for my folly." She looked at him attentively, and he continued: "I have a very kind friend, a widow lady, who would be very glad to have you for a companion, I know. If you will permit me, I will take you to this kind lady at once, and I am sure you will find it a more pleasant situation than teaching those Perkins cubs."

"It was not very pleasant," answered the girl, sadly; and when she saw how eager he was to atone for the trouble he had brought upon her, she accepted his offer with shy gratitude.

Taking a pleasant leave of Mr. Carew and Teddy, she withdrew with the detective, and they were driven immediately to—River Cottage.

CHAPTER LV.

[Pg 207]

KATHLEEN AND DAISY MEET AT LAST.

No, no, 'tis vain to hover
Thus round a hope that's dead;
At last my dream is over;
'Twas sweet—'twas false—'tis fled!
T. MOORE.

It was the day following Kathleen's petulant rejection of her cousin's love, and the young girl, embarrassed by Chester's grieved and dejected looks, had gone to her room to nurse in solitude the pain at her heart.

"Why does no one come to me? Am I forgotten by my uncle, Mrs. Stone, and Teddy? Their silence and delay is very, very strange," she murmured, sadly; and just then she heard a low murmur of voices in the parlor, where she had left Mrs. Franklyn and Chester a while ago, pleading a headache as an excuse for retiring to her room.

"They have company. I am glad I came upstairs," she thought, feeling far too dejected to meet strangers.

The murmur of voices continued a while, then the front door closed, and Kathleen thought the guests were leaving.

Directly afterward, Mrs. Franklyn entered the room with an excited face.

"Kathleen, do you remember the strange story you told us about Daisy Lynn?" she asked. "Well, she is here in this house! She is no more insane than you are, and is your living image—only, perhaps, not *quite* as pretty. She knows all you suffered in her place, and is just dying to meet you. Will you come down?"

"I should like to have her come up here," answered Kathleen, who felt as if she would like to be quite alone at first with Daisy Lynn, the fair young girl whose line of life had so strangely and tragically crossed her own.

Mrs. Franklyn understood her wish, and a few minutes afterward she led Daisy to Kathleen's door and gently withdrew.

They looked at each other—the two beautiful young creatures—then they smiled at the likeness they saw in each other's faces. At that smile their hearts leaped to each other.

"Daisy Lynn! Oh, you poor darling!" cried Kathleen, holding out her arms.

[Pg 208]

Daisy ran into them. They kissed, then wept together.

They sat down side by side on the bed, like two sisters, and wept like little children for a while; then Daisy wiped her eyes, and said, piteously:

"Oh, Miss Carew, can you *ever* forgive me?"

"It was not your fault, Daisy, darling. But you must call me Kathleen; you know we are not strangers to each other. I know all about you. I have lived at your home, slept in your pretty room, and—can *you* ever forgive *me*, dear?—I read your sweet diary! I was so lonely and so curious over the girl whose identity had become mixed with mine."

"It was very silly, was it not?—that is all I regret about it," Daisy Lynn answered, blushing crimson. Then she looked fearlessly into Kathleen's eyes as she added: "But I am cured now. I despise him. I could not love him now if he begged me on his knees!"

"I am glad of that, dear, for he was not worthy of you," said Kathleen, fervently.

"You know him?" cried the other girl, in surprise, and then Kathleen told her all about her wicked step-brother.

She was rejoiced to see how disgusted Daisy Lynn became with the accomplished villain who had once been the hero of her girlish dreams.

"But, Daisy, tell me where you have been all this time?" said Kathleen, curiously; and Daisy smiled as she answered:

"Most of the time with an old couple in the country, to whose lonely little house I wandered that night after I escaped from my keeper and wandered into the woods. You see, Kathleen, I was not violently insane, only sort of melancholy mad for a while; and because I foolishly attempted to poison myself, an incompetent physician pronounced me mad, and persuaded my aunt to send me to a lunatic asylum. Well, in my horror and grief I confided my cruel distress to those good old people, and they believed me and pitied me. They let me stay with them, and were as good to me as if they had been my parents. A few months ago the good old man died, and his gentle old wife soon followed him to the grave. Then the little farm passed into the ownership of a distant connection of theirs, Lawyer Perkins, of Richmond. He employed me to teach his children."

[Pg 209]

She went on then and told Kathleen how strangely the detective had found her, and all that had happened afterward.

"So Uncle Ben is alive, thank Heaven! I must go to him!" cried Kathleen, springing to her feet in wild excitement.

"No, dear, for Mr. Wren has gone to bring them here to you. Mrs. Franklyn told him you were here," replied Daisy; then she started as a low rap sounded on Kathleen's door.

When she opened it, there was Chester, looking so remorseful and dejected that her tender heart leaped with pity for his woe.

"May I speak to you alone for one moment, dear cousin?" he asked, humbly.

She went out into the little hall with him, and Chester manfully confessed his sin, and humbly begged her forgiveness.

"All my foolish plans for keeping you away from your own true lover and winning you for myself have come to naught. Heaven watched over you, dear Kathleen, and foiled my selfish love. Oh, Heaven! how ashamed I am, how wretched! and you can never forgive me!"

"Yes, I can," answered the girl, nobly. She pressed his hand gently in hers as she added: "I forgive you, dear cousin, and I will forget all about it, and remember nothing but that I owe you my life."

"God bless you!" he said, chokingly, and went down-stairs. But he was not brave enough to meet his rival yet. He went away for a long walk, unwilling to witness the meeting between Kathleen and her betrothed, the man that Jack Wren said was so rich and handsome. Poor fellow! he might have felt happier had he known how little Kathleen cared for Teddy. It was Ralph who filled all her thoughts, hopeless as they were.

[Pg 210]

"How am I changed! My hopes were once like fire;
I loved, and I believed that life was love. . . .
I love, but I believe in love no more."

"Love is a tyrant that has no mercy. I wish I could forget all my past!" she sighed nightly to her pillow; but Shelley's lines would recur to her with cruel pathos:

"Forget the dead, the *past*? O yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it;
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets that glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
That joy, once lost, is *pain*."

Chester had scarcely left the house before the detective returned with Mr. Carew and Teddy Darrell. Kathleen flew down-stairs, vouchsafed Teddy a sedate kiss, and fell into her uncle's arms.

CHAPTER LVI.

"SO SHINES A GOOD DEED IN A NAUGHTY WORLD."

Howe'er it be, it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

TENNYSON.

Kathleen remained a week longer with her relatives; but such importunate letters came to her from Mrs. Stone and Helen Fox that she decided to go home to Boston, promising her

grandmother that they should meet often in future.

Leaving her friend Daisy to brighten the quietude of River Cottage, Kathleen departed with her uncle and her betrothed for Boston.

She had promised Daisy that she would stop in Philadelphia and inquire for her about her aunt, Miss Watts. She also wanted to see her benefactor, the kind-hearted Mr. Hall.

To her dismay, she found, on inquiry, that Miss Watts had died three months before, and her will, made years ago, bequeathed her snug little fortune to her niece, Daisy Lynn.

There were no greedy relatives to dispute the will, so Kathleen had the blended pain and pleasure of writing to Daisy that she was bereaved of her only living relative by death, but that her aunt's demise had left her rich.

Kathleen sent her address to Samuel Hall, and the young man came promptly to call on her, his kind face beaming with delight at seeing again the beautiful heroine of his romantic adventure. He was shocked, however, when he heard of the second peril from which she had escaped.

[Pg 211]

"It is that woman Fedora who planned it, I feel sure!" he exclaimed; for he believed the woman was wicked enough for anything.

Kathleen did not agree with him, for her uncle had confided to her his and the detective's belief that Ivan Belmont was the guilty party. Jack Wren had been to Boston, carefully spotting the young man's movements from the time that Kathleen had charged him with the theft of her jewels, and he believed he had found a clew that, if carefully followed up, would lead to his conviction.

Uncle Ben Carew was very much pleased with Kathleen's friend, and when he left her went for a stroll down Chestnut Street with him.

Sammy Hall thought that the old gentleman was very inquisitive, he asked so many questions, getting out of the rather quiet young man the fact that he was engaged to a beautiful fellow-clerk, Miss Tessie Mays, but that they thought themselves too poor to marry until he had laid by a little sum for housekeeping.

"You shall hear from me again, young man," said Uncle Ben, mysteriously; and he did.

Several months later, when he had almost forgotten all about the old man's promise, he received a deed of gift to the pretty little furnished house where Miss Watts had lived. Uncle Ben had bought it from Daisy Lynn, who continued to reside with the Franklyns, and he gave it to Sammy Hall in his niece's name.

"Marry your lovely Tessie and be happy in your cottage home, the gift of Kathleen's grateful heart to her noble friend," wrote Kathleen, sweetly.

Sammy Hall lost no time in taking this pleasant advice, and he and his charming Tessie spent a long and pleasant life in the pretty cottage home. Their first daughter was called Tessie, for her mother; but the next time Heaven sent them girl twins, "as like as two peas," wrote Sammy, when he announced to Kathleen that he had named them Kathleen and Daisy.

[Pg 212]

CHAPTER LVII.

MRS. CAREW TRIUMPHS IN HER SWEET REVENGE UPON KATHLEEN.

Revenge is a two-edged sword;
It has neither hilt nor guard.
Wouldst thou wield this sword of the Lord?
Is thy grasp, then, firm and hard?

CHARLES H. WEBB.

"Kathleen, you and Uncle Ben must come to me soon for a visit. It is such a little time now before your marriage, and I can never have you to myself again after that!" exclaimed Helen Fox.

"Uncle Ben is going back to the country to-morrow, but I shall be glad to come," Kathleen answered.

She had been back at Mrs. Stone's for a week, but neither Mrs. Carew nor Alpine had called on her or sent any message—"the heartless wretches!" as Mrs. Stone said, indignantly.

Rumor said that the mother and daughter were making hasty preparations to sail for Europe, to be absent several years. It was rumored also that the disreputable Ivan had crossed the sea before them, flying from justice. The story of Kathleen's lost diamonds was public property now; but there was no chance that she would ever recover the jewels or their value, for Ivan had disappeared, and his mother and sister angrily repudiated the debt.

Uncle Ben himself went to the two proud women, begging them to do his niece justice.

"Think, madame," he said; "you and your daughter have stripped Kathleen of everything. The jewels were all that remained to her, and now that she is to marry a rich man, she would like to have the money for her wedding *trousseau*. It is very little to you out of your great wealth, but to her it is *all*. Be just and fair, and make good what she has lost by your son's dishonesty."

Mrs. Carew laughed mockingly.

"I would not give her a penny if she were starving to death!" she said.

[Pg 213]

"Your own husband's daughter!" he said, reproachfully.

"I hate her the more for that. I hate everybody he ever loved!" she replied, vindictively.

"You hated poor Zaidee and caused her death, I know," he replied, bitterly.

Her face suddenly grew livid, and she looked at her accuser with startled eyes.

"It—it is false!" she muttered, weakly.

"It is God's truth," answered the old man. "You told Zaidee Carew a trumped-up story of her husband's falsity, and then—her death followed. Answer me this, madame: Was her death a suicide or—a murder?"

She quailed before the stern old man, pale as death, trembling with nervous alarm; but Alpine rose up suddenly and interposed between him and her mother.

"How dare you distress my mother so with your shocking hints and suspicions?" she cried, violently. "Get out of here at once, you old wretch, or I will call Jones to throw you out into the street!"

"As your mother did poor Kathleen," he sneered.

"And served her right," she hissed. Then she rang the bell violently. When Jones appeared, she said: "Take this old beggar and throw him into the street! If you ever admit him again, you will be discharged."

Uncle Ben moved toward the door with Jones, but, looking back, asked, pleadingly:

"Will *you* not pay your brother's debt?"

"Never! Now go!" she stormed, and the rich curtains fell behind the bent retreating form; but from the hall a strange, exultant laugh came back to them, and Mrs. Carew shuddered.

"Heavens! how horribly that laugh sounded like my husband's laugh!"

CHAPTER LVIII.

[Pg 214]

"I WILL NEVER HUMBLE MYSELF TO YOU AGAIN."

Fare thee well, and if forever,
Still forever fare thee well,
Even though unforgiving, never
'Gainst thee shall this heart rebel.
BYRON.

Helen Fox was a very bright girl. She did not tell Kathleen that Ralph Chainey frequently visited the house, nor did she mention to him that Kathleen was to be her guest. Yet she knew very well that the unhappy young lovers were sure to meet under her roof.

And, in fact, Kathleen had not been twenty-four hours at Helen's when George Fox encountered Ralph somewhere, and dragged him home with him.

Kathleen was playing and singing for Helen. Her back was turned to the door, so she did not know when the two young gentlemen entered and silently seated themselves, obeying a gesture from Helen.

The young girl, unconscious of her lover's presence, sung on, sweetly and sadly:

"One word is too often profaned,
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it.
One hope is too like to despair,
For prudence to smother,
And Pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

"I can give not when men call love,
But wilt thou accept not—
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not,
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the day for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?"

The plaintive words rang in sad echoes through her lover's brain:

"The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the day for the morrow?"

She turned around, and in a minute more she saw him coming forward to speak to her. A start, and she recovered herself enough to speak to him, but her voice faltered, and the little hand, as it touched his, was deadly cold. It was like the old, sad song:

"We met—'twas in a crowd,
And I thought he would shun me,
He came, I could not breathe,
For his eyes were upon me,
He spoke—his words were cold,
Though his smile was unaltered—
I knew how much he felt,
For his deep-toned voice faltered."

She did not know what he was saying to her, or what she murmured in reply. She could realize nothing clearly but the ecstatic consciousness of his presence, that had such power to thrill her whole being.

Then she found herself slipping into a seat by Helen, and twining her cold fingers in those of her friend. They turned the conversation cleverly away from her, but in a very few moments George Fox got up and left the room, saying as he went:

"I will get those specimens we were talking about, Ralph."

Ten minutes later he called down the stairs:

"Helen, will you please come up and help me find those things I brought from Palestine for Ralph?"

"George can never find anything without my assistance," laughed the young girl, as she excused herself and left the room.

The unhappy lovers were alone together—perhaps by the clever scheming of George and Helen, perhaps by chance; who could tell? [Pg 215]

There ensued a moment of intense embarrassment. Kathleen, sitting with down-dropped eyes, felt her lover's eager brown eyes upon her, and a deep blush arose to her beautiful face. Slowly she raised her bashful eyes and they met his—deep, passionate, reproachful, beseeching, all in one. In spite of herself, her own gaze replied to that look—answered love for love.

A moment, and he rose and came toward her. She thrilled with ecstasy as he sat down by her side. Her little hand, icy cold a moment before, grew burning hot as he touched it with his own.

"Kathleen, forgive me," he murmured, "but I can not let this blessed chance pass. I wrote to you. Did you receive my letter?"

"Yes," she faltered.

"Cruel girl! And you would not reply? Kathleen, was that just or fair? Could you find no excuse in your heart for me when I had told you my whole sad story?"

"I—I—was sorry for you. I—wanted to—write—but I promised not to," she whispered, almost inaudibly.

"Promised not to write to me!" His dark eyes flashed with anger. "Who was so cruel as to forbid you? Mr. Darrell?"

"No—No! Teddy knows nothing. It was my uncle. It seemed to him that it would not be right to my—to—to—Mr. Darrell!"

"To Mr. Darrell! Oh, Kathleen, is it true, that you will marry him? Do you love him?"

"Do not ask me. It is not right. You—you—are not free!" she cried, trying to be loyal to her absent betrothed.

"I shall be—soon. The courts will certainly grant me a divorce from that dreadful woman. But then, Kathleen, my freedom will avail me nothing if you are lost to me! Oh, my own love—my darling! be brave, and break through the fetters that bind you to this man you do not love! Wait for me?"

Oh, the passionate pleading in his voice and eyes! how they thrilled her soul. She wished to herself that she had never seen poor Teddy, whom she had so rashly promised to marry. [Pg 216]

"Oh, I must not listen to you!" she sobbed. "Please, Ralph, do not speak to me so; do not look at me! I can not bear your eyes!" and she hid her own with a trembling hand.

There was silence for a moment, but Ralph could not give it up. It seemed to him that he was pleading for more than life.

"Kathleen, don't be angry, dear; but I can not give it up so easily," he began. "If I thought you did not love me, if I believed you cared for Teddy Darrell, I would not say another word. But—if—I—were—free—you—would love me again, would you not, my dear one?"

Kathleen had been fighting down the weakness of her loving heart. She looked at him with sad, hopeless eyes.

"Spare me!" she sighed. "Oh, Ralph, we must not count on what has been or what may be. I am promised to another, and I can not break my vow. Think of the suffering I should bring to Teddy's noble heart."

"He would soon forget you," Ralph Chainey urged.

"Then you may soon forget me, too," she replied.

"But, Kathleen, my darling, it is so different. I love only you, while your Teddy has had scores of loves. Think, if you marry him, his fickle heart may soon tire of you; then how wretched you would be!"

"I do not believe that Teddy is fickle. If I thought so, I would beg him to release me from my promise. But he loves me truly, in spite of his past, and so I must be true to him," sadly replied Kathleen.

"And your marriage day is set?" he asked, gloomily.

"It is only two weeks from now," she replied; then her courage failed her; she burst into tears, and sobbed miserably against his shoulder.

Ralph tried to soothe her, whispering:

"If he knew you cared like this—for—me—he would not want to marry you. No true lover would accept the hand without the heart." [Pg 217]

"He must never know—for—I—I—shall learn to love him by and by. Mrs. Stone says so; they all say so," she whispered.

"They are driving you into a—a—a wretched future with their silly advice!" cried the young man, violently, despair goading him to desperation. He pushed her from him and rose to his feet.

"I have been deluding myself," he said, bitterly. "I thought you loved me. I was mistaken, I see. I will never humble myself to you again, proud Kathleen. From this moment to my life's end, we are strangers. Farewell!" and with a stately bow he was gone.

Kathleen sprung to her feet with wild despair at her loss.

"Oh, Ralph! come back!" she cried, faintly; but he was beyond the reach of her voice.

She threw herself weeping into the chair where he had sat but just now.

"Gone—and forever!" she sobbed in bitterest agony, and there came over her a longing to die and be at rest from her sorrow. Life seemed too bitter to be borne, now that the last hope had failed, and Ralph had gone from her "forever."

CHAPTER LIX.

OH, RALPH CHAINEY, WAKE!

How murderers walk the earth,
Beneath the curse of Cain,
With crimson clouds before their eyes
And flames about their brain;
For blood has left upon their souls
Its everlasting stain!

The Dream of Eugene Aram.

Ralph Chainey left the presence of his loved and lost Kathleen with a heart full of bitterness and pain, and hurried home.

He had concluded his engagement in Boston the previous evening, and it was a great relief to him, for he was eager to get away from the city that held Kathleen. Stay there, and see her wedded to another, he could not! That way lay madness.

He had dismissed his company for several months. He was going to travel, he said, although the manager pointed out to him that now was the time to reap a golden harvest, if ever. He was even more popular now than before, if such a thing could be. The divorce proceedings had given him notoriety. People who had not gone to see him act before, went now, just for a sight of his handsome face. [Pg 218]

He loved his art, but the money was no object to him. Fortune had already showered her golden favors on him in lavish measure. He could not be tempted to remain.

"No, mother, I can not stay," he answered, sadly, when she pleaded with him. "I must get away as soon as this divorce business is settled. That will be soon—in a week or so, my lawyers tell me. Then I will go abroad and try to live down this unpleasant notoriety. You do not blame me, mother?"

She sighed, but answered bravely:

"No; but it will be very lonely, my son."

"You will have my brother, his wife and little ones to cheer you," he said, moved to the heart by

her tears. He knew well that he was her favorite son.

He kissed her, and went to his own room, wrote some letters, and then went with his mother for a drive. At night he felt as if the day had been a month long. Oh, how cruel it was, this love that mastered him in spite of his pride!

"You may rouse your pride, you may use your reason,
And seem for a space to slay Love so;
But all in his own good time and season
It will rise and follow where'er you go."

He threw himself down, dressed, on a couch in the luxurious room, and gave himself up to bitter-sweet memories of the girl he loved so hopelessly, living over in his thoughts every time he had met her until now, when her dark eyes had made shipwreck of his life. Time passed unnoted, although the tiny French clock had tinkled musically the midnight hour.

What a picture of manly beauty he made, lying there with half-shut eyes on the rich couch with its Oriental draperies. The gas-light, half-turned down, cast weird shadows all about the room. In the little sleeping-room beyond, seen through the half-drawn *portière*, all was dark and still. Did a white, desperate face with gleaming eyes peer out of that gloom upon the young man resting there in his velvet dressing-gown, one shapely hand tossed up over his brown curly head, the dark, curly lashes drooping downward to the pale cheek?

[Pg 219]

Yes, he was well worth looking at, this gifted young actor, this genius who at barely twenty-five had scored such dazzling successes in the dramatic world, and written his name up high upon the scroll of fame. It was no wonder that women raved over his beauty and his genius, and that they filled his daily mail with love letters that he flung into the fire after one contemptuous glance.

But were they eyes of love that gleamed on him now, lying so pale and still and sad, with his thoughts upon his beautiful young love?

Alas! a gleam of tigerish hate shone in those steel-blue orbs as they watched the young man; and when at last the fringed lashes drooped against his cheek, a faint sigh of relief escaped the lips of the impatient watcher. For hours and hours she had been waiting there; but it seemed as if he did not mean to retire to-night. Now he had fallen into a light doze. Perhaps he would sleep there all night.

Oh, Ralph Chainey, wake! From the curtained darkness beyond a fiend is gliding toward you!

The shrouding hood of the long cloak has fallen back from the face of a woman—a bold, handsome face with steel-blue eyes, and glittering golden hair. In her upraised hand glitters a long thin dagger, on her face is stamped in awful, ashen pallor the fell purpose—murder!

But he sleeps on lightly, dreaming, perhaps, of Kathleen, while this beautiful fury glides soundlessly across the thick moquette carpet, gains his side, poises her shining weapon on high, aims for his heart, and—it descends, it pierces his breast!

Ralph Chainey was sleeping but lightly, and as the cold steel entered his breast a shudder ran over his whole frame, the dew of pain started on his brow, and with a shriek of mortal agony he staggered to his feet, clutching blindly at the midnight assailant.

[Pg 220]

She had not counted on this; she thought her frenzied blow would be short, sharp, and decisive, that she would have time to fly from the scene of her terrible crime.

She was mistaken. His outstretched arms caught and held her with the momentary fierce strength of a dying man; his blood spurted out in hot streams upon her face and hands.

And meanwhile his shriek of agony had aroused the house. Earl Chainey, his brother, started wildly from his dreams, and his wife, affrighted at that awful sound, buried her pale face in the pillows. Mrs. Chainey, lying awake and restless, brooding over her son's departure, recognized Ralph's voice in an instant, and, with a terrible foreboding of evil, sprung forward to his rescue.

Upon the threshold of the door they met—the mother and her elder son. Earl flung the door wide, and together they sprung into the room.

Not a moment too soon was their entrance, for Ralph's momentary strength had failed from the profuse loss of blood. He had struggled madly to hold his assailant, but her superior strength had overpowered him, and as he sunk back heavily upon the couch, she raised her bloody weapon for a second, surer blow.

But it never reached its mark, for Earl's strong arm caught and flung her fiercely aside as he knelt by his fallen brother.

CHAPTER LX.

"MY LOVE SHALL CALL HIM BACK FROM THE GRAVE!"

"Oh, my dear, how ill you look this morning. Surely you did not sleep well!" Helen Fox exclaimed, gazing in surprise and pain at Kathleen's pale cheeks and heavy, somber eyes.

It was the morning after her painful interview with Ralph. Kathleen had not closed her heavy eyes all night for thinking of her lost lover and his cruel, parting words. They had pierced her

[Pg 221]

heart like a thorn, and some sweet, sad lines, strangely appropriate, rang in dizzy changes through her brain:

"It came with the merry May, love,
It bloomed with the summer prime;
In a dying year's decay, love,
It brightened the fading time.
I thought it would last for years, love,
But it went with the winter snow—
Only a year ago, love—
Only a year ago!

"'Twas a plant with a deeper root, love,
Than the blighting Eastern tree;
For it grew in my heart, and its fruit, love,
Was a bitter morsel to me.
The poison is yet in my brain, love,
The thorn in my heart, for you know,
'Twas only a year ago, love—
Only a year ago!"

"Yes," the girl thought, sadly, bitterly, "the root of that love went so deep in my heart that I can never pluck it out unless my life goes with it! Oh, God! that I *could* forget—that I could give *all* my heart to the one who holds the promise of my hand! Oh, Teddy, Teddy! you deserve more of me than this! You are so good, so noble, you believe in me so fully, little dreaming that the heart which should be yours is given to another!"

She looked at Helen with a smile so faint that it was sadder than tears. She could not speak, and Helen put her arm tenderly about the drooping little figure, so pathetic in its unspoken despair, understanding without one word all the sorrow in Kathleen's heart.

And even then the newsboys running through the streets were shouting wildly:

"Extra copies of *The Globe*—all about the murder of the handsome actor, Ralph Chainey, by his jealous wife!"

Their startled ears caught the sound—the name. Starting apart, the two beautiful young girls gazed with blanched faces into each other's eyes.

The words were repeated clearly just beneath the window—blasting words, that coldly drove the shuddering blood back from Kathleen's lips to her heart. With a moan, she slipped down to the floor, winding her arms about Helen's knees, leaning her head against her while she wailed:

"Dead! Murdered! Oh, my love, Ralph!"

Then consciousness fled, she slipped inertly to the floor, and Helen, with a pallid face and trembling limbs, ran out to purchase a copy of *The Globe*.

Ere Kathleen had recovered from her swoon, Helen had hastily run over the startling news—the attempted murder of Ralph Chainey by Fedora, the woman whom he was suing in the courts for divorce.

"But for the opportune entrance of his brother, Mr. Earl Chainey," ran the paragraph, "the fiend would have succeeded in her fell design. The deadly blade was descending a second time to sheath itself in the victim's breast, when she was caught and violently hurled aside by Earl Chainey. She proved to be Fedora, the wife whom he was suing for divorce. She now lies in a prison cell, awaiting her punishment, which will probably be a capital one, as Ralph Chainey has never regained consciousness, owing to the loss of blood, and his death is momentarily expected."

[Pg 222]

It was to bear this terrible shock to her heart that Kathleen recovered consciousness. Was it not a wonder she did not go mad with the horror of it all?

Parting from her only yesterday in despair and anger—lying dead, perhaps, this moment—dying at least, and dying before he had forgiven her for her coldness and hardness. Oh, God, the pity of it all!

Weeping, she lay upon Helen's breast. Pride all gone, she laid her heart bare to her sympathetic friend.

"Oh, Helen, it will kill me unless I go to him—unless he speaks my forgiveness before he dies!"

"You *shall* go my darling," was the answer; and in less than an hour the carriage was at the door. The two girls stepped into it, and they were rapidly driven to Mrs. Chainey's suburban home.

All the way Kathleen lay upon her friend's breast, weeping, always weeping. In all her long after-life she could never forget that long hour of misery and suspense, in which she could not tell whether she should find him dead or alive. Would he pronounce her forgiveness, or would his lips be stiff in death, and the memory of his anger remain forever a thorn in her heart?

How the cold March rain swirled through the leafless shrubbery about the great stone house, with its closed doors and windows, suggesting so vividly the presence of death. Thank God! there was one thing lacking—the funereal crape upon the door. At the worst, he was still alive.

"Alive, alive! oh, thank God!" murmured Kathleen through her raining tears.

Helen tenderly supported her as they left the carriage. Soon they were within the house; Kathleen was waiting with a wildly beating heart for some one to come to them. [Pg 223]

But when Ralph's mother came to them, Kathleen was beyond speech. It was Helen who had to prefer the request that they should see Ralph—"Friends, old and dear friends," she said, in excuse.

The gentle, gray-haired lady looked in wonder at the beautiful, weeping girl, the fairest she had ever beheld. Her heart went out to her at those tears.

"They are for my boy," she thought, tenderly.

But she hesitated, for the doctors had forbidden any one to enter the room.

"He knows no one. He has spoken but twice, and then just to utter a name," she said, looking doubtfully at the two fair supplicants.

"A name?" whispered Kathleen, eagerly.

"Yes; it is that of a young girl whom I fancy he loves. If it were only *her* now," she said, musingly.

"The name?" questioned Helen Fox, with eager impatience.

"Kathleen!" replied Mrs. Chainey.

Oh, what a cry came from Kathleen's lips!

"Oh, my love, my love, you have not forgotten me! I am Kathleen! Oh, madame, let me go to him!"

"Come!" was the thrilling answer, and as she led the girl away, Kathleen's heart throbbed wildly with the thought that she should hear his lips pronounce her forgiveness.

"And he shall not die! My love shall call him back from the grave!" she sobbed.

CHAPTER LXI.

SHE LOVED MUCH.

I would have rather been a slave
In tears, in bondage, by his side,
Than shared in all, if wanting him,
This world had power to give beside.

L. E. LANDON.

She was kneeling by his couch—she was gazing through her blinding tears upon that pallid, emotionless face, as still now as though it already bore the stamp of death; her hand touched his, but it did not respond to her passionate pressure, and when she called his name, there was no answer—not even a quiver of the dark, curling lashes lying so heavily against the marble-white cheek. [Pg 224]

Mrs. Chainey and the two physicians looked on in the tenderest compassion. The story of the young girl's love was written on her anguished face, and they knew, alas! that Ralph Chainey lay close to the borders of spirit-land. The dark eyes would never open on that most beautiful face bending over him, the pale lips would never uncloseto speak her name.

Breathlessly she called upon his name, beseeching him to look at her, to speak to her; but the spell that wrapped him was too deep. Those strong men listening to her wept in sympathy. They had no hope. It had been so difficult to stanch the flow of blood from the terrible wound so close to his heart, that he was sinking from inanition—he could not survive the weakness.

Suddenly the girl turned and looked at them. They were whispering together. She caught some disjointed words:

"It has been tried with success. You remember cases of?—but he is so far gone, I doubt—transfusion of blood—do you think?"

It startled them, the way the weeping girl sprung to her feet. New life seemed to come to her. She threw off the long fur cloak from her slender form, pushed back the sleeve from the most beautiful white arm they had ever beheld, and cried, beseechingly:

"You can save him! Oh, take my blood—my very life, so that you restore him!"

They were shocked at first, but she would not listen. She implored them to yield to her wish.

"I am so strong, I have such splendid health, it will not hurt me—I can bear it!" she cried, pleadingly, and they were full of admiration for her courage and bravery.

Her lovely face shone with its lofty purpose.

"Impossible!" they answered; but they gazed with admiring eyes at the beautiful girl whose fresh young loveliness indeed hinted at glowing health and strength; but it seemed hopeless, such an experiment. He was so far gone. Any minute might launch his life's bark out upon death's unknown sea. [Pg 225]

She could not bear it, this obstinate refusal. Oh, to save him, to save him she would lay down her life!

A desperate thought came to her. Her dark eyes fastened on a rich blue vein in the rosy white arm she had bared to their view. A furtive movement and she had slipped from the burnished mass of her golden tresses a toy dagger with a jewel-studded hilt. Maddened with misery, she thrust the keen point against the blue vein, and the scarlet tide of her life-blood spurted out in a tiny vivid jet. Oh, horror!

They sprung toward her, one bound a handkerchief over the wound, but—her bravery had thrilled their hearts. They could not hesitate longer. It was a forlorn hope, but yes, they would try the experiment!

CHAPTER LXII.

"GOD BLESS BRAVE, BONNY KATHLEEN CAREW!"

So silent! Yet it seems to me
That had you lived, and had I died,
My dead heart must have heard you call,
And, throbbing with new life, replied.

Doctor Beard was an enthusiast in his art, and his fine eyes shone with eager interest as he realized the delicate and dangerous operation that lay before him and his colleague, Doctor Miller. Both were comparatively young, but they had attained eminence already, and if any physician in Boston was capable of conducting this experiment, it was one or both of these two.

They gazed anxiously into each other's eyes as they made their hasty preparations. Would it fail, or would it succeed? Death was so near—so perilously near! Would the rushing tide of life ever flow through those numb veins again? Yes, if there were any efficacy in love and prayer; for the stricken mother knelt, weeping and praying, by her boy's side, and down-stairs, in the darkened parlor, Helen Fox, waiting in keen suspense, lifted her heart in earnest petitions that God would spare the young life trembling in the balance. Within the great house all was trembling anxiety and suspense, while outside the wild March wind shook the dead branches of the trees and drove the gusty rain against the windows with a mournful patter, as though kindly Nature wept for the bright young life going out into darkness.

[Pg 226]

When years had fled and gray hairs began to creep into their bonny brown curls, Doctor Beard and Doctor Miller still loved to tell the story of that day, and how it ended—of the patient who lay so close, so awfully close to the portals of death that it did not seem possible for human art to save him, and of the beautiful, brave young girl who had prayed them on her knees to take the blood from her round, white arm and infuse it into the patient's, giving him new life; how they had hesitated to wound that tender, exquisite flesh, and how she had taken the initiative, thrusting a jeweled pin from her hair into the blue vein.

"I tell you it was *grand!*" cried Doctor Beard, with enthusiasm. "I could hesitate no longer. I was longing to make the experiment from the first moment the thought entered my head. So we asked the consent of Miss Fox, the young girl's dearest friend, who had brought her there. She was willing, and we tried it. Tried it, and—with the grandest success."

"It was magical the way that the girl's fresh young blood put new life into him," agreed Doctor Miller. "Why, I give you my word, I had *no* faith in the operation. The fellow looked like a dead man. I could have sworn he would never revive again, yet—it was magical, as I said just now—when we had carefully bound up their arms, that brave, beautiful girl leaned over him, looked into his face, and cried in accents of piercing anguish:

"Oh, Ralph, my darling, come back to Kathleen! You must not die!"

"And you may believe me or not," said Doctor Beard, taking the thread of the story again, "but the dead man opened his eyes and met her look. The color began to come back to his ashen face. He smiled faintly, whispered her name, 'Kathleen,' turned on his side, and slept calmly as a weary child."

[Pg 227]

"That was the proudest moment of my life!" cried Doctor Miller. "God bless brave, bonny Kathleen Carew!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

WITHIN PRISON BARS.

Oh, my heart, my heart is sick, a-wishing and awaiting:

I looked out for his coming as a prisoner through the grating
Looks and longs and longs and wishes for its opening day.

JEAN INGELow.

"A week, and yet he has never been near me! Not a word, not a sign! What does he mean? Why has he left me to my cruel fate?"

The beautiful prisoner raged up and down the narrow limits of her prison cell like a caged lioness, so desperate was her mood, so fierce her unrest.

"Such cruel and heartless neglect from him who incited me to that dark deed is unbearable! He does not yet know Fedora if he believes she will tamely bear it!" And she clinched her white hands ominously, her eyes glittering with anger, as she thought of the man for whom she had risked so much, yet who seemed to have left her to her fate without an effort to save her.

"Where is he? What has become of him? Will he leave me to die like a rat in a hole? And I thought he loved me—fool that I was! Did I not already know men too well to trust him? Oh, fool that I was! And yet, dare he desert me, the partner in his terrible secret? Perhaps the coward has fled, fearing that I may betray him!"

So she raved on, every moment increasing her impotent fury.

"No answer to my letters, no notice taken of my passionate appeals! Why, he might have effected my escape ere this if he had tried, and I *must* escape! It is true I can not be hung, since that foolish girl saved Ralph's life when he was on the brink of death; but if I am sentenced I shall be sent to prison for long, long years! I can not bear the thought! Oh, God, I'm stifling—dying!" She threw herself on her hard couch, sobbing in hysterical *abandon*.

[Pg 228]

A grating sound at the door; the key turned in the lock; the portal opened, closed again. Inside stood a beautiful young girl gazing with sad, accusing eyes at the wretched, sobbing woman.

Fedora looked up with a cry of wonder mingled with rage:

"Kathleen Carew!"

"Yes, Kathleen!" answered the other. She advanced, and they gazed in momentary silence into each other's eyes—the girl Ralph Chainey loved, and the woman that was his wife.

"Why are you here?" muttered Fedora, hoarsely, as she started to her feet.

"For justice," answered Kathleen, sternly.

"Justice?"

"Yes, justice to the man you tried to murder—the man I saved from death!"

"Saved, yes—curse you forever for that deed!" snarled the prisoner, viciously.

Kathleen recoiled a little at her terrible aspect, and said, in wonder:

"Why did you do it? Why did you want him dead?"

"I hated him! I hate you!"

"I know, but you would soon have been free of him by the law. Why did you want to kill him? It was horrible. Life is so sweet when one is young; and Ralph is young—only twenty-five," said the young girl, almost piteously.

"Why do you come here to probe into my secrets?" Fedora cried, fiercely. "Listen, then: I wanted him dead before he secured the divorce, so that I might inherit his wealth. I, his loving widow! Ha! ha! Was it not a clever scheme?" She laughed wildly; and, coming closer to Kathleen, glared threateningly into her eyes as she hissed: "You foiled me—you—curse you, I repeat! Let me but escape, and I will murder you!"

[Pg 229]

A weaker heart than Kathleen's might have quailed before such threats; but she stood there trembling but courageous, an earnest purpose in her splendid eyes.

"These are idle words, and I did not come here to bandy words with you. I came to make a solemn appeal to you," she said meekly, almost beseechingly.

"Appeal to me?" asked the prisoner, with a scornful laugh; and then she waited out of curiosity for the other's answer.

"Do you remember that night in Philadelphia?" Kathleen asked.

"Yes, I remember."

"You were wearing my diamonds—the ones that were stolen from me that night when I was left for dead on the ground at Lincoln Station. You told me—told me," her voice faltering, "that Ralph Chainey gave you the jewels. Oh, God! I think if I had quite believed that horrible story, I should have died! But there was always the merciful doubt—the hope that it might not be true—that saved me from madness!"

She paused, but the prisoner did not speak—only smiled derisively.

"So I have come to you for the truth," went on the girl. "Oh, for God's sake, speak and tell me you lied! It was not Ralph; it could not be. Perhaps you are shielding the guilty man behind his identity. Are you? Tell me the truth! I will not ask you to betray the criminal. I do not wish to punish him. Only tell me it was not Ralph!" and she waited in wild suspense for the answer.

Fedora's evilly handsome face had on it a smile of triumph. She was gloating over the young girl's

misery.

"So you love *my husband*?" she exclaimed, tauntingly, and the deep color rose up over Kathleen's face at the cruel sneer. She trembled with emotion, although she tried to appear indifferent as she answered:

"I did not come here to discuss *that* with you, madame."

[Pg 230]

Fedora was regarding her with a fixed gaze. A cunning thought had entered her mind.

"How much is my secret worth to you?" she asked.

"All the wealth in the world, if I had it, but I am penniless. I can not buy your secret," Kathleen answered, sadly.

Fedora came nearer and whispered in her ear:

"If I tell you the truth, will you help me to escape?"

"I could not do it if I wished to do so ever so much. It would take money, and I have already told you I have none."

The voice was cold and dull. Kathleen began to realize how hopeless was her mission. The cruel, calculating woman before her had no pity for her misery.

But Fedora was scheming in her mind how to turn her secret to account. She hated Kathleen too bitterly to show her any kindness; but if she could pay for the secret she wanted so badly, why, let her have it.

She looked at Kathleen with a cunning expression.

"There is one condition on which I will tell you what you want to know."

"I have already told you that I have no money."

"I do not mean money. Listen, Miss Carew: You know Ivan Belmont?"

"Yes," with a contemptuous gesture.

"He is a friend of mine; and if he knew about my trouble he would try to help me, I think. Do you know where he is? Can you send word to him?"

"I do not know anything about his whereabouts."

"You must find out. You must tell him that I, Fedora, have sent you to him. Tell him I command him to come to me here. Return to me with a letter from Ivan Belmont, and you shall hear the truth about the diamonds. I swear it!"

They gazed at each other—Fedora flushed and eager, Kathleen excited, sorely tempted.

"What say you? Is my price too great?" demanded the prisoner.

[Pg 231]

"No," Kathleen replied. Turning to go, she said:

"I will surely find Ivan Belmont, and bring the letter."

The door closed. The prisoner was again alone within the grated cell.

The hours dragged on and brought the gloomy night. With it there hovered over the great city the black and vulture wings of a terrible storm. It hissed, it roared, it swept with devastating, cyclonic force through that area where the prison was situated. Trees, roofs, houses even, yielded to its terrific fury, and flew like feathers before its angry breath. The poor prisoners, cowering in superstitious terror before the awful voices of the warring elements, prayed to God for mercy; but the answer seemed far, far away, for suddenly there came a terrible, deafening roar; the earth seemed to rock like a cradle, and the great stone tower of the prison fell with a sound as though heaven and hell had clashed, while lurid flames shot up from the awful ruin into the midnight air. Sentence of death had already been pronounced on many who were awaiting trial, and many a soul went up in that holocaust of smoke and flame and tempest to render an account of the deeds done in the flesh. Some few survived, some few escaped. Where was Fedora?

CHAPTER LXIV.

"YOUR FATHER IS GEORGE HARRISON, THE CONVICT!"

It is a common fate—a woman's lot—
To waste on one the riches of her soul,
Who takes the wealth she gives him, but can not
Repay the interest, and much less the whole.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

"Another letter! Gad, they come thick and fast! Ta, ta, Fedora! sorry I haven't time to read it; but a fellow must look out for his own neck, and mine has felt deuced uncomfortable ever since I

found out that that devil Jack Wren is on my trail. How *did* he strike it, I wonder; for I thought we had covered up our tracks very cleverly. But the fellow's a sleuth-hound, they tell me, and I've got to escape him. Poor Fedora! it's a pity to leave you to your fate, but the sooner I pack up and be afloat on the briny, the better for my neck," muttered Ivan Belmont, airily, as he moved about his shabby apartment, in a very unsavory quarter of Boston, gathering together his belongings, that were scattered about on chairs and tables.

[Pg 232]

The letter from Fedora that he had found on coming in he tossed unread into the fire, and as he ransacked the bureau drawers he hummed, carelessly:

"Long have I been true to you,
Now I'm true no longer."

It was long past midnight. The tempest had spent its force, and only a fitful, souging wind and gusty dashes of icy rain remained as souvenirs of its terrific fury. Its worst force had not reached this neighborhood, and Ivan little dreamed that the prison doors had been hurled asunder by the blind force of nature, and that his partner in wickedness had been released and was hastening to their rendezvous in eager joy.

Recklessly he flung on the floor her dainty garments and pretty trinkets, seeking the diamonds he had given her in the days when he loved her first—love that had long ago tired, and had now grown heedless, indifferent.

"But what the devil did she do with them? I'm positive she left them here. Can they have been stolen? They are worth a pretty penny to me now—they would help me to get away from this place that is getting too hot to hold me."

"Help you to get away, you coward! Who helped me, I wonder? The devil, I suppose. They say he takes care of his own!" said a mocking voice behind him. He turned with a start. There stood Fedora!

Fedora or her ghost? The voice was there, the glittering, steel-blue eyes; but where was all the prettiness, where the burnished golden locks, the silk attire? This woman was drenched with rain, clothed in rags, and the disheveled tresses that straggled over her brow and shoulders had turned dead white, and their silver gleam was in awful contrast with the drops of blood that trickled down her ashen face.

[Pg 233]

He stared like one turned to stone. He doubted the evidence of his own eyes. That voice, those eyes—but could it be Fedora?

"Yes, it is I," she said, answering that mute, wondering look. "I am here, escaped from the wreck of my prison to find you—you dastardly thief—trying to steal my jewels, your own gift to me! You shall suffer for this night's work! Villain! you tempted me to aid you in your crimes, then left me to suffer the penalty alone. But I will betray you, and you shall know how it feels to be shut within prison walls, deserted by the one who swore fealty forever in happier days!"

He had been so disgusted, so enraged, that he was about to retort in angry, sneering words that would drive her forever from him; but at her threatening words his defiant mood changed to one of cringing, abject fear. Though inwardly shrinking from her altered looks in keen disgust, he dared not show his feelings. He must temporize; he must turn her from her savage purpose.

He approached her; he held out his hand.

"Ta, ta, Dolly; we are not going to part in this fashion, are we? Surely you did not mind if I sold the diamonds to get you out of prison. It was a big bribe, I know; but the guard would not listen to a penny less. To-morrow you should have been free; but how lucky that you escaped, and we have the jewels still!" He slipped his arm around her, and—in spite of her anger, in spite of her suspicions of his falsity—the woman's head dropped against his breast.

She loved him with all the heart she had, this petted darling of the foot-lights; she who had trifled with the hearts of nobler men had found in this weak nature her ideal, and he led her on to lower and lower depths until she was wrecked on the shoals of sin.

Nestling in the arms that were so reluctant to hold her, Fedora told the man how she had escaped from her prison in the company of an aged prisoner—a convict under a life-sentence for murder.

[Pg 234]

"You have often told me that your father was dead, Ivan," she said. "Did you believe it, or was it a falsehood?"

"I—I—believed it," he replied, weakly.

"No, you did not," she replied, triumphantly. "Ah, my lord, how proud you have been of your connection with the Carews! Yet your father is an escaped convict under sentence for life! Have you forgotten his name? Let me refresh your memory. George Harrison—alias Dutch Fred. Ah, you start—you remember! Yes, he told me his whole history, and I gave him the address of your mother—once his wife. He will go to her, he said, and demand half her fortune!"

Ivan Belmont was silent a moment from chagrin. Then he rose superior to the situation.

"Ha! ha! how the *mater* will rave!" he laughed. "I wish papa success in plucking the madame. The devil knows what a time I had coaxing and wheedling pennies out of her pocket."

The vision rising in his mind of this proud mother and sister's consternation roused his risibilities, and he laughed loud and long. They had discarded him—flung him off like a dog. What a glorious

retribution!

But they turned presently from even this savory morsel to their own affairs. Both were in peril, and it would not do to remain in reach of the law. Yet Ivan was by no means ready to give up his cherished plans. They sat far into the wintry dawn, exchanging confidences and plotting new schemes, to be unraveled on Fate's dark loom.

CHAPTER LXV.

A STARTLING DÉNOUEMENT.

You may bury it deep, and leave behind you
The land, the people that knew your slain;
It will push the sods from its grave and find you
On wastes of water and desert plain.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

"Jones says there is a horrible old man down-stairs, mamma, asking for you, and will not go away until he sees you," Alpine Belmont said, entering her mother's *boudoir* one rainy evening just a few days after the cyclone. [Pg 235]

"I will not see him. I have just refused to see that old impostor—my husband's brother, indeed!" contemptuously—"and I will not be annoyed again. Tell Jones to send the old beggar away."

Alpine was pale. Her eyes had a troubled look.

"He says that he is not a beggar, mamma—that he has claims on you. I am afraid you had better see him. He is making such a noise at the door, and Jones says he is somewhat intoxicated."

"Tell Jones to pitch him into the street."

"He tried to, but the old man was more than a match for him. Do come, mamma; it's so disgraceful, the sensation he is creating. People are gathering around the house. Let us have him in and try to pacify him."

Her arguments conquered, and Mrs. Carew sent down word to admit the old man to a small room where the servants were accustomed to come to her for orders.

Alpine's trepidation had somewhat unnerved her mother, and as she swept into the little room her air was a trifle less haughty, and her proud eyes gazed anxiously about for the cause of this commotion.

There he lay, sprawled upon a luxurious sofa—an old, blear-eyed man in ragged garments, but with a very close-shaven head, and the stubble of several days' growth upon his chin. His keen, close-set eyes devoured with a hungry gaze the handsome face before him.

A cry of surprise and terror burst from her blanching lips:

"George!—George Harrison!—*you!*"

"Yes, George Harrison—your husband!" answered the intruder, and a hoarse cry of despair broke upon the air from the lips of Alpine, who had glided in unheeded by both.

She stood behind her mother, gazing with affrighted eyes at the man's coarse, leering face.

Mrs. Carew recoiled—she threw out her white hands, all glittering with costly rings, as though to shut out some terrible sight. [Pg 236]

The man laughed at her terror and, gliding forward, seized and held her hands.

"Are you glad to see me, my wife? Come, give me a kiss for the old times' sake, my beauty!"

She struggled with him, loathing the offered caresses, and Alpine sprung to her mother's assistance, beating him back with dainty jeweled hands.

He turned then and saw her for the first time. His narrow eyes dilated with surprise.

"Why, you pretty wild-cat, you must be my daughter Alpine! How do you do, my dear? Give your papa a kiss, dear!"

"You are not—not——" she choked over the word, and he answered, with sudden gravity:

"I am your father, George Harrison, my little girl, and I went to prison for life for killing a man who was once my dearest friend. Why? Well, your mother might tell you if she would. I will spare her for your sake. You seem to love her." He seemed to have grown suddenly sober after the first sight of his daughter's face. "Well, she has prospered, has she not? She is rich and grand, while I have lain in prison all these years, but a few miles from her, my heart burning with hate for her, and aching with love for my boy and girl, Ivan and Alpine, while she taught them to forget that they ever had a father other than Vincent Carew, the proud millionaire. Alpine, speak to me for once; call me father!"

A spasm of pain contracted the worn features he raised longingly to her face. Love shone in his eyes, poor convict that he was, and although he had come to curse the mother and extort money from her, the memory of it fled from him now as he gazed imploringly on Alpine's lovely, soulless

face. With outstretched hands he besought her kindness.

Surely the fiends in hell could have had no more hateful look than the girl turned upon the suppliant as he bowed the knee before her so entreatingly. Angrily she struck at the outstretched, toil-worn hands, exclaiming:

[Pg 237]

"You have no claim on me. I hate you—hate you!"

Could a strong man's heart break for so common a thing as a child's hardness and ingratitude? It would seem so, for the escaped felon turned aside with such a look on his face as it might have worn had a dagger pierced his heart. It seemed as if he meant to go. He staggered toward the door, tripped, and fell prostrate. His face quivered with one or two spasms, then he lay still and dead, his white face upturned to their startled gaze.

"Dead!" muttered Mrs. Carew, staring down in mingled terror and relief.

"Dead!" echoed Alpine, in a sort of awe.

And for a few minutes there was a terrible silence.

Then Alpine crept to her mother's side.

"Mamma, was it true?"

"Yes, it was true. There, you have my awful secret. Bury it deep in your heart, Alpine, for no one must ever know. Now we must call the servants to put the body out. We can not have anything so vulgar as a dead tramp lying in the house!"

She moved toward the door, but her steps were arrested by a stern voice:

"Stay!"

She turned with a start and shudder.

A man had emerged from behind the curtain. At first sight it seemed to be Uncle Ben Carew, the old man so cordially despised.

But with a rapid hand he flung off wig, whiskers, and spectacles, standing revealed in majestic beauty—Vincent Carew!

"My God!" she cried, and flew to embrace him.

He repulsed her with scorn and loathing.

"How dare you, you Jezebel?" he cried. "Down on your knees to that dead man there, you and your cowardly daughter, and pray his forgiveness for the sin that wrecked his life! Vile creature that you are, you would throw him into the street like a dog! No; let him lie there to be buried at my expense. I heard all that was said. I know all your guilty secrets!"

[Pg 238]

"Oh, Vincent, forgive me, forgive me! My temptation was so great!" she cried, frantically; but he spurned her outstretched hands.

"Can one forgive a fiend?" he said, sternly. "I tell you I know all—the plot that broke my Zaidee's heart, and drove her to madness and death—perhaps you murdered her—who knows?"

"No, no—I swear I did not! I am innocent of that charge. She was so young, so jealous, it was easy to drive her mad. But, Vincent, it was for love of you! Can you not forgive so great a love?"

If scorn could have blasted her, his look would have struck her dead at his feet.

"Forgiveness is not possible," he answered, bleakly, and silenced her with a gesture of his hand. "Listen," he said, looking her in the face: "I was not lost at sea when my ship burned. I was cast away on a desert island, where I remained until a few months ago. When I returned I took a fancy to masquerade to see how matters were going. There is no Uncle Ben. I never had a brother, but the disguise has served its purpose. I know you now—you and your scheming daughter. Now listen to your fate. No, do not speak. Hear me out. I will keep the secret of your disgrace; and—you were to have sailed to-morrow—you two—for Europe. Your trunks are packed—your passage taken. You will go, just the same, but you will never return. You have no claim on me. You belong to that dead man there. Go now to your rooms. I wish never to look on your faces again, but the curse of a broken-hearted man will follow you to your grave!"

CHAPTER LXVI.

[Pg 239]

"I WILL GO TO THE OLD HAUNTED MILL," SAID KATHLEEN, BRAVELY.

"We must love and unlove and forget, dear,
Fashion and shatter the spell
Of how many a love in a life, dear,
Ere we learn to love once and love well."

Kathleen Carew sat in the library of Helen Fox's home, with her cheek bowed in the hollow of her delicate hand, and a very sad expression in her downcast eyes. She was thinking of the tragedy of two weeks ago, by which the prison walls had been rent asunder, sending so many wicked souls to their account with God.

"And in that awful wreck Fedora perished—poor guilty soul!—and with her died the secret I would have risked so much to know. Now I shall never know it; but Ralph, dear Ralph, I must trust you blindly. I must not let this dark cloud of suspicion drift between us. But, oh, Heaven! that it might have been lifted!" she half sobbed, in her self-absorption.

In those two weeks many things had transpired of interest to Kathleen. The Carews had gone abroad, and, although Kathleen knew it not, they had faded forever out of the life that they had done so much to wreck and ruin. Uncle Ben, as he still called himself, had not yet disclosed his identity to his daughter, but kept up his *incognito* for reasons best known to himself. The grand Carew mansion remained closed and silent, and people said that Mrs. Carew and Miss Belmont intended to be absent for years.

Ralph Chainey, under the magical influence of renewed hope, was fast recovering his health again. Kathleen and Helen had been to see him several times, and, although no tender words had been uttered between them, Ralph no longer feared and dreaded handsome Teddy. He fancied that all would come right between him and his darling.

But Kathleen was very sad at heart. She had the greatest esteem and regard for her betrothed, and shrunk from telling him the unflattering truth that her heart belonged to another man.

"He has been so good and kind to me, how can I grieve him so?" she thought.

[Pg 240]

The ring of the door-bell startled her from her sad thoughts.

Several letters were handed in. On one she recognized the writing of her cousin Chester. She broke the seal with eager impatience, and as she read on smiles began to dimple her scarlet lips.

Helen, who was reading her own letters, was startled at a gay exclamation from her friend.

"Oh, Helen! good news! Chester and Daisy are—engaged!"

"But I thought it was you he loved, my dear."

"Oh, a mere fancy! It is that dear, darling Daisy Lynn he loves. And she—there's a little note from her, too—she has forgotten or outlived that old love—gives her whole tender heart to Chester. Listen, Helen, how he writes me—apologetically, you know, fearing I may think him fickle."

She read aloud, with a mischievous smile playing round her lips:

"Both born of beauty at one birth,
She held o'er hearts a kindred sway,
And wore the only form on earth
That could have lured my heart away."

Helen smiled in sympathy.

"Poor boy! I'm glad he's to be made happy," she said. Then she nervously fingered a letter she held.

"*Mine* is from Loyal," she said, bashfully.

"From Loyal? Oh, Helen, is he ever coming back to America? You cruel girl! why did you send him away?"

"I did not know my own mind," the beautiful young girl answered, in a low voice, and then she added, softly: "You remember those sweet lines of Jean Ingelow?"

"Thou didst set thy foot on the ship, and sail
To the ice-fields and the snow;
Thou wert sad, for thy love did not avail,
And the end I could not know.
How could I tell I should love thee to-day
Whom that day I held not dear?
How could I know I should love thee away,
When I did not love thee anear?"

"Oh, you darling, I'm so glad!" cried Kathleen, springing to her friend's side and giving her a girlish hug. "That dear Loyal Graham! I always thought he was perfectly grand, and I know you will be happy with him. Does he *know* yet, darling?"

"Yes; and he is coming home to *me*;" and her soft blue eyes drooped with a loving smile to the dear letter.

Ah, the gladness, ah, the madness, ah, the magic of a letter!

And Helen recalled the beautiful lines of Adelaide Proctor:

"Dear, I tried to write you such a letter
As would tell you all my heart to-day.
Written Love is poor; one word were better—
Easier, too, a thousand times, to say.

"I can tell you all: fears, doubts unheeding,
While I can be near you, hold your hand—
Looking right into your eyes, and reading
Reassurance that you understand.

"Yet I wrote it through; then lingered, thinking
Of its reaching you—what hour, what day;
Till I felt my heart and courage sinking
With a strange, new, wondering dismay.

"Then I leant against the casement, turning
Tearful eyes towards the far-off west,
Where the golden evening light was burning,
Till my heart throbbled back again to rest.

"And I thought: 'Love's soul is not in fetters,
Neither space nor time keep souls apart;
Since I cannot—dare not—send my letters,
Through the silence I will send my heart.

"She will hear, while twilight shades infold her;
All the gathered Love she knows so well—
Deepest love my words have ever told her,
Deeper still—all I could never tell.

"Wondering at the strange, mysterious power
That has touched her heart, then she will say:
"Some one whom I love, this very hour
Thinks of me and loves me far away."

"So I dreamed and watched the stars' far splendour
Glimmering on the azure darkness start,
While the star of trust rose bright and tender
Through the twilight shadows of my heart."

"I must go and tell mamma that I shall marry Loyal, after all," said the blushing Helen, gliding [Pg 241]
from the room; and then Kathleen turned to her other letter.

It was superscribed in a strange hand—feminine, yet bold and dashing.

"It is a strange hand," Kathleen said to herself, as she tore it open; but stranger yet were the
words it contained—strange, few, mysterious:

"If you wish to have full proof of the guilt or innocence of the man you love, come alone
at twilight this evening to the old Cooper saw-mill, where I am dying. I can not survive
the night. Do not hesitate about coming. I know that a beautiful young girl like you will
do and dare all for love and happiness, and it is all-important that you should know
what I have to tell you. If I die with the secret untold, you will forever rue it. Come
without fail, secretly and *alone*. Destroy this letter.

"ONE WHO KNOWS ALL."

Kathleen read and reread this strange letter with fascinated eyes.

"I know the old Cooper saw-mill," she murmured. "It is on the old country road where we used to
drive so often, near the glen and the waterfall. I have seen old Myron Cooper, too, that strange
old man with his long gray duster. People said he wrote poetry as wild and gloomy as the glen
where he lived. Yes, I will go, although they say the old mill is haunted after nightfall. But my
unknown correspondent is right. A young girl will do and dare much for love—love, that mighty
passion that moves the whole world."

She spent the remainder of the day in restless thought, longing for the hour to come when she
should go upon her strange mission, and yet half ashamed of the longing to know all the truth
about her lover.

"Why is it that I can not trust him wholly?" she asked herself; but the reckless curiosity of a
woman's nature drove her forward on that perilous quest fraught with mystery and danger. "I
must *know*!" she declared, passionately, to herself. [Pg 242]

CHAPTER LXVII.

TEDDY'S LOVE LETTERS.

"Closely shut within my chamber,
Where the fire is burning bright,
All these letters, long since written,
I must read and burn to-night."

"I wonder what has detained Jack Wren? He promised to be here this evening at five o'clock
sharp. Here it is six," Teddy Darrell said, impatiently, as he looked at his watch, then lingered
dreamily a moment over the fair face of Kathleen smiling up at him from within the golden lid.

"Sweet darling! in a few more days she will be mine," he murmured, and forgot Jack Wren in sweet anticipations of his wedding-day now near at hand.

Teddy was waiting in his rooms for the detective; and now, to beguile the time, he took some letters from his inside pocket and began to run over their perfumed contents, smiling softly now and then to himself.

Then he got up, walked about the room, shook himself together and sighed, then laughed.

"Poor little dears! it's hard to give you up, after all."

The "little dears" probably referred to Teddy's old sweethearts, whose names were "legion"—such a string of them there was: Hatties, Helens, Lauras, Gussies, Saras, Emmies, Roses, Fredas, Annies, Nellies, Katies, Lenas, Noras, Mauds, Nannies, and so on through a list of the belles and beauties of several seasons, whose letters and photographs were treasured in Teddy's desk, soon to be ruefully sacrificed to the fire-fiend; for "Benedict, the married man," must not carry any of these sentimental mementoes of the past into his new life.

"Here a dainty school-girl's letter
Still retains its faint perfume,
But the little hand that wrote it
Molders in a foreign tomb.
Close beside it lies another
In an awkward, girlish hand,
Desperately sentimental—
Ah! I now can understand
Just how silly two such lovers
As we were then must have been—
She about a year my junior,
I a youngster just nineteen!"

Teddy unlocked a drawer of his desk and brought out a miscellaneous pile of letters, photographs, faded flowers, and locks of hair of every shade known to woman's head. I am ashamed to record it of Kathleen's prospective bridegroom that he cast glances of unfeigned regret at these treasures as he prepared to devote them to the flames—a sacrifice on the altar of his love for Kathleen. [Pg 243]

How he lingered over those pretty photographs!—over Rose, the beautiful actress, in the dress she had worn as Iza in "The Clemenceau Case."

"Ah, Rose was a model girl!" he laughed, as he laid it down and turned to stately Laura in the two-thousand-dollar gown, the very envy of all her feminine friends when she wore it to Madame Frivolity's ball. Next to it was Gussie, with her sweet and serious face, the dark curls lying softly against her temples, the dimpled white shoulders peeping above the little sleeves of that simple white lace dress in which Teddy had liked her best. He gazed long and earnestly at the girlish face, and a memory came to him of that moonlight evening in the vine-covered arbor when Gussie's arms had clung about his neck, drawing his dark, handsome face down close to hers while the blue-gray eyes gazed tenderly into his dark ones as she whispered, in answer to his question, "My dear old Dark Eyes, I love *you*!"

"Upon my soul, I believe that flirtation hit me hard! She was the sweetest of them all, and I was almost sorry I let her marry Bob. Ah, well, Gussie, dear, I too shall be married soon, and these bitter-sweet memories of ours must be tossed into the rag-bag of the past!"

He sorted out *her* letters, and placed them with her picture in a secret drawer, for he had a lingering fondness for his old sweetheart, pretty Gussie, the famous novelist.

"I will just keep these," he said. "I don't believe Kathleen would care, for she reads and loves Gussie's novels. And if anything should happen that I do not marry Kathleen—and it was strange the way she acted about Chainey—I should like to know I have these still."

He gathered all his mementoes and, with a genuine sigh, flung them upon the glowing blaze. [Pg 244]

"It is but just to Kathleen," he said, trying to stifle his regret.

"Back the mists of years are rolling
As these relics of the past,
With a wondrous fascination,
Have their spells around me cast.
Crowds of tender recollections
Fill my eyes with unshed tears;
Dimmer grows the glowing future—
Dimmer till it disappears."

Teddy had a warm heart, and it was no disloyalty to Kathleen that made him sigh so sadly. He would not have exchanged her for any other girl he had ever loved; but somehow the thought of Gussie haunted him. She had been his first love, and it was a lover's quarrel that had driven them asunder. That was several years ago, and now she was married and a shining literary light: but it was quite certain that if ever Kathleen had a rival in Teddy's thoughts, it would be this one lost love.

A loud rap at the door startled him. It was Jack Wren, who entered in haste with an excited face.

"I had quite given you up, Mr. Wren," said Teddy, startled out of his tender recollections.

"Darrell, come with me. We have no time to lose. I have made a startling discovery. I have a cab waiting below, and you must come with me to the rescue of one you love, for she is at this moment in peril of her life! I have been on Ivan Belmont's track ever since I saw you, and he and Fedora, who escaped from the prison when the cyclone shattered it, are together now at Cooper's saw-mill, in Wild Cat Glen, plotting a terrible crime!" breathlessly answered Jack Wren.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

IN MORTAL PERIL.

Listen to the water-wheel
All the live long day—
How the clinking of the mill
Wears the hours away.

—*Old Song.*

People always wondered why old Cooper ever built his saw-mill in so wild a place as that lonely glen; but the scene, the crazy old building, and the strange old man, all seemed to chime together, and no one was surprised that when he died he expressed the wish to be buried in the glen, close to the old mill, that his dreamless rest might be soothed by the sound of the grinding wheel day by day. Madame Rumor said that the old man's ghost haunted the wild, forbidding gorge, and Kathleen shuddered with dread as she climbed up the rocky path, with the cascade tumbling wildly beneath, on her rendezvous with her unknown correspondent. She had come within half a mile in a cab, which she left waiting for her while she made the rest of the journey on foot. To escape Helen's kind inquiries, she had said she was going to spend the night with Mrs. Stone, which she really intended doing on her return.

[Pg 245]

How gloomy the old mill looked in the pallor of the swiftly falling night! All winter the snows had held it bound in an icy thrall, but now the April sun had sent the mass of foaming, dashing water tumbling over the falls, and turned the old saw. What a scene for a crime! thought Kathleen, with a thrill of superstitious dread, as she hurried on in the deepening gloom, casting furtive glances about her, as though she expected to see Cooper's disembodied spirit hovering near. Frightened and nervous, she half regretted that she had come, and at the hooting of an owl in the tree near by, she uttered a frightened scream which rang through the gloomy glen in hollow, reverberating echoes, and fell prostrate on the ground.

An icy fear seemed to clutch her heart. It seemed to her that she had no strength to rise to go on. The gloom, the darkness, coupled with the mystery of the whole affair, began to weigh with crushing force upon her spirits.

She laid her fair golden head down on the rough stones, and prayed piteously:

"Dear God! give me strength to go on, to bear whatever is before me! For, oh! I love him so, I love him so! and I *must* know if he is worthy of that love! If he is not—if they tell me he is guilty of that sin with which Fedora accused him, dear God, let me die! I can not live and know him false and wicked! I would sooner throw myself over those rocks down into the terrible cascade, and end my wretched young life!"

[Pg 246]

New courage came with that incoherent prayer, and struggling to her feet, she tottered on, murmuring faintly:

"Oh, Ralph, dear Ralph, how much I must love you to risk so much for your sake!"

She gained the threshold at last. With a hopeful glance upward at the feeble glimmering light in the window, she knocked upon the door. It was jerked rudely open on the instant, and Kathleen saw before her a frowsy-looking old woman with a short clay pipe in her mouth.

This repulsive old woman thrust out a hand and dragged the trembling girl into the mill.

"What made you so long? I've been expecting you more than an hour!" she exclaimed, in a tone of savage anger.

Not waiting for an answer, she dragged the girl rudely along with her into a small room, and, turning quickly, slipped the bolt into the lock.

Kathleen gave a startled glance around the room. No one was there but the old hag, who was gazing at her with malicious eyes, in whose tigerish gleam of hate there was something so strangely familiar that she shuddered with terror, and a name leaped to her lips:

"Fedora!"

"Yes, Fedora; but you have keen eyes to see through this disguise," cried the woman. "Do you remember, I told you I would murder you if I ever got out of prison? Well, I shall keep my vow!" She sprung savagely toward her, but at the cruel grasp of her foe Kathleen uttered a moan of horror and slipped limply to the floor like one already dead.

"Is she dead so easily? I hope not, for I want to torture her first!" hissed Fedora, spurning the prostrate body with her foot.

She tore open the door at a slight tap upon it, and stood face to face with Ivan Belmont.

He spoke hurriedly:

[Pg 247]

"Ralph Chainey is coming, Fedora! Quick! lock the girl in, and come out and meet him alone. I must not be seen yet."

Fedora obeyed him, and Kathleen, coming back to life with a shuddering gasp, found herself alone, locked in, and heard outside the voice of her lover, and the words spoken held her spell-bound.

"Kathleen? Where is Kathleen? She told me to meet her here."

With a hissing laugh of savage hate, Fedora flung off the hood that she wore and stood revealed, scarred, hideous, gray-haired, but Fedora still—the woman who held his honor in her light keeping and bore his name.

"Kathleen is dead!" she laughed. "Dead, and I killed her without a blow! My weapon was a lie. It slew her as fatally as a dagger!"

He could not speak. He could only stare at her in dumb horror as she continued:

"Do you see these diamonds flashing in my ears? They are the ones that were stolen from Kathleen Carew the night of the attempted murder, when you found and saved her at Lincoln Station. I told her that you, my husband, did that foul deed, and robbing her of her money and jewels, brought them to me. A fiendish lie, you say? Ha! ha! but it killed her, all the same. Do you want to know the real thief? It was Ivan Belmont, my lover; and she was slain by a lie!"

Kathleen had struggled with difficulty to her feet. She tottered to the little window that looked into the mill; she saw her noble lover's handsome face, and uttered a piercing cry:

"Ralph! Ralph! I am here! Save me! Save me!"

He sprung toward the voice. The movement was fatal.

Ivan Belmont had stolen up softly behind him, bearing a heavy mallet in his hand. A moment more, and it was lifted high in air, and Kathleen's anguished eyes beheld her darling struck down before her into apparent death!

Kathleen would never forget the horror of that moment. It seemed to her that she went mad with grief and terror. Shriek after shriek burst from her lips, and she beat her little hands wildly against the smoky little window-pane, struggling wildly to get free. But the fiends before her did not heed her cries. Between them they lifted the inanimate form of their victim, and bearing it a short distance away, but in full view of the window, they laid it on a plank upon a table in front of the large steel circular saw. Kathleen saw his arms fall limply to his side, and the dark curly head drop back heavily. The death-white face, the closed eyes, assured her that he was either in a deep swoon or already dead from the terrible blow that had felled him to the ground.

[Pg 248]

Hushing the piercing shrieks upon her blanched lips, Kathleen watched in terrible suspense the movements of the two fiends.

Perhaps they doubted whether their victim was already dead, for they bent over him, feeling his pulse and listening for his heart.

"He lives," Ivan Belmont said, with fiendish joy. "Let us bind him hand and foot, and leave him on the plank till he revives. I want to enjoy his agony when he realizes the awful death that lies before him. He must know that Kathleen is here, that she will witness his death, and then meet the same horrible fate."

It was a scene on which the devils in hell might have gloated: the old mill, with its dim lights and strange, flickering shadows; the prostrate man, with his death-white face; the two fiends binding him with strong cords, lest he should recover and escape their vengeful fury; and looking on with anguished eyes at the doom of her beloved was our beautiful Kathleen.

"He revives!" hissed Fedora.

"Good!" laughed Ivan, hoarsely; and he looked back over his shoulder at Kathleen's convulsed, almost supernaturally pale face at the window.

"Ha! ha! my proud lady, you would send me to prison for stealing your diamonds, would you? But I foiled your game! It was I that decoyed you to Richmond with a lying letter; I that flung you into the deep, dark river to perish. Well, you escaped then, but you will not be so fortunate now. Do you realize the fate that lies before you? I decoyed both you and your lover here. Why, you ask? For revenge upon you both. Do you see yonder glittering saw, with its hungry teeth, waiting to cut your delicate body to atoms and drink your life-blood? Well, we are only waiting for you to see your lover dead before we devote you to the same torture. He is dead already, you say? No; he is reviving. See that tremor creep along his frame! See his eyelids tremble! Ha! his eyes open! he sees! he understands! Oh, the anguish on his face! How happy it makes me! Look, Fedora, at his tortures. Are we not already avenged?"

[Pg 249]

Her answer was a laugh of fiendish triumph.

"Oh, yes; it is glorious—glorious! I am in no haste for their death. I like to see them suffering like this. I want to prolong their torture!" she exclaimed. "What do you say, dear Ivan? Shall we let them live a few hours yet to realize the horrors that surround them? What avails their love, their beauty, their wealth now? To-morrow they will be lifeless clods, and I the rich widow, Mrs. Chainey!"

"Baffled!" said a hoarse, triumphant voice, and, turning, she met Ralph Chainey's burning gaze. "You mistake," said her victim, faintly but audibly. "I made my will weeks ago, and divided my whole fortune between my mother and Kathleen."

A scream of baffled fury escaped her lips; but Ivan said, quickly:

"You can contest the will, Fedora."

"Yes; I will fight for my rights to the bitter end!" she shrieked, then sprung toward him in a fury. "Let us end this farce; let us show them no further mercy. He dies now, Ivan! Go, set the saw in motion!"

He moved forward in eager obedience to her order, and Ralph Chainey realized that his moments were indeed numbered, and that death in the most horrible and soul-sickening shape was approaching. He made an almost superhuman effort to burst the bonds that held him fast, but the attempt was useless. He was weakened by the illness through which he had just passed, and could not move. With a prayer in his heart to Heaven, he turned his dark, despairing eyes toward the beautiful, anguished face at the window.

[Pg 250]

"Courage, my own love!" he called to her, bravely. "Death is but a fleeting pang, and then it will be life forever. Turn your sweet eyes away, my own Kathleen; do not torture yourself with the sight of my fate. You will come to me soon, and we—" His voice broke, drowned by the whirl of the wheel as it began its revolutions, slowly drawing the plank with its doomed victim within its jaws.

Oh, God, what a moment!

Surely the pitying angels, who know and see all things, hovered near and aided weak, despairing Kathleen in her frantic struggle for liberty.

As Ivan Belmont stepped out to open the water-chute, she sprung with a strength born of despair against the door. The rusty lock yielded to her onslaught, the door fell crashing beneath her weight, and staggering, tottering, her loosened golden hair flying like a banner behind her, Kathleen fled across the moonlit space, the torturing sound of the revolving wheel grating on her ears, the flying sawdust blinding her eyes, and gained his side. Brave Kathleen, noble Kathleen, you are not one-half a second too soon! The swift revolutions of the saw are drawing your doomed lover closer to the encroaching steel! Throw out in an agony those fair white arms, gifted with such momentary, wondrous strength, grasp your loved one wildly, eagerly, and draw him madly from his couch of deadly peril! Saved! And watching angels weep joyful tears at the victory of love over hate and revenge.

Fedora, dazed with wonder, mad with rage, darted forward to thwart Kathleen's angelic purpose. But Heaven had interposed. Ere she reached them, Kathleen's frenzied hands had dragged Ralph from the fatal plank. His falling body struck the fiend, tripping and throwing her violently upon the cruel saw. Blindly she threw up her arms, shrieked in demoniac fear, and then—there came a horrible, grating sound, the sickening smell of fresh blood spurting into the air, and—Fedora's headless body fell with an awful thud upon the floor, while from the gloom beyond there followed upon her dying shriek the sound of pistol-shots and men's angry voices! Jack Wren and Teddy Darrell had arrived upon the scene; but only that the heavenly hosts had helped Kathleen, they would have come too late.

[Pg 251]

Ivan Belmont, in the midst of his exultation over his terrible crime, had met a swift retribution. Turning to rejoin Fedora, and gloat with her over the destruction of their victims, he was confronted by the detective and Teddy Darrell. Snatching a pistol from his breast, he fired at the foremost one, and received in return a fatal bullet from the ready weapon of the dashing detective. He fell dead, and his crime-stained soul wandered forth on the wings of the night, with that of Fedora, to the realms of darkness and eternal gloom.

Hastening into the mill in search of Kathleen, the two men were horrified to find upon the floor the ghastly, decapitated body of Fedora.

In another moment they saw near at hand the inanimate forms of Ralph and Kathleen.

"Oh, Heaven, we are too late! They are all dead!" exclaimed Teddy in anguish; but a low moan from Kathleen arrested him.

He stooped over his beautiful betrothed and lifted her in his arms. She opened her eyes, but they gazed blankly into his, and Kathleen murmured, gladly:

"Ralph, darling! I have saved you from a terrible death. Thank God! thank God! for I love only you, and had you died, I should have gone mad with grief!"

Teddy Darrell started and shivered, but the arms that held Kathleen did not let her fall, only pressed her closer to his throbbing heart.

[Pg 252]

"She loves Ralph Chainey. That is the key to the mystery of her coldness for me," he murmured, sadly. "Oh, my beautiful love! must I then lose you? I loved you so, and I would have tried to make you so happy. Must I give you up?" And only the pitying angels knew the pang that rent his heart.

CHAPTER LXIX.

"I'LL TAKE YOU HOME AGAIN, KATHLEEN."

I know you love me, Kathleen, dear,
Your heart was ever fond and true,
I always feel when you are near
That life holds nothing dear but you.
Oh, I will take you back, Kathleen,
To where your heart will feel no pain,
And when the fields are fresh and green
I'll take you to your home again.

THOMAS P. WESTENDORF.

But true love is never selfish. Teddy Darrell's heart bore that cruel wrench gravely and in silence. They took Ralph and Kathleen home; and a few days later, when the girl was stronger and better, her noble young betrothed came to her and bravely gave her back her promise.

"I know all your love for Ralph," he said. "I know how bravely you have held to your promise to me. I have not one unkind thought of you, dear, and I give you back your vow, for I know you would be happier with him than me. But think sometimes of me, Kathleen, for I shall always love you."

He meant what he said, and he thought it would be so, but something happened just a few weeks later that changed all the world to handsome Teddy Darrell.

Far away, in a beautiful Southern home, where the magnolias bloomed and the orange groves drooped their white blossoms down on her dark head, a beautiful young widow laid aside her pen too often to dream of one who had been her lover in the dear old days, before that fatal quarrel had driven her into a marriage for pique with the proud, rich man who had now been lying for more than a year beneath a costly granite shaft in Howard Cemetery.

[Pg 253]

To-day, in a magazine that she had been reading, some sweet, sad lines had touched her heart. Obeying an uncontrollable impulse, she drew pen and ink toward her, exclaiming:

"What if I copy these sweet, sad verses and send them to my dear old Dark Eyes? He is not married yet, I know, and I will send him the notice of Bob's death with the verses; for I love Ted still, and I would give the world to win him back!"

And so the letter came to Teddy from that far-off Southern home, and he read with tender eyes the little poem, entitled "Dark Eyes," which it contained:

Which eyes do I love the best,
Dark or blue or gray?
Each are beautiful and blest
In their way.
But I think if some sweet soul
Dearer to us than the rest
Shone through light or dark, we'd love
That color best.

One I loved in happier days,
Under happier skies,
One whose looks breathed only praise,
Had *dark* eyes.
Darkly radiant eyes that rest
Nevermore to wake,
And I love *dark* eyes the best
For *his* sake.

Dark eyes, oh, you haunt me yet
With your magic splendor!
All my heart holds one regret
Deep and tender.
Oft you come as all sweet things,
Memory-saddened, come;
As the scent of roses brings
Dead perfume.

As the sadly dying strain
Of a song we used to know
Stirs the heart to sudden pain,
You come and go;
Shining on me in my dreams
With the light you used to wear,
Deepening with your starlight beams
My despair,
Till the sad heart in my breast

Throbbing seems to break,
And I love dark eyes the best
For his sake!

Teddy's dark eyes grew dim, but he smiled as he exclaimed:

"Bob had blue eyes, so she must mean *me*, for she used to call me her 'Dark Eyes.' Poor fellow! I'm sorry he died; but I do believe all the old love for Gussie is coming back again. I'll take the first 'flier' for the South." And, sure enough, it was only a few months later that he bore away from the Crescent City the fairest flower of the Magnolia State, his bonny bride.

But it was long before Teddy's wedding-day that he had cards to attend a grand reception at the Carew mansion on Commonwealth Avenue.

It seemed that Mrs. Carew really meant to stay abroad for years, for Madame Rumor said, in a week after their departure, that the handsome old house had been rented to a rich and eccentric old man, a relative of the late Vincent Carew. Kathleen herself was surprised when she received that letter from Uncle Ben, far away in his country home, telling her all about it.

"I wanted to give you a big party on your betrothal to that grand young actor, Ralph Chainey, my dear, so I rented the house from the agent, and I want you to be sure to come, Kathleen," he wrote. "Never mind about buying a new dress, dear. Uncle Ben is not as poor as he looks, and you must come in your every-day dress. Go up to your own old room, and you will find there a new dress and jewels, a gift from Uncle Ben."

[Pg 254]

To know that Uncle Ben was rich was surprise enough, but when Helen and Kathleen arrived with Mrs. Fox and Mrs. Stone at the mansion, she was transported with joy to meet in the hall her aunt, Mrs. Franklyn, her cousin Chester, and beautiful, happy Daisy Lynn.

"Uncle Ben invited us on a long visit," they exclaimed, and hurried her upstairs to the beautiful rooms once her own, but to which, for almost two years, Kathleen had been a stranger.

Kathleen, now the happy promised bride of noble Ralph Chainey, could not keep back the tender tears as she crossed the threshold of the familiar rooms; but Daisy wiped them away, begging her to look at her new dress.

"The people will be coming presently, and you don't want Mr. Chainey to see you with pink rims around your beautiful dark eyes," she said, gayly, and hurried her into the beautiful white dress costly enough for a bride.

"And here are these diamonds, Kathleen, that he gave you to replace those that you lost by the villainy of Ivan Belmont," continued Daisy, lifting a set of glorious diamonds from their white velvet bed.

They slipped through her white fingers like rivers of light, and Kathleen uttered a cry of rapture.

"They are worth a fortune! Oh, how good Uncle Ben is to me! I must put them on and go down to him, Daisy."

But when she was going along the hall in the beautiful, bride-like robes, she paused suddenly at the library door.

"Daisy, I must go in alone to see papa's portrait first," she said, and tears came into the lovely eyes as she crossed the threshold.

Again she knelt before the portrait, weeping for the loved and lost, but suddenly Uncle Ben came in and stood by her side.

"He wronged you, my darling, and left you to fight the bitter battle of poverty alone. How can you forgive him?"

[Pg 255]

She put her hand in his, and answered, sweetly:

"My step-mother was to blame, I'm sure, Uncle Ben, and so I have never harbored one unkind thought of my dear, dead father; and, oh, what would I not give if he were alive to-night to bless Ralph and me in our happiness!"

"My angel daughter!" cried the old man, and he flung aside the disfiguring disguises in which he had masqueraded while unmasking his wicked wife. There he stood, tall, dark and handsome, although with a sadness that would never leave his face—Vincent Carew, her beloved father!

She flew to his arms, and they had a blessed half hour of sacred rejoicing and love. Then there came a light rap on the door.

It was Ralph Chainey, handsome as a prince in his evening suit.

"They told me to come here for you, my darling! Oh, how beautiful you are!" he cried, taking her into his arms.

Vincent Carew came forward into the light.

"See, papa has come back to me," she said; and he smiled on the pair of lovers. He had had a rooted antipathy to actors, but for Kathleen's sake he was willing to accept Ralph Chainey for a beloved son-in-law. Kathleen had whispered to him that she was to marry her lover soon, and he shook hands most cordially now with the young man ere he turned away and left them together for a few sweet moments before they joined the guests.

Ralph took beautiful Kathleen in his fond arms, and kissed that radiant face with adoring love.

"My love, my bride so soon to be," he whispered; and then she drew him away.

"We must go, although I had rather stay here with you, dear love," she whispered; and they went along the hall arm in arm, happiest lovers the world ever knew.

Daisy Lynn was singing at the piano when they entered the crowded drawing-room. It was a song that Vincent Carew had chosen. The words rang out in sweet and jubilant echoes on the air: [Pg 256]

"I'll take you home again, Kathleen,
Across the ocean wild and wide,
To where your heart has ever been
Since first you were my bonny bride.
To that dear home beyond the sea
My Kathleen shall again return;
And when thy old friends welcome thee
Thy loving heart will cease to yearn!"

THE END

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Transcriber's Notes:

This story was originally serialized in the *New York Fireside Companion* story paper from December 19, 1891 to April 16, 1892.

Thanks to Deidre Johnson, Joseph Rainone and Northern Illinois University for assistance in locating story paper installments in order to restore text omitted from the Westbrook edition.

Some inconsistent hyphenation retained (e.g. bedroom vs. bed-room).

Image may be clicked to view larger version.

Page 3, changed "Darrel" to "Darrell" (twice).

Page 5, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 7, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 11, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and changed "heydey" to "heyday."

Page 12, changed "drooping lips" to "drooping lids."

Page 15, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 19, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 22, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 27, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 28, changed ? to ! after "having saved your life."

Page 33, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 37, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 40, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and changed single quote to double quote after "again."

Page 43, changed comma to period after "getting off, sir."

Page 45, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 46, restored omitted poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 50, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 53, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and added missing second "for" to "after being vainly looked for for more than two days."

Page 57, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and removed unnecessary comma after "throwing."

Page 63, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 66, changed period to comma in "Now, listen to me."

Page 70, the Westbrook edition was missing the poetry from Daisy Lynn's book. This text has been restored from the original Fireside Companion serialization along with the chapter head poem.

Page 73, changed "Watnut" to "Walnut."

Page 74, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 79, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 83, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 88, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 89, removed unnecessary comma from "dry, eyes."

Page 91, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 93, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and changed "recontre" to "rencontre."

Page 97, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 101, the Westbrook edition was missing the word "put" in "put me into a lunatic asylum." The word has been restored by checking the original *Fireside Companion* appearance of the text.

Page 102, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version; in Fireside Companion, this chapter is entitled "TURNED OUT INTO THE STORM TO PERISH."

Page 105, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 107, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 111, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 113, restored poetry and introductory paragraph ("Some burning words...") from Fireside Companion version.

Page 115, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 118, changed "grimmace" to "grimace."

Page 119, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 122, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 124, restored lengthy passage of Teddy reading poetry from Fireside Companion version; removed unnecessary comma in "Teddy Darrell, came."

Page 126, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 128, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 132, restored missing poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 133, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 135, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 138, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 142, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 146, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and changed "money-moon" to "honey-moon."

Page 147, restored two omitted poems from the Fireside Companion version.

Page 148, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 153, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 157, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 160, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 162, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 167, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 171, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 173, the Westbrook edition omits some poetry on this page; it has been restored from the original Fireside Companion appearance.

Page 175, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 179, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and changed "a animated" to "an animated."

Page 180, restored poetry and introductory paragraph ("Some touching verses...") omitted from the Westbrook edition.

Page 181, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 184, restored start-of-chapter poem found in Fireside Companion edition but omitted from Westbrook reprint.

Page 185, restored poetry omitted from Westbrook edition.

Page 188, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 189, removed unnecessary comma after "romantic heart."

Page 192, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 194, changed period to comma after "Never."

Page 195, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 197, restored song lyrics removed from Westbrook edition.

Page 198, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 200, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 205, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version and changed "subtile" to "subtle."

Page 207, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 210, restored poetry and related paragraph to end of chapter LV and restored chapter head poetry to chapter LVI.

Page 212, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 214, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version along with several song lyrics and accompanying text.

Page 217, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 218, restored poetry cut from Westbrook edition.

Page 221, restored poetry and introductory text cut from Westbrook edition.

Page 223, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 225, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 227, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 231, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 234, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 238, changed "you passage" to "your passage."

Page 239, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 240, added missing close quote after "fickle" and restored poetry cut from Westbrook edition.

Page 242, restored missing poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 244, restored poetry missing from Westbrook edition.

Page 252, restored chapter head poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 253, restored "Dark Eyes" poetry from Fireside Companion version.

Page 256, changed "you heart" to "your heart."

Back cover, changed "Barabara" to "Barbara"; changed "Heart's of Fire" to "Hearts of Fire"; changed "Gorvice" to "Garvice."; changed "Daphane's" to "Daphne's."; changed "Passions Slave" to "Passion's Slave."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KATHLEEN'S DIAMONDS; OR, SHE LOVED A HANDSOME ACTOR ***

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