

MY BROTHER'S FRIEND.

IN TWO PARTS.

I.

I CANNOT tell how it happened, but from some cause or other my brother Raleigh and I were always peculiarly attached the one to the other. I am sure that this mutual love did not interfere with our affection for the rest; for ours was a happy, united family circle, but still that there existed between us two a bond of especial strength was a fact unconsciously acted upon by us, and tacitly understood by everyone around us. As children our plans and hopes were the same; and our studies too were in many respects similar, for while my brother joined me in my botanical rambles,—first, as I well remember, induced to do so by the fear that I should get into danger in my enthusiastic search after a rare specimen,—I, ever by his side, caught somewhat of his delight in the old Greek and Latin authors. In these pages he revelled; and many and many an hour have I spent in our library, poring over those records of the past, and, from their teaching, learning yet more and more to believe that saying of the Wise Man, “There is nothing new under the sun:” for are not the men and women of to-day the same as when, long ages ago, they lived and loved and joyed and sorrowed in this dim world?

Thus passed my childhood and early youth; the years, as they flew by, brought many a change to us and to those dear to us, but no shadow fell between our hearts. Our father died, and our little sister Jessie soon followed him to the tomb. Helen married and went to live in the south of Ireland; John too took to himself a partner and bore her to the far West, there to found a happy and prosperous home; and not long after his departure Raleigh finally decided on carrying out a plan which had long been talked about and looked forward to, but hitherto delayed by many circumstances, a plan which was no less than to go to London to complete the medical education which had been begun in our native place; and when this was finished, should any opening promise success, to enter on his career as a doctor in the capital; for to the profession of medicine he had been destined from his childhood.

To me his decision was fraught with inexpressible pain and anxiety. The idea of losing my beloved brother; of bidding him farewell with the knowledge that in that great busy London scarcely one single human being whom we could call friend would be at hand to cheer and uphold him in his toilsome path; the terrible dread that the temptations that beset the medical student in no common measure would gather thickly around him in his solitude,—all filled me with bitter sorrow, the more intense from my utter hopelessness as regarded any ability of mine to lessen the peril; and I watched the preparations going forward, and strove to aid in them as far as I could, in the silence of despair. For when for an instant the thought of accompanying Raleigh in his venture, and clinging to him in the trust that one home face would be a blessing amidst a crowd of strangers, flashed across me, and the proposal rose to my lips, I turned away from the idea sick-hearted, for I knew how vain would be the attempt to convince

my mother that the necessity existed that could possibly justify me in placing myself in such a lonely, self-dependent position as mine would be unavoidably. In the end, however, the permission for which I longed was unexpectedly granted, and in a manner totally unforeseen. I need not relate how the matter was brought about; suffice it to say that just after Christmas in the year that witnessed my twentieth birthday, the final arrangements having been completed, Raleigh and I were comfortably settled in good lodgings in London, and his course of study fairly entered on under excellent auspices.

From this time our two lives rippled on in a placid stream, with very few events to disturb its course. My brother, devoted to his avocations, was absent from me the greater part of the day, only returning to his hasty meals, and even then often too much hurried or engrossed to speak many words; but our evenings well repaid all my privations; busy as the poor fellow might be, he always held the hours from eight to ten sacred to me, and except perhaps that a lecture might interfere unavoidably and oblige his absence, I never missed him from my side during the time which he called his "daily holiday;" and lonely as I might be during the long silent forenoon, I could look forward to our pleasant reunions and cheer myself up right bravely, for each one brought me fresh proofs of my brother's warm, untiring affection, and convinced me more and more that I was in my right place.

After the first few months I had not much time to remember any lack of companionship. It is true that for a space the dull dark street with its endless sameness of prospect, the hurry and bustle that surrounded me on all sides when I ventured out, the myriads of unknown faces and all those nameless annoyances that beset the stranger freshly arrived from the heart of the country and the freedom of old-fashioned country life, were so many sources of trial to me; but I did my best to conceal my discomfort from Raleigh, and before very long custom had me completely familiarised with my situation. Besides, I had scarcely learnt to thread my way fearlessly amongst the intricate thoroughfares before I had plenty of work laid out for my leisure moments. Raleigh had from his childhood been noted for his sympathy with every species of suffering. From the day that he, when little more than six years old, had come crying to our mother with an almost inarticulate tale of the woman and baby under the hedge in the orchard, who on examination proved to be a poor hunger-stricken tramp carrying her two-week old infant, and wandering over the country in a vain search for her recreant tinker-husband, my brother's heart had been open to all kinds of woe; and in the hospitals and amongst the dismal alleys where his chief acquaintance lay, he found only too many opportunities for learning how much misery there is in the world; and very often, and at last almost daily, fresh objects for such small help as I could offer were recommended to my charity. It is true that we had not much abundance of worldly store from which to spare for the relief of the destitute; but after all, good as it is to have wherewith to afford temporal aid, that is not the only thing requisite. Sympathy is a rare benefaction to the poor, and it is touching to see how gratefully they receive it. When health and strength are theirs, and the necessity of constant work imposes ceaseless activity, there is little time for falling back on themselves; but O, what a desert their life is when the strong hand is feeble, the sturdy foot fettered, and when their saddened existence knows of no break to its monotony but the coming and going of the narrow strip of light that pierces the window of their gloomy homes! The sick poor! How often we say those words! how seldom, how very seldom, we realise their full meaning!

Amongst all these employments I scarcely felt so much as some might have expected the absence of companionship with those of my own age and station. As months and years rolled on, certainly, from one cause or another, my limited circle of

acquaintance increased until I was on speaking terms with several families with whom Raleigh had become professionally connected ; but neither our position nor inclination favoured a large range of associates ; and weeks would sometimes pass without my exchanging a word with any out of my own home, save my poor clients before mentioned. With respect to Raleigh's daily associates, his fellow medical students, for my sake any desire they might have felt to find their way to his fireside was ever courteously but decidedly discouraged. At the time of which I am speaking, there were but few among this class with whom any intimacy would have been agreeable ; and justly believing that it would be easier to stand aloof altogether than to set limits where a habit had once begun, our hospitalities were never offered or extended. I do not know how my brother managed to adhere to this difficult rule. He never alluded to any unpleasantness arising from it ; but I fear that such must often have followed so unpopular a measure ; but, with all his gentleness and affability, Raleigh had a resolute spirit, and nothing could ever turn him from that which he esteemed to be right ; and he well knew all the trials that might have assailed me if he had followed the bent of his naturally free and open disposition, and gathered around him in his home those who elsewhere were his associates and fellow-workers.

But there was one exception to this otherwise rigid rule. I cannot at this distance of time recall exactly for what special reason or on what particular occasion my brother first brought Walter Stewart to our secluded corner. I have often asked myself the question, and taxed my memory in the vain endeavour to bring back to my recollection the first interview and the impressions it produced. I cannot do it ; I only know that the winter subsequent to our arrival in London must have witnessed the beginning of our acquaintance, for from that time he is associated with all our life. "We two" it is up to that period, "we three" it is ever after, until the sad, sad blank comes, and the old tune begins again.

Walter was Raleigh's senior by a few years, and from the earliest day of my brother's studentship had ever been his steady friend. His abilities and excellent conduct, his clear head and skilful hand, and that indescribable influence of character which some possess in such a peculiar degree, marked him out amongst the class as its highest member ; but at the same time these qualities, joined with a refinement of mind and, what was better, an uprightness of principle that made him shrink with abhorrence from the dissipated reckless habits of those around him, isolated his position much, and until Raleigh's appearance he had walked on alone, bravely but in loneliness. No wonder, then, that two such kindred spirits should recognise each other, and join in the links of no common intimacy for mutual aid and support in their arduous paths. Even as that subsisting between David and Jonathan was their friendship, "passing the love of women ;" no marvel, then, that my brother should have decided to relax his plans and to admit this one guest to our home ; as a brother he came and went, helping and cheering us both, and applying to us as freely in his turn for aid and encouragement—a bright thread woven into the quiet web of our sober domestic life.

The records of few existences, comparatively speaking, are fraught with startling incident or wonder ; here and there we meet with one to whom strange things have been meted out, varied experiences have been permitted ; but such is seldom the case ; and if the even tenor of the common path of mankind may be called by some monotonous, it is at least peaceful compared with the storms and conflicts that harass those of the less-favoured ones. Ours was a quiet unobtrusive walk through many a year. Doubtless there were points of peculiar interest, to some of which I can now recur : tidings of further changes in the home scene—deaths and marriages and births ; occasional visits to the old places far away in Yorkshire ; the emancipation of Walter and Raleigh from their pupilage, and their early struggles in making for them-

selves a position amidst the ranks of the profession,—all these things, so fresh in their importance at the time, so far away in the dimness of the past now, and mingling with them the ever-running stream of our intercourse together, unbroken in its pleasant current, unruffled, untouched by one breath or shadow of distrust or coldness. Thus years went on, but clouds, all unknown to us, were gathering in our horizon.

To those who can look back fifty years, some things sound strangely. When we hear it said that unless great alterations be made, unless blocks of houses that have stood in their places through the lifetime of generations be not cleared away, unless sanitary regulations be quickly introduced and carried out strictly, fearful epidemics will thin our populations, old people are apt to wonder how these affairs were managed in their youth. Ah, if some of these improvements had been thought of then! If a little of the science that now watches over health had been in existence half a century ago, what lives might have been saved! what sorely-tried hearts might have been spared that anguish which is worse than death! But cease these vain questionings and murmurings. Let us say, "God's will be done," and be at peace!

There was no marked indication of the coming of any season of peculiar sickness. I remember that the summer began rather early that year, and that the hot weather surprised us by its suddenness, although we had all become so inured to the stifling atmosphere of those close London streets that we did not hold the matter in much account; but about the last week in June a change came; heavy rains, in no way mitigating the heat, making it only more oppressive from the alteration from dry to damp, set in, and before long fever—at first of the usual summer character, but speedily assuming a more alarming type—made its appearance in our district. By this time I had become as fearless as any hospital nurse in my attendance on the sick. Once or twice Walter had seemed to hesitate before allowing me to visit some cases which had come under his care, and at first my brother had always made a personal inspection before sanctioning my venturing; but I had long since overruled all their objections, and now my hands were indeed full of employment.

At the outbreak of the epidemic it was thought best to send patients to the neighbouring hospitals; but ere long their wards were inconveniently filled, and it was necessary, and a sad necessity it was, to trust to such arrangements for their life and comfort as their own poor homes afforded; and, strange to say, in many instances the sufferers themselves were more than satisfied that such should be the case. O, how well I remember that busy anxious time! busy and anxious at first, gradually becoming more and more so, until at last, amidst the heavy pressure of many cares and fatigues and fears, the power of connected thought seemed almost lost, and we felt that we must act in the present moment; afterwards we might realise what our dangers and terrors had been, but now we must not pause.

Walter and Raleigh were very popular in the district, not with the poor only, though, of course, their chief practice lay amongst them, but in many instances the richer inhabitants had learnt to appreciate their merits and to look to them in any sudden emergency. Now these hasty calls had become appallingly frequent, and at all hours of the day and night hurried rings at the surgery bells of both houses announced that another stricken one required aid. Gradually, as the time of the visitation lengthened, we could plainly see how the disease was making its rapid way from the hovel of the poor to the abode of the comparatively affluent, until at last it reached the houses of the rich, and into all these habitations made so sadly equal by the stroke that levels to the dust the vain distinctions of earth, did the fearless companions go, ministering what lay in their power to the suffering body, and often—how often will never be known until the secrets of all hearts are revealed at the last dread day,—bringing as needful succour to the departing spirit. Through these labours,

which seemed all too heavy for any human frame or mind to bear, our home was still as calm and bright as in the sunniest days before. Smiles and words of sympathy and acts of generous self-abnegation for the sake of others made our way smooth and happy; and now, in this hour of fear and trial, shone out yet more purely and cheerily that ray of peace which had long made "the path of the just as a shining light;" and I could bless God and take fresh courage as I joined my brother and friend in their daily supplication at the Throne for that support and protection which we each so desired for one another.

Amidst the many recollections that crowd on my mind in connection with this time, confused and blended together as most of them are, as my eye strains back to them through the mist of intervening years, some incidents stand out with singular prominence, little incidents, many of them so slight in interest to all but the immediate actors in the drama that I will not record them. But one scene of agony and dismay I must recall. Perhaps amidst the overstrained excitement of the hour, and the overtasked energies of mind and body, I was morbidly alive to rash and false impressions if it were indeed so, I cannot now, I never could, judge; but from that moment to this, the idea, struggled and prayed against for many a long day after, now left alone in the submission born of sad years, gathers vividly around this point, the terrible belief that in that hour the disease, which had been encountered successfully, so long and bravely, struck home its arrows, and that the sun of my life set as I stood beside that sick-bed and aided one,—unconsciously how much dearer to me than my own existence!—to combat death in his struggles for one frail young victim. The time has been when I have driven the picture of that night from my memory and striven to erase its torturing image; but I am older, calmer now, and it seems to pour balm into the aching wound to associate that deed of mercy with the closing hours of the dead.

Our evenings, in so far as we could so arrange them, interrupted as they now constantly were by hurried calls to the sick, were spent together as they had been for a long time; in fact our little sitting-room had become almost common property. My brother had even urged Walter strongly to give up his present lodgings and take up his domicile in our house,—an arrangement which, under existing circumstances, we both thought would be a considerable advantage, as enabling the two companions to summon each other without delay; but to this Walter would in no way agree. He thanked us most warmly and gratefully for our offer, but declined it simply and decidedly, assigning no very special reason, however; and though often adverted to, the plan was never carried into execution. At the time I imagined that an unwillingness to deprive his landlady of a lodger at a season when such were so scarce was his chief motive, and that perhaps he fancied that the addition to our household (Raleigh and I had moved into a small dwelling of our own) would entail increased care and trouble on me when I needed all the quiet that could be afforded; but I now know what was the actual state of the case. He felt too truly that the risk we each daily ran was more than enough to make it very probable that one or other would eventually be smitten; and he could not bear the thought that, should the ordeal lie in his path, the chief weight of nursing and attendance would rest with me, and with his usual generosity he chose to suffer himself rather than increase the burden on those he loved. If for a moment the truth had flashed on me or on Raleigh, we should have borne down all opposition and resolutely carried our point; but it was left for a chance expression to reveal to us the full extent of our friend's self-forgetfulness and tender care for us.

The epidemic had been raging unchecked for weeks, and the alarm occasioned by it had reached its height, but from some sudden atmospheric change (or rather ought I not to say, in the mercy of Him who had permitted the disease to descend on the city?)

a remarkable abatement had been remarked within the past day or two, more in the mitigated type exhibited by fresh cases, however, than in any improvement in the older cases. But such as it was, we hailed the hopeful omen with deep thankfulness, and drew together on the evening to which I have alluded with a feeling of relief that only those who have been as sorely tried as we had been can realise. For many days past we had scarcely known the luxury of a quiet hour; and now, with an unspoken wish that no call might disturb us in the enjoyment of our unwonted rest, we shut out the busy world and were all in all to each other, as in the old days that seemed, looking through the busy weeks just past, so very, very long ago. Raleigh was sadly tired, but Walter appeared as well and strong as ever; and as for myself, all sense of fatigue had vanished. I even opened my long-forgotten work-box and prepared to employ myself with some of its contents, not, however, without a playful remonstrance from Walter, who cried a truce to such things, and bade me rest myself on the sofa while I had an opportunity; but I persisted in my industry, and we all, I think, liked that it should be so, it seemed such an earnest of the peace that we so hoped was coming.

But it had not come yet; for scarcely had an hour passed before a violent ring at the surgery bell, and then another and another, startled us into a remembrance of the suffering world outside. Raleigh, who had been dozing on the couch, sprang up at the sound; and Walter himself went to answer the messenger. I followed to the door of the parlour and heard a hasty dialogue that told me only too much. "Both the doctors were to come at once," such was the answer to some question from Walter; "not a moment was to be lost, for the little thing was dying; and if the young lady could come too, it would be a mercy, for the poor gentleman—" and here I lost what was said, until, as Walter turned hastily from the door, the direction of the house caught my ear, showing that it was little Bertha Hollis, the only child of Walter's kindest friend, who was stricken, and I grew sick with terror and sorrow; for I well knew how that one young life was entwined with many, and how feeble a spark always burned within her tiny frame. How could she weather the blast that had destroyed so many stronger frames?

But this was no time for paralysing regret; Walter's voice first roused me to a recollection of the need for instant action, as he took my hand in his, and tenderly inquired whether I was equal to going with him on his errand. "If it be as the messenger says, Janet, our aid will be of little avail; but still I cannot bear to forsake them at such a time, and it is possible we might be of some use but do not come if you do not feel able. Raleigh shall not; he is far too much tired." I could only whisper that I would go at once, and fly to prepare for setting out. I loved the little creature so dearly; I had so hoped that she had been carried out of the reach of danger; and the thought of her being in such a strait was so sudden a shock, that my powers of speech and thought seemed half benumbed.

MY BROTHER'S FRIEND.

IN TWO PARTS.

II.

WHEN I returned to our little parlour, I found Raleigh eagerly desirous to join us, but Walter resolute in his decision that it would be better for him to keep his energies for the morrow ; and he eventually prevailed, although my poor brother felt like a deserter from the field of battle. Walter and I set out. It was about nine o'clock ; the twilight of a summer's night was still abroad, and the air felt fresh and pleasant ; but we had no time for lingering. The house to which we were bound lay at so short a distance that we did not think it necessary to take a conveyance, and in a very few minutes we had reached the door. It was ajar, and as we hastened up the steps, opened hurriedly, and a servant, pale and terrified, gestured to us to enter ; and whispering, as though the Angel of Death were indeed already on the threshold, she begged us to come with her at once upstairs ; but before we could follow, the dining-room opened, and Mr. Hollis came out. O, what a change a few short days of anguish had wrought in him ! When last I had seen him his robust frame and cheerful face had seemed to set care at defiance ; now he was haggard and worn and aged, and as he grasped Walter's hand and tried to speak, hoarse murmurs alone came from his lips ; he strove to thank us for coming, and to tell us somewhat of his little daughter's state ; but he could scarcely gasp out that three doctors, the best in our neighbourhood, had left her, saying that they could do nothing more. She had been ill for several days, and at first hopes had been given that all would end well ; but now that was over, and he could not bear to see his darling die ; he groaned as he said that word, and tears, such as only strong men weep, ran down his cheeks ; but would we take pity on them and help them in this agony ? We promised to do all in our power ; and as we followed the trembling servant up the stairs, the wretched father strode back into the room whence he had come, and shut the door, as though he would have barred out the great woe that he so dreaded.

Up those stately stairs and along the corridor we passed with our conductor, until she paused, and turning a door-handle noiselessly, admitted us to the sick chamber. Pomp and riches and luxury—what can they do when the King of Terrors is at hand ? Everything that wealth could buy or love devise was gathered in that one apartment, as though its baby possessor could find pleasure in such things : soft carpets under foot, heavy velvet curtains drooping round the bed and before the windows, every appliance of a downy couch,—all were there ; but little did these varieties minister to the fevered frame of the sufferer. Just as we entered, Mrs. Hollis, who had watched incessantly by the side of the child through its illness, had started up at some change in the panting breath, and placed the lamp so as to cast a faint light on its features ; and truly it was a fearful sight that met our gaze : the seal of death seemed indeed impressed on that little brow, and both Walter and I at that moment despaired of the issue. A dying child ! I had seen death again and again through all

these past weeks ; but never had its aspect sent such a thrill to my heart as now. But all these ideas passed through my mind in an instant ; the next I was sickeningly conscious of a terrible weight in the air, an almost perceptible feeling of pestilence, such as many who have seen much illness can well realise. It almost deprived me of consciousness, coming, as I had just done, from the pure air outside ; and I could scarcely command myself sufficiently to take hold of the bed-post and steady myself by its aid. Walter felt it too ; for without speaking he went hastily over, and drawing aside the folds of the drapery, opened both windows without hesitation. How thankful I was when the first waft of clear fresh air entered that stifling room ! Even Mrs. Hollis, accustomed gradually as she had been to it, and therefore unable to judge of its intensity, and besides startled and terrified by such a sudden change from plans to which she had all her life been taught to adhere, must have enjoyed the blessed relief.

The soft sweet night breeze gently swayed the bed-curtains, and stole in between them ; and when Walter drew them also apart, and its coolness reached the brow of the sick child, all doubt that he had brought her the best boon in his power vanished. The change seemed electrical ; she pushed the heavy clothes aside, and spreading out her little arms, appeared unconsciously to welcome the healing balm. We watched by her side for many an hour ; there was small room for medical aid—nature was all too exhausted by the struggle of the past days—and we could only give grateful draughts and fresh air, and leave the issue prayerfully in the hands of her Heavenly Father. And He saw meet to send hope with the dawning day : sleep—not the heavy stupor that had heralded death, but slumber, such as to a child is a messenger of life—stilled the restlessness of disease ; and in the gray of the morning, leaving such directions as were needed, Walter and I returned through the silent streets to our own home, bringing back with us the joyful tidings that little Bertha might still be counted amongst the living, and followed by the thanks and blessings of the whole household.

It was no unusual thing with any of us to spend the night as we have just done ; an unbroken rest was scarcely ever enjoyed. Our plan was, therefore, for those who had been out to snatch a few hours of repose before entering on the business of the day ; so, briefly detailing to Raleigh the case we had just quitted, and making a few needed domestic arrangements, I lay down and tried to sleep off my fatigue and alarm ; but the events of the past night were too vivid. Strive as I might to banish them, they would return ; and I rose at last, feeling far from comfortable, but hoping that before Walter and my brother should come in my strength and spirits would have rallied. The event answered my wish ; by the time our evening circle had gathered, cheered as it was by the news of Bertha's approach to convalescence, almost all my unpleasant sensations had worn off, and I was able to greet the comers without difficulty.

Once more we drew together for an evening of happy social converse, and this season was unbroken ; no summons from without came to disturb us, and the hours glided peacefully away. We did not talk—we never did at these moments—of our outside cares and anxieties ; they were sufficient for our busy day ; and it seemed understood amongst us that other and brighter topics were to occupy our thoughts in the intervals of relaxation ; but I remember one incident, so slight at the instant as scarcely to arrest any attention, but vividly present to my after recollection. Something—I cannot recall what—reminded me of the scene of the previous evening, and I alluded to the stifling closeness that I had observed on entering the sick-room. Walter shuddered and turned pale, and hastily passing by the subject, precluded all further dwelling on it : for a moment I felt surprised, for he, of our trio, had always hitherto appeared least to dread any allusion to the scenes of danger through which we had gone ; but I quickly explained it to myself, for did not a thrill pass through

me at the recollection? No wonder, then, that he too should turn away from the thought.

Our conversation that night was, strangely enough, of our homes. A letter had arrived that morning from ours—that is, from Raleigh's and mine—earnestly urging an oft-repeated entreaty that we would consult our own safety, and hasten into the country away from the peril that surrounded us; but no motive that it could bring forward could have induced us, I believe, to alter our plans. It had seemed so necessary for us to remain at our posts, that from the first we had separately decided on so doing, and then strengthened each other in the determination; and the event had so proved the correctness of our belief, that the constantly-recurring admonitions of our anxious friends did not make us waver for an instant: hence it was not from any thought of this kind that the morning's letter was discussed; but the pleasant home-pictures it brought up, and the welcome glimpses it afforded of the quiet and peace of the country were too grateful to be disregarded, and we indulged ourselves with gazing down vistas of autumn excursions into the cool green glades and pure healthful air of our native county.

Walter joined us in all our schemes; we could not separate him from our future. His home was more one of the past than of the present. His father and mother had died, and no brothers or sisters remained to greet him; all lay at rest in the little churchyard in Cumberland, which he had so often described to me that I half fancied that I had seen it in reality, or, it may be, in a dream, and I have seen it since, and stood beside the quiet graves, and thought heavily of one far away which ought to have been numbered amongst them. But lovingly still he looked back to the old homestead, and often and often had he recurred to it, and spoken of his hope of one day welcoming us to the familiar scenes; and we had discussed plans in reference to it, and made it a kind of holiday scheme that was some time to be carried out; but this evening he dwelt on it more earnestly than ever, and painted its beauties in all their fairest colours, as though some long-sealed book had been opened before the eye of his memory, making the past as vivid and actual as the present.

Have I said that Walter had never spoken to me of love? Our lives had been too busy hitherto—first during his and Raleigh's student days, and since then while they had been both striving to gain vantage-ground amongst their fellows, for us to have much time for such things; and besides, we were neither of us in a position to sanction such ideas; but it maybe the thought, unwhispered even to our own hearts, was there, nevertheless, and many months before this the secret of his silent long-pent-up affections had come to me. It boots not to tell how the knowledge first dawned on me—I scarce know myself; it is enough that I learned that I was beloved, and the cup, which I had fancied was so filled to the very brim with passionate brotherly devotion that no other earthly attachment could find place therein, received a wealth of priceless affection besides, and sparkled to my lips as surely none ever did to those of feeble mortal before. But this evening words were said, and glances met, that told yet more than words, and sweet strange visions of coming bliss were summoned forth. O young, trusting hearts, with sorrow and death around in every shape of horror, how could we speak of love? How could we touch each other's hand and not feel the chilly finger of the angel severing our warm clasp?

And we parted, as so many have parted, undreaming of what was before us, seeing alone the future that we pictured for ourselves on the dark background, which, alas, alas, was the sole reality there. We laid our plans for the morrow, much less arduous ones than they had been for many preceding weeks; for the sickness was most undoubtedly on the decrease; and we knelt once more together to seek for mercy and aid—for aid to bear humbly and trustfully our different lots, whatever they might be—and then we

baded each other farewell in the light of that radiant hope that was shining so brightly upon our paths,—on Raleigh's as on ours, for the desire had long been a cherished one with him.

The next morning broke peacefully on the great city, rejoicing in the sheathing of the destroyer's sword; and we, my brother and I, laboured in our respective works, and thanked God—O, how fervently!—that the long-prayed-for boon of healing was indeed being poured out on the awe-stricken multitude; and through the day, amidst the narrow streets and amongst the toils and cares of our ways—for as yet these were many—the angel Hope walked with us both, and pointed to glad hours to come. But evening arrived, and brought no Walter. Where could he be? My brother had seen him in the morning, and he had appeared well, but rather fatigued; perhaps he was resting, and would be with us presently; but as the minutes went on, I could not bear the suspense, and Raleigh went to seek him. He returned with the tidings that he had been so weary all day that he had decided on sending a messenger to excuse him to us for this one evening; one real night's rest would perfectly restore him; and my brother had himself seen him, and been the bearer of the note which he had written to beg my forgiveness for his unwilling absence. Here it is, all yellow with age, with its dim, faded ink traced in those familiar characters, telling me not to be surprised or uneasy; he was quite well, only tired out, and in no state to be an amusing companion; “but to-morrow, dearest Janet, I trust all will be right. Rest yourself well, darling, and then I shall less regret my own privation; for you know that you never will confess to being weary when Raleigh or I am taxing all your powers to entertain our selfish selves.” Well, we had to be content, and Raleigh assured me there was nothing to be alarmed about. Walter himself said so too, and I strove to be calm and hopeful.

That night! O, how shall I tell the rest! I had fallen asleep late; for I could not help a vague feeling of anxiety, despite of all my brother's soothing prophecies, and I had lain long awake, wishing for the morning to come and bring us tidings; but at last I had closed my eyes, and exchanged realities for troubled dreams, when a ring at the night-bell struck on my ear and roused me in a moment. I scarcely knew whether it was fact or fancy, and I sat up to listen, when another and more decided peal fell cold on my very heart; and I sprang up, scarce knowing what I was doing, and opening my bed-room door, heard the servant in muffled colloquy with some messenger. I recognised the voice,—I had heard it often before; the son of Walter's landlady had come, and what was his errand? I knew it well; I knew what it must be: our friend was down with the fever, and we must hasten to him immediately.

And we did hasten, but what availed it? What availed it for us, with our love all turned to agony now, to stand beside that silent couch and feel how powerless any human aid was to bring relief to the beloved one—to watch and pray through heavy days and nights, and note no change, no lightening of the stupor that seemed so like death? Disease was paralysing the overwrought frame; those kind hands, that ready brain, which had so untiringly laboured on even beyond their powers in the behalf of others, were soon to be “ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” and as yet the unvarying repose, which was not rest, had been broken by no word or sign to tell us that the sufferer knew who ministered to him. Gradually the flame of life grew fainter and fainter; there was no strength left for fever; a failing of all the vital powers was the herald of the grave; and as the silver cord was loosened and the golden bowl gently broken, all hope that the brightness of the mind would return seemed taken away; and when at last we knelt to crave a peaceful parting from earth for our friend and brother, we mingled with our petitions no longer the entreaty that a sign of recognition might be permitted,—rather that strength and grace might be vouchsafed to us to bear our bereavement without a murmur.

But the last bitterness was not to be added to our cup. As the end drew nigh a change was perceptible ; not a change for hope—that had long faded into nothing—but that latest flicker of the parting mind which so often precedes death broke through the heavy clouds of stupor ; and I thank God that its faint rays fell on us to brighten for ever that dim and lonely path which stretched before us in the future.

I cannot tell how long we had watched, in suspense first, then in despair, beside that bed. All reckoning of the days was over with me ; Raleigh alone counted the tides of disease, and knew the hours of their ebb and flow ; but in mercy he kept silence, for well he knew that they but told of successive stages towards the end of the journey. And now that journey was well-nigh finished, and, unspoken by each to the other, the knowledge struck its dumb horror on us both ; for there is a clinging to hope in the inmost soul which never wholly ceases, unknowing as we imagine ourselves to be of it, until the fearful seal is set which bids it flee away for ever.

Raleigh and I sat together beside our unconscious friend, lying there voiceless and motionless, as he had been from the first moment of our presence in that room ; but as the evening drew on a slight tremor in the pallid face sent the blood faintly rushing to my heart. What did it betide ? I started to my feet, and Raleigh was at my side in an instant. A few minutes passed, and the lips moved with an indistinct sound, and then more clearly came words and names grown familiar to us in many a long past hour. Walter fancied himself in his distant home, and the loved of old times were round him ; the present was hidden from his view ; and as we hung over him, thanking God even for the blessing of listening to that voice, which we had believed was hushed for ever, we heard him recalling many vanished scenes, and speaking tenderly to those who had once mingled their love with his. But ere long later memories returned also. “Mother, dear mother, where is Janet ? Is she not coming ? O, mother, call her ; call her quickly ! Or is she ill ? Has *she* got the fever ? Let me go to her ; I must go to her and Raleigh.” And then I spoke to him, and told him that I was by him ; that we both were there, and besought him to speak to us, to look at us again. And the clouds rolled away gradually from his poor brain, and he knew us—knew us both, and blessed and thanked us for our watchfulness and care.

How can I tell what words were said, what farewells spoken, in that last holy hour of love and friendship ! Peace, such as the world may not give, hovered round that dying bed, and our chastened hearts in all their agony were stilled and strengthened. How often through my long life has the memory of that time come back to me with cheering power ! and that feeble voice, so feeble at first that it scarce seemed able to convey the words it uttered, but gradually rising, until in its clearness and sweetness days of health and vigour were brought to mind, has sounded upon my listening ear and taught its lesson of faith and submission again and again to my rebellious soul, again and again thrilled my whole being with the earnestness of its passionate love. And in the dreams of night, when things of the past come back upon the human soul in all their vivid colouring, how often have I knelt again beside that bed and watched the light fade out of those beloved eyes, seen the shadow of death pass over that noble brow and draw the curtain for ever between it and life, and felt the last faint pressure of that cold hand, as when—O, friend ! O, husband !—I parted from you in that hour so long ago, so far divided from me now by many a weary year !

What remains for me to tell ? Raleigh and I are yet one, as in our childish days ; we have clung together all through our lives, and the memories of the past are alike to us both in joy and grief. And ever present to both, whether spoken of or living but in thought, there walks one remembered form, which hallows and glorifies our united lives, and beckons us ever on to the mansions of rest and peace.