

Poets' Corney.

THE CONSCIENCE AND FUTURE JUDGMENT.

I sat alone with my conscience,
In a place where Time had ceased,
And we talked of my former living
In the land where the years increased;
And I felt I should have to answer
The question it put to me,
And to face the answer and question
Throughout an eternity.
The ghosts of forgotten actions
Came floating before my sight,
And things that I thought were dead things
Were alive with a terrible might.
And the vision of all my past life
Was an awful thing to face—
Alone with my conscience sitting
In that solemnly silent place.
And I thought of a far-away warning,
Of a sorrow that was to be mine,
In a land that was then in the future,
But now is the present time.
And I thought of my former thinking
Of the judgment day to be,
But sitting alone with my conscience
Seemed judgment enough to me.
And I wondered if there was a future
To this land beyond the grave—
But no one gave me an answer,
And no one came to save.
Then I felt that the future was present,
And the present would never go by,
For it was but the thought of my past life
Grown into eternity.
Then I woke from my timely dreaming,
And the vision passed away,
And I knew that the far-away warning
Was a warning of yesterday.
And I pray that I may not forget it,
In this land before the grave,
That I may not cry in the future,
And no one come to save.
And so I have learnt a lesson
Which I ought to have known before,
And which, though I learnt it dreaming,
I hope to forget no more.
So I sit alone with my conscience
In the place where the years increase,
And I try to remember the future
In the land where the time will cease.
And I know of the future judgment,
How dreadful so'er it be,
That to sit alone with my conscience
Will be judgment enough for me.

—'London Spectator.'

HAWTHORNDEN.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONVALESCENCE.

"ALL that is not for human power alone, dear," she replied, "but I will do all I can for you. Dear daughter," she added, laying her hand on Laura's head, "begin at the beginning. You will never have peace while you carry this secret about with you. Colonel Hartland and Captain Marten at least have a right to know your position, and they can make it public if they choose. Lieutenant Hartland's honor demands that you make a fair statement of everything to him. I cannot counsel you further now," she added.

"But you will not leave me alone," cried Laura, seizing both her hands convulsively, and rising only to sink back exhausted; "all alone!" she continued, covering her face with her hands, "nobody cares for any thing but the disgrace."

"Be quiet, my dear," replied the sister, "don't excite yourself; wait till you are a little stronger. I will not forget you, and may be your father will let you come to me for a little while when you are able, and I will do all I can for you. The dear Lord help you," she added, stooping over her and kissing her brow.

Laura meditated on the counsel she had received; it returned to her day by day as she grew stronger; but with her slowly recovered strength came added reluctance to follow Sister Agnes' advice. There was but one thought living in her soul, one feeling that overcame and trampled out every other emotion—how she should take the next step. The lonely hours brought her no peace, and her aunt's conversation became odious to her. At length, with a desperate struggle, she took the first step in the right direction; she wrote a long letter to Lieutenant Hartland, confessing every thing but the last interview with Le Compte, and the loss of the betrothal ring. With all her struggles she could not bring herself to tell of this, it was such a mortifying incident. She was sincere and truthful as far as she went, but she kept back that which was doomed to bring her severest punishment, and which, truly confessed, would have been forgiven with the rest.

The effort she made, although it was not a thorough one, benefited her mentally and physically; but a dreadful fear of Le Compte, which had come upon her so forcibly in her illness, continued in all its force. His presence seemed to haunt her, and not without reason, for she had learned from months of almost daily intercourse, that he did not readily give up the pursuit of any object.

No sooner was she able to appear below stairs, and her father well out of the way, than a little messenger appeared each day with bouquets of flowers for "Miss Marten," from an unknown source; soon words of love were found among the leaves, betraying at once, if before there had been any doubt, from whence they came. Mrs. Norris spoke of the "delicate attention," and "kind thoughtfulness" of the donor, professing to wonder who he could be; but to Laura these tokens brought added pangs of head and heart, till one day, summoning resolution, she met the carrier of the flowers, and ordered him to return them to the one who sent them. Mrs. Norris was indignant with this step.

"Aunt," said Laura, after that lady had expressed her feelings, "you ought to be the last to tempt me further in the ways of sin. Flirting and coquetting have brought me sorrow enough. I wish to be done with them."

She did not dare leave the house even for a stroll in the garden, an invisible influence told her the enemy was not far away, and September went out with its last golden sunshine, leaving her still a close prisoner within doors. Her father came up for a few days, and she begged most piteously that she might return to the city with him, but the physician had advised her remaining in the country as long as possible; she did not open her heart to her father, or he would have better understood her pleadings.

She sat gazing from the windows of the drawing-room to the blue hills in the distance, the day after his departure, wishing she had the wings of a dove and could flee away and be at rest, wondering if she had any one who really cared for her; remembering Rosine and her sweet love that had brought her so much pleasure, with a sting of sorrow in the end, as she recalled her own harsh unjust words, when a quick ring at the hall door startled her to her feet.

"It is a stranger," said her aunt, bustling in; "a very courtly looking gentleman. I saw him drive up the avenue."

Laura flew instantly to her own room, and bolting the entrance, threw herself on the floor. "It is he," she whispered; "I know it, I feel it! Detesting him as I do, there is an influence that almost forces me into his presence."

She was not mistaken, it was Le Compte, who inquired very respectfully for Mrs. Norris, not being willing to take the word of the servant as to Miss Marten's health. The lady received him rather stiffly, but skilful flattery soon won her; she was sure there could not be any thing very bad in a young man so respectful to his elders. He expressed no hope of seeing Laura then, but he would call again. Mrs. Norris sought her niece after this interview, and found her almost wild with excitement. Her face became livid as she listened to her aunt's eulogiums upon the manners of the gentleman, and his delicate inquiries for her health; but when she came to his promise to call again, Laura spoke in a terrible voice: "Aunt, I shall never leave this room till my father comes to take me away. Do you know that viper?" she exclaimed vehemently, striding across the floor; that wretch was the whole cause of my illness; his insulting proposals nearly shattered my brain, and he keeps me as truly imprisoned here, as if a band of soldiers surrounded the house with that design. I will not change my purpose," she added, as her aunt begged her to be calm and reconsider, "I will not see him, I will not communicate with him, and if he comes, tell him what I say."

Mrs. Norris, frightened by her excited and positive manner, dared not expostulate further, lest she should bring on the delirium of her illness; but her fear left her before the next call of the tormentor, and she excused Laura on the plea of health not sufficiently restored to meet any one out of her family.

"I may trust you to give this to her," he said in his blindest manner, giving into her hand a dainty note.

She turned the note over and over again after his departure, hesitating for some time in her decision, but after her own curiosity had been gratified, she concluded to commit it to the flames.

It was well for Laura that her aunt came to this decision, for the contents would probably have sent her back to the borders of insanity. After this second call, the poor harassed girl wrote a pleading letter to her father, telling him of her sufferings from her persecutor, and begging him to come and bring her to stay awhile with Sister Agnes, as the only place where she could be free from his haunting presence. We may readily suppose her earnest words had the desired effect, and the next week found her at the House of the infant Jesus, under the calm, placid but invigorating watchfulness of one who would deal wisely with her sorrows.

CHAPTER XV.

INGLEWOOD.

DURING Rosine's visit to Hawthorndean, which we have mentioned in a previous chapter, a letter was received by Colonel Hartland from Mrs. Benton, a letter written during her husband's severe illness; it asked advice in view of the physician's expressed opinion that Mr. Benton's constitution could never endure the labor of farm life in that climate. To whom could she so readily turn for counsel as to him who so sacrificed himself for them in their extremity.

"Bad news?" inquired Mrs. Hartland, as she heard the exclamation when the Colonel read the letter, and saw the flush that passed over his face.

"I must go west," he said decidedly; "Philip Benton will kill himself and all his family."

"What has he done now?" asked his wife.

"He has congestive fever, and is nearly dead. I must start tomorrow."

"But why should you take the whole Benton family upon your shoulders, husband; you surely have already done more than could be expected."

"He who presumes to friendship's name
Reckons himself and friend the same,"

replied the Colonel, smiling.

"No; but really, Alexander, you have done a great deal," she said somewhat urgently.

"And hope to do a great deal more. Poor Benton! Can you