

him. We walked together until we came in view of the Professor's, where we left Con, and Winnie and I drove for the remainder of the way.

Thus things went pleasantly on for a year or two, until one evening after we had been home and had our meals Winnie called me with her for a walk, and we strolled along until we came to the banks of a lake in the northern part of Socrates' farm. As we rounded some trees we saw Con, who was reading, and did not appear to see us at first, though I noticed he blushed as Winnie approached in a half artful, half artless manner. We sauntered along for some time, and then Con and Winnie sat down beneath the bank, with the wavelets kissing the sands at their feet. They talked earnestly together for a considerable time, and seemed exceedingly happy. The sun was now setting, leaving a golden canopy behind, the air was charged with electric joy, and I reported myself pleasantly amongst the rocks bordering the lake. Eventually Con looked at me suggestively as he took Winnie by the hand, and I, pretending to see a hare, cleared the bank at a spring. I struck against something on the other side with great force; and, horror of horrors, on recovering I saw Socrates, who evidently had been watching us through the long grass, endeavoring to scramble to his feet, and swearing at me in a terrific manner. He clambered on to the bank, and, facing the lovers, who were now standing with their hands still locked together, he commenced a tirade, at first sarcastic, but becoming painfully solemn as he proceeded: 'There you are, my fine disciple; such is your philosophy, is it?' And this is the result of my teachings. Fool that I was to be deceived by a shallow top like you. But you shall rue it, my fine fellow; and you, my shy damsel, you are sowing bitter seeds, and you shall reap an abundant harvest.' And then, leaning on his stick, he hissed out, 'The best that I can wish you is that you both prove false; that is the happiest ending, for then there is no disappointment.' At these last terrible words Winnie rushed away crying, and Socrates disappeared behind the bank, but Con stood transfixed where he was, dumb and dazed, until we had gone out of sight.

For some days after this Winnie was sad and listless. Con was nowhere to be seen, and though we galloped past the Castle, which now seemed more forbidding than ever, there was no necessity for this precaution as Socrates was not seen out for weeks afterwards, and then he never again deigned to even look at us. I believe it was on the fourth day we again met Con. He assumed an air of nonchalance, unusual and unbecoming, which reminded me forcibly of a boy whistling past a churchyard, endeavoring by this means to persuade himself that he was not afraid, but the conversation was strained and sadder than usual.

After a time, however, they recovered their usual buoyant spirits, and there was now no mistaking their love for each other which the warnings of Socrates seemed only to cement—such is the perversity of human nature. Joy had again succeeded to the throne, and I shared in the contagious happiness of the others. Con found the theories of Socrates! I soliloquised; they are not applicable in this case; love is not contrary to philosophy, but about it; it is the only pleasure worth the attendant pain. Love is its own reward.

It could not be expected, however, that these pleasant meanderings would last for ever; and one evening Con, with an air in which pride and grief seemed to strive for predominance, told Winnie that he had won a scholarship which would necessitate his going to a distant college for a term or two, but he would soon return with his degree and belie the predictions of Socrates. Winnie, however, was unreasonable, and refused to be consoled. Though she had implicit confidence in Con, and—what is no less important—in herself, the warnings of Socrates now returned to her with added force. There was no help for it, however, and at last the day fixed for Con's departure arrived. The parting I need not attempt to describe; many of you have experienced, and all of you have read of such scenes. Perhaps the two kinds are difficult to reconcile, so I shall leave the picture to be filled in according to your fancy.

III.

Winnie's mother had been dead many years before I first came amongst them; her father was engrossed in business all day, and we seldom saw him except in the early morning and late at night. She had now finished school, and with Con and Kyrle away, I was left as her only companion, and I may say confident. But we were not as happy and content as in our younger days. A gloom had fallen over Winnie, and the only bright rays which penetrated it were the letters which were received regularly from Con and occasionally from Kyrle. Con's letters came regularly every Monday, and

these she re-read and pondered on during our evening soliloquy by the lake.

Thus the first twelvemonths of Con's absence had passed over, when, on a Monday morning, Winnie hastened to meet the postman—on such occasions no Philistine hands were allowed to touch the letters—but returned with a troubled look and downcast eyes instead of the usual joyful flush. No words were required to inform me that Con's letter had not arrived. I, however, looked forward hopefully for the following morning. But when the morrow came and passed into history, and was followed by many similar days, and yet no news from Con, then I also began to look serious.

This was in spring, but the newly-leaved woods or the bright April sun brought no joyous thrill to Winnie, for darker musings had occupied her mind; and when the verdure of spring passed by and was succeeded by the rich, golden summer, faintly lingering hope gave way to despair. She now shunned life and sought the solitude, and towards the autumn, as the ripe corn was being cut down and the matured hay gathered to the farmyards she became noticeably paler and sadder. We still had our evening walks, but instead of to the lake our steps were now turned towards the churchyard, the sad abode where death reigns supreme. One evening as we returned home—Winnie had prayed long and fervently on her mother's grave and cried profusely—her father, noticing her altered appearance, ordered her to bed, and wrote for the doctor, whose attendance in these parts was but rarely required. I anxiously looked for Winnie at the breakfast table on the following morning, but, alas, there was a vacant chair, and I was sorely grieved to see the troubled look which her father bore. The good man was not over observant, but the absence of Winnie, the one bright ray in his clouded and busy life, had a most disquieting effect, and woke up slumbering memories of other days. I watched all day as the sun slowly spanned the heavens, hoping against hope that as evening came on I would hear her gentle summons, but, alas, I was again doomed to disappointment. All night I spent in a sad vigil anxiously awaiting the morrow; but the morrow came and passed away, and yet no sight of the comely form, no touch of the gentle hand, nor sound of the voice whose every whisper I understood and obeyed.

Thus the hours passed by and slowly faded into days alternately saddened by the visit of the sombre doctor and brightened by those of the hope-inspiring priest. Seven times the sun had set and risen again since I had seen Winnie, when one day I was brought to her bedroom. I bounded in with joy; Winnie was there, but, alas, how changed! The bloom had left her cheek, and the lustre of the eye had gone; she was transformed from a doll to a statue, but still beautiful. On seeing me she patted my head, and then turned away sobbing, and I was taken away and left to my own sad thoughts.

Outside the leaves were fast falling from the trees, the sky was dark with clouds, and a solemn stillness appeared to have fallen on everything. During the day several friends and neighbors called, and in the evening Kyrle arrived. Something had prompted me that he was coming, and I met him at the village. He greeted me as friendly as ever, but then he fell into a reverie and I followed him at a respectful distance.

That night lights were in the house later than usual, and it must have been long past midnight when I suddenly awoke from a troubled dream. I heard a great noise in the house, they were praying and crying, and I realised that the worst had happened. I then raised a weird cry which I was unable to control until Kyrle rushed out and his appearance scared and silenced me. His head was bent down, and his eyes stared cold and tearless; he hurried along not seeming to know or care whither, and I followed him silently. At length we came to the churchyard, and going in he threw himself on his mother's grave; then the tears came, the heart-rending toots of a strong man, and for an hour he sobbed and cried like a child.

We returned home as the grey dawn appeared on the horizon, the once bright and happy home but now sad beyond words—sadder than I could yet realise. The day of the funeral arrived, and I learned that she was to be taken to her mother's grave. At length the coffin was taken out and carried to the churchyard, enclosing the source of all the pleasures and joys of my life. It was placed in the already open grave, and the cold earth filled in with its dull, dismal sound, each thud sending a cold shiver to my heart. Then, alas! I knew I was to see her no more, and I cannot attempt to describe my feelings as I thought of the happy days we had spent together; of her merry laughter and pleasant voice; how she stroked my head and caressed me, and then of the sadness that came over her, and how she became more and more attached to me in the days when she never laughed.