KERSHAM MANOR.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALONE.

They were gone. Esther had seen them off; she did not move away from the quay until the vessel was but a speck on the gray horizon. A sensation of great loneliness came over her when at last she turned to go. They were passing completely out of her life. She had done her utmost for them as long as she could; She had not done much, it is true, but still something had lain within her power and had been accomplished. Twice she had given Nina back to her husband in heart and soul; twice she had revived the flickering flame of love which seemed so difficult to keep alive in Nina's self-centered heart. When Esther looked her last upon them, Sebastian's arm was round his wife, while she, evidently dissolved in tears, was leaning upon his shoulder.

It had occurred to Nina that Esther would be a useful companion to her in South American solitudes, and that she might be governess to Roland and Muriel.

Sebastian, on the contrary was annoyed with her for making the offer. "Not at all likely that Esther would throw up her career in order to teach our children," he said rather shortly. "You entirely misunderstand her position."

"I don't know what you mean," Nina replied. "Esther has no position. She earns her own living. And she would be much more comfortable with us, with all her wants provided for and a good salary, than rushing about to meetings and sitting in an office just like a man!"

"You forget that we are not in a position to offer her a good salary. And there are things in the world that she might prefer even to 'being comfortable.'"

"Then she is very foolish," said Nina decisively. "What else can anybody want?"

Sebastian kept silence. It was no use trying to make Nina understand.

But nothing more was said to Esther until the day of the departure, when she stood alone with Sebastian for a few moments on the deck before bidding her friends goodby.

"I do not know what Nina will do without you. I wish you were coming too," he said smiling, yet thoroughly in earnest.

"I wish I were. I wish I could have accepted Nina's kind offer."

"It is like you to say so—you have a heart of gold," said he, with more emotion than he was in the habit of showing. "You have done everything for us during the last month—I shall never forget how good you have been. But we could not possibly have expected you to go with us; she should not have suged such a thing."

"Don't say so. I feel as if I had been selfish to refuse."

"You were never selfish; you do not know how to be selfish," said Sebastian. "You give your whole life for others. . . . Esther, forgive us if we—all of us—have asked too much from you; and do not forget us when we are away.

"I shall not forget," Esther breathed rather than spoke.

"No," he said, looking into her face with more fire in those melancholy eyes than she had seen of late; "do not forget us. It is a great thing to know that we have a friend like you, Esther, true as steel, faithful to the heart's core. If ever I am in need of help I shall come to you."

Some electric spark of feeling flew from his eyes to hers as he spoke. For a moment it was clear to him—clear as it had never been before—that this was the woman whom he might have loved, had his senses not been beguiled by the merely physical charms of a lovely girl; that with Esther for his wife, he would not have missed his mark, squandered his chances, faltered in the high aspirations with which he had entered on his career.

And now it was over. The ship was almost out of sight when Esther turned round and walked steadily back to the hotel where she and her friends had spent the previous night.

She went straight back to Dunross, refusing a pressing invitation from Miss Meredith to stay with her for a week or two. She had been away from her work for some time, and felt instinctively that it would be good for her to return to it. At the office her fellow-workers gave her a warm welcome, after their own fashion.

Hard as she tried to live in the present and dissociate herself from her past, she was much troubled by a sensation of which many people are more or less conscious at some time in their lives—a haunting sense of incompleteness, known mostly to young people or to unsuccessful elder folk.

A little break in the darkness came with a visit from Phillis and Jack. Mr. Wyatt had been placed in a quiet, respectable home, under reasonable restraint, since Phillis's marriage. So far Sir Roland's money had made life easy to them all. But Henry Wyatt was not to be controlled. In spite of careful attendance he got away from his keepers now and then and drank himself into insensibility. A violent fit of *delirium tremens* finally brought his career to an end. Phillis came back to Dunross to see him laid in the grave, and with her came her husband, who had given up his post upon the staff of the Chronicle, and was for the time being an idle man. But he did not intend to be idle long, as he assured Esther very seriously.

"No," said Phillis, "he is going to be busy; he is going to take service under me, and fulfill all my behests."

They were all three in Esther's sitting-room, where the evening light was streaming in through the windows with a golden glory which reminded Esther of a certain evening not many months ago, when Phillis, in a willful mood, had danced a measure on the house-tops.

It was possible that Phillis thought of it too in her own whimsical way, for she suddenly jumped up, and began to dance a few steps and hum a tune.

"I've not forgotten how to dance, you see," she said mischievously, coming to a halt in front of Esther and looking at her with gleeful, sparkling eyes. "Marriage has not tamed me yet."

"No, she is a shrew that might defy Petruchio," said Jack. "I assure you that I am under her thumb completely."

"He has no will of his own now," said Phil wickedly. "He has abdicated; and I am queen."

Esther shook her head. "King, not prince-consort," she said, glancing at Jack.

"You don't know anything about it; I reign supreme," said Phil with a dainty little toss of her head.

"Shall we tell Esther our plans, Jack? I know that she will not think that we are foolish and mad, as Mr. Haslam did when you told him. . . It may even be that she will think we are doing right—who knows?"

"Who knows, indeed! The world's opinion matters very little to us, does it, Phil!—Miss Denison—well, Esther if you are going to allow me a brother's privilege, as Phillis says you will—we are going to leave Scotland altogether, and make our abode in London."

"I am sorry for my sake to hear it," said Esther frankly, "but I suppose that you have found something to do in London?"

"Of a kind. You see, I shall not want to do much newspaper work again"—Esther saw Phil's grasp tighten on her husband's hand: Jack's impaired eyesight was a great grief to Phillis, although she seldom mentioned the fact—"and yet I don't mean to be idle, although we have enough to live upon in a quiet way. During the last few months I have heard a good deal about Phil's past life. And like herself, I feel that if there is anything to be done toward lightening the burden of the multitudes who are slaving and sinning and suffering, it must be done through individual effort, and that persons who have time and money and leisure, as we have, are the very people to make that effort. We want to go and see whether we can do anything for the poor—Phil and I: I don't know yet whether we can, but I hear that there are things to be done, and we want to find out what they are."

Phil began to laugh, but there was moisture in her eyes. "It sounds quite grand—as Jack puts it, doesn't it? But we are not going to do anything grand at all. And we are not going to be goody either. But there are some people that I used to know in Whitechapel who want looking after, and we mean to find them, if we can, and look after them. That's all."

"That is a great deal. You will do what is worth while living for," said Esther, with almost a sigh.

"Oh, I don't know!" cried Phil airily. "We are only going to amuse ourselves. We don't mean to distribute tracts or open soup-kitchens or preach doctrines of any kind—except the doctrines of soap and water and fair pay for a fair day's work, perhaps. We want to make friends with the people. When I lived there"—her voice sank—"I had no friends at all, and I wanted them sorely. I think I might be a friend to some of the workwomen and girls in Whitechapel, because, you see, I have been one of them myself and I know—I know so well what their life means."

"Yes," said Jack, who was looking at her intently, and, as it seemed to Esther, almost with a sort of reverence. "Phillis has come through the furnace. She knows—she understands. And she will teach me to understand. I never thought how dark, how cheerless, how bitter, the life of some of those work-girls must be, till Phillis taught me."

"If life is an education, as many people think," said Esther slowly, "it seems as though your troubles and sorrows, Phil, had all tended toward this one thing—this love of the poor and this desire to help them."

Phillis said nothing for a minute or two. The half-assumed gayety fell away from her face, which turned a little pale and assumed the rigid look that Esther knew too well. Her eyes glittered; her lips took on a curve of indignant scorn.

"I don't believe it!" she exclaimed. "My own troubles taught me nothing. Don't you know that I could always bear pain better than other people? But I can't sit still and enjoy myself while other people suffer."

That was the keynote of Phil's life. And although she resented, as some people do resent, the notion that she had been trained by means of pain and sorrow to reach after higher ideals, it was certain that the intensity of her sympathy for others could never have been gained without some of the sad experiences which she had undergone.

The happiest lives are those, thought Esther, in which all previous experience proves at last to have been training for special work. With Phillis and Jack this seemed to have been the case. Phil's life among the poor, Jack's career as a journalist, had fitted each for the years that they were, as it turned out, to spend in Whitechapel, "making friends" with the toilers and workers of the East End. But Esther's life hung loose. To what had it tended hitherto? And was the purpose, the meaning of it all, still to be unfolded?—the romance, the battle, and the victory still to come?

She did not think so. But how little do we guess what a single hour may bring forth!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FROM THE SEA.

"English Steamer Wrecked: Great Loss of Life."

It was on this heading that Esther's eyes had fallen; and her heart contracted with sudden fear.

Could she be mistaken? Was it not indeed the Albinia in which Sebastian and Nina had left England? Were there two Albinias bound for Valparaiso in the world?

For it was the steamship Albinia which had been wrecked in a furious hurricane, wrecked, as it appeared, almost in sight of land. Very few of the passengers had been saved. The vessel was not a large one, and did not belong to an important line of steamers; there had been few passengers on board, and these, for the most part, foreigners. The wreck might possibly have attracted less attention but for the fact that Mr. Sebastian Malet ("nephew," as the people said, "of the late distinguished diplomatist, Sir Roland Malet") had been on board with his wife and family, on his way to Valparaiso. Mrs. Malet, the papers went on to say, and two of the children had been lost, and Mr. Malet, although saved from the wreck, was seriously ill and scarcely expected to recover.

These were all the details that Esther heard for many a long day.

At first she found the news impossible to believe. There was something in her which rebelled against this sentence of fate. It is easy to read of terrible disasters by fire, and sea, and storm; difficult to believe that they can befall us personally, or swallow up all that we hold most dear. Esther was at first incredulous. Then the horror of the event took hold of her, and her nerves quailed at the visions that would continue to hover before her eyes, of drowning men and shrieking women, and little children engulfed beneath the terrible waves. . . .

Never once did she think or even feel—"Now Sebastian may come back to me!" The thought would have seemed blackest treachery to her white and sensitive soul. She loved Sebastian so perfectly, and yet so little passionately, that she was one with him in his sorrow; that she could think of nothing but his grief for the woman that he had loved, for the children who had been to him all that Nina had failed to be. And even though Nina had not satisfied the requirements of his higher nature, Esther knew how he would mourn for her and think of her with tender regard and almost remorseful steadfastness. Her own tears fell honestly for the loss of her old friend—the pretty child, the bright attractive girl, the lovely bride, and later on the fragile but winsome wife and mother, whose shallowness of nature was half concealed by the glamor of her beauty and her ever-varying charm. And the children! Which has been taken and which left? The baby, no doubt, was dead; but had gallant Rollo or lovely little Muriel gone too? Alas, for the sweet child-faces that would be seen no more! And alas for Sebastian in his loneliness!

Esther's trouble of spirit was augmented by the fact that she could obtain so few details of the calamity. She did not know where the La Touches were now living. Cecily, long her correspondent, had ceased to write to her; the Malets of Kersham Manor were not likely to know much about the matter. Besides, they were also in trouble, for their little boy had recently died of croup, and Esther did not like to write to Mrs. Malet for news of Sebastian and his wife. Miss Meredith sent her a newspaper containing an account of the shipwreck, and a few words about the way in which the sad news had been received at Kersham and Kennet's Green, where the La Touches were so well known. But this was not much.

Her face grew pale, her eyes hollow and heavy with sleepless watching in these days. When the postman's knock was heard, her heart beat so violently that she felt as if she were suffocating, her limbs trembled beneath her, strange lights passed before her eyes, strange noises sounded in her ears. And when, day after day, she was doomed to bitter disappointment, she would turn cold and sick with reaction, and sitting down on the chair from which she had risen in the fever-heat of her excitement, would feel her pulses drop to deathlike faintness, and her heart sink to its usual level of silence and despair.

And in this way, little by little, she learned to understand, as she had never understood before, the depth and reality of her love.

Sir Roland used to say with a smile that love and hate both shorten life. But who, thought Esther, would choose to live long at the price of experiencing neither? "Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well." And the love that had been for so many years a torment, a well-spring of sorrow, had also become to her a precious possession and even an abiding peace.

She sat alone one evening, feeling more keenly than usual the cheerlessness of the spring twilight, the touch of chill which came with sundown in her easterly-facing sitting-room. It was seven o'clock, and the sky was golden with reflections of the setting sun. Esther sat by a window, her eyes fixed on the broad river and distant hills which she could see from her windows; her head was leaning upon her hand, her back turned to the door. She heard a knock, but did not look round; it must be Catherine with the lamp—no caller would intrude upon her at that hour.

But it was not Catherine.

"Esther—Esther—"

She knew the voice. She rose from her seat trembling, putting out her hand as though to protect herself, to thrust away from her the semblance of one who was far distant, whose image was just the offspring of a disordered brain, or—strange lingering of superstitious fancy—the phantasm of a dying man, the doppelganger sent to announce his own immediate death. She did not believe—for the moment she could not believe—that Sebastian Malet was standing at her door.

His gestures, his features even, seemed strange to her. He was ghastly pale, and his face was worn and lined—so much the twilight revealed—and the hand which he stretched out to her was bony and shaking as though from long protracted illness. He stood silent for a moment, and she saw that his figure swayed slightly as if he were dizzy. This sign of physical weakness recalled her to herself; she touched him with one hand as if to support him, and contact with commonplace broadcloth sent idle fancy to the winds. It was Sebastian indeed—ill, worn, haggard, unlike himself; but why had he come to her?

"I have brought you my children," he said hoarsely, as if feeling the need of an instant explanation of his appearance. "Nina is dead; and I—I am afraid I am going to be ill again: take care of the children for me."

And then, to Esther's infinite alarm, he fell down insensible at her feet.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Big Money in Organ Grinding.

The Ramsgate County Court Judge, say the London Times, was the other day engaged several hours in hearing a dispute between Italian organ grinders for their share of earnings during a term of some months. In the course of the case it was stated that the plaintiff earned often £1 per day, and never less than 7s., a sum of £114 being earned by two men in thirty eight weeks. It also transpired that the defendant was able to put £30 in the Post Office Savings Bank for himself and a similar sum for a daughter; that he could afford an occasional trip to Naples; and that once, when he was arrested by the Ramsgate police, a sum of £19 was secreted in his belt. The Judge eventually gave judgment for the plaintiff for £20, a seventh share of the earnings, and for the defendant for £26 4s. 6d. on the counter-claim for money advanced and food supplied.

More people have died from colds than were ever killed in battle.

POETRY.

The Silent Ones.

Under the grassy sod,
Under the swaying willows,
Down 'neath the buds and flowers
Sleeping away the hours,
Far from the paths they trod.
They lie on their clayey pillows.
There at the dawn's first peeping,
There when the night comes weeping,
The silent ones are sleeping.

Under the drifting snow,
Down 'neath the naked branches,
Under the rain and sleet,
Swift are the hours and fleet,
Far from the cares we know,
Safe from grief's avalanches,
There at the dawn's first peeping,
There when the night comes weeping,
The silent ones are sleeping.

Niagara Falls.

J. E. POLLOCK, B.A.

Stupendous Tide of never-ceasing wonder!
Almighty Fountain framed by God's own hand!
Resistless Torrent tolling tones of thunder!
Type of sublimity supremely grand,
That mocks all works of man renown'd in story;
That thrills with awe the bravest of the brave;
That fills the soul with thy unrivall'd glory,
And makes man feel God's presence in thy wave!

Terrestrial Temple of celestial token!
Similitude thou'st none on land or sea!
No metaphor by human language spoken
Can half the glory tell that dwells in Thee:
No artist's hand tho' trained to Nature's story,
On canvas tinted with a Titian's skill,
Can ever make so real thy wondrous glory
Or with so deep an awe our spirits fill!

Like voice of thunder from the heavens tolling;
Like trumpet sounding at the Judgment Day;
So speaks thy voice of thunder-waters, rolling
In grand magnificence and wild dismay:
And yet, could we but read creation's story;
Could we God's wondrous works but understand,
We'd see how dimly shines Niagara's glory
Beside the worlds brought forth by God's command.

—[Keswick, Jan. 17th, 1894.

No Songs Like the Old Songs.

Why don't they sing the old songs—the dear old songs of yore,
The songs we sung in happier days, now gone forevermore?
Give us a strain of "Bonny Doon," with a' its banks and braes,
And tell us of "Highland Mary," whom we dearly loved to praise.
Let springtime come and flowers bloom—the birds sing out their lay,
So we may meet, down by the brook, our own "Sweet Maggie May."
"The little witching Maggie, Maggie,
Singing all the day.
Oh, how I loved her none can tell,
My little Maggie May."

Tune up the old banjo just once and let your fingers roam
Across the strings in melody to "The Old Kentucky Home:"
All hands join in the chorus and let the notes be free,
"Oh, weep no more my lady—weep no more for me."
There's something sympathetic in the songs of days gone by—
A tenderness that sort o' brings the teardrops to the eye.
Tho' years have fled and I am old, my heart with rapture swells
When mem'ry, in its backward flight, returns to "Kitty Wells."
"You ask what makes this darky weep—
Why he, like others, am not gay;
What makes the tears roll down his cheek
From early morn till close of day.
My story, darkies, you shall hear,
For in my mem'ry fresh it dwells:
'Twill cause you all to drop a tear
On the grave of my sweet Kitty Wells."

"'Tis Years Since Last We Met,' alas, sing comrades with a will,
The old familiar sweet refrain, "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still;"
And "Nelly Was a Lady" is a song I'd like to hear
Every day and every moment of all the live-long year.
"I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls," "Then You'll Remember Me,"
And "To-night I Am a Widow in the Cottage by the Sea,"
Are the songs that often solace me when I am sad and lone;
They're old songs, but I love them as I love "Sweet Belle Mahone."

"Soon beyond the harbor bar
Shall my bark be sailing far.
O'er the world I'll wander lone,
Sweet Belle Mahone.

Sweet Belle Mahone,
Sweet Belle Mahone,
Wait for me at heaven's gate,
Sweet Belle Mahone."

"Signal Lights."

The great gray sea and the headlands bold,
The tall gaunt tower of the lighthouse old,
The rhythmic beat of the waves below,
Gleaming white as the wintry snow.

The sunset flames and smolders away,
Firing the sails in the lower bay,
And the beacon swings its burning light
To misty sea and coming night.

And answering lights are kindled afar,
From rocky shore and from sandy bar,
That flash responsive—and greeting send,
Like the loving voice of an absent friend.

Burn on, burn on, O signal light!
Fling out thy message to the night;
In darkness dense and danger's hour
Thou art a mighty saving power.

Like loyal hearts that love and cling
Through all the ills that fate can bring;
That shine forth with a beauty rare
Through storm and shipwreck and despair.

During the siege of Sebastopol the batteries of the allied army threw into the besieged city over 30,000 tons of shot and shell. The cost of the artillery firing and the value of the guns ruined and condemned is estimated at $12,000,000.

Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned emperor of the French Dec. 2, 1804, and won the battle of Austerlitz, his greatest victory, Dec. 2, 1805. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, President of the second French Republic, was crowned as Napoleon III. Dec. 2, 1852.

The most curious city in the world is situated on Saginaw Bay, an arm of Lake Huron. It is without a name, has a population of about 500, and consists of modern huts on wheels, to the number of 150, which, when the fishing season arrives, are rolled on the ice in the bay.

During the Franco-Prussian war the Germans fired 30,000,000 rifle cartridges and 363,000 charges of artillery, killing or mortally wounding 77,000 Frenchmen, showing that 400 shots are required to kill or mortally wound one man.

During the most peaceful years the world has 3,700,000 soldiers, who are withdrawn from productive occupations to pose as soldiers. The pay, equipments, food and clothing of these men cost the world's taxpayers nearly $8,000,000 a day.

THE WEEK'S NEWS

CANADIAN.

It will be necessary before the next Dominion general elections to supply a deficiency in the number of ballot boxes to the extent of about fifteen hundred.

John Wright, a porter at the Caistor house, Woodstock, has been missing for over a week. It is thought he has been the victim of foul play.

The post-office at Kinmount, Ont., was entered by burglars either on Saturday night or Sunday, and fourteen registered letters, forty dollars in cash, and some postage stamps were taken.

It is understood in Montreal that the negotiations for the transfer of the Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Company have been successful.

Hooper, who is now in the Three Rivers gaol, is still very hopeful of his ultimate acquittal, but is very bitter at being subjected to a second trial.

Mr. A. E. Prescott, a market gardener, of Chatham, Ont., while driving into town Saturday night, was struck by a train at a railway crossing. His skull was fractured, and he also sustained severe injuries to his body. He is not expected to recover.

At the Western Dairymen's convention at Ingersoll, a resolution favouring the discontinuance of making grants to the Industrial Exhibition at Toronto, and the Western Fair at London, for the purpose of awards on cheese, and giving them instead at the annual convention, was referred to the Executive Committee.

Mr. J. B. Snowball, Senator, of Chatham, N. B., who was in Ottawa last week, says business in New Brunswick is in an unsatisfactory condition, owing to the prevailing low prices for fish and lumber. Mr. Snowball thinks the passage of the Wilson Tariff bill would greatly improve trade in his province.

Mr. Wm. Dunbar, proprietor of the Dunbar house, Kinmount, Ont., and Mr. Robert Cottingham, a blacksmith of the same place, were drowned in Pigeon lake on Friday night. A search party discovered the team and cutter frozen stiff in the ice but the bodies of the unfortunate men have not yet been found.

BRITISH.

Imperial aid to the Canadian-Australia steamship service is strongly recommende by the London Times.

An extraordinarily high tide on Thursday night demolished sixty yards of the sea wall at Sandgate, Kent.

Mr. Robert Reid, Minister of Defence for Victoria, who is at present in London, will leave for Canada in March to endeavour to establish reciprocal trade arrangements between his colony and Canada.

Michael Walsh, twenty-eight years of age, who in 1882 was sentenced to life imprisonment for shooting a constable in Galway, has been released from prison in very poor health.

On Sunday the British barque Port Yarrock, lying in Brandon bay, County Kerry, dragged her anchors during a storm, and was driven on the coast, where she struck broadside on. She was battered to pieces, and all on board, numbering twenty-six persons, were drowned.

UNITED STATES.

The International Mid-winter Exhibition was opened in San Francisco on Saturday. There are one hundred buildings, which contain the exhibits of thirty-eight nations.

A man named Elias Graff, living near Reading, Pa., claims to have invented a telephone based upon an entirely new principle in acoustics, which gives wonderful results.

Under the Wilson Tariff bill a duty of half a cent a pound is placed upon fresh fish packed in ice. Representative Lockwood succeeded in having his resolution passed admitting fresh fish free.

At the execution in Chicago of George H. Painter for the murder of his mistress, Alice McLean, the rope broke and the man fell eight feet to the stone floor. He was picked up bleeding and unconscious, and hanged the second time. Painter protested in the most vehement language that he was innocent.

In the debate on the duty of barley in the United States House of Representatives on Saturday, Mr. Lockwood, Democrat, from New York, said he lived within two miles of the Canadian border, and he knew that the duty on barley or any other agricultural product did not help the American farmer one cent.

A band of striking miners, composed of Hungarians, Slavs, Poles, and other foreigners, did an immense amount of damage to mining and private property in the neighborhood of Bridgeville, Pa., on Saturday. A band of armed citizens was organized and the miners were pursued, and after a conflict sixteen of them were captured.

GENERAL.

It is stated in Paris that the Government intends making sweeping arrests of Anarchists and to detain them in prison until after Vaillant is executed.

The Czar is suffering from a severe attack of influenza, accompanied by bronchitis and inflammation of the right lung.

An insurrection is expected to break out in Oporto, and a fleet of warships has been sent from Lisbon to preserve order.

Yellow fever is increasing in Rio. There were twenty-five deaths from the disease on Sunday.

The consensus of opinion in Berlin papers is that the reconciliation of the Emperor and Prince Bismarck is a personal affair, having only indirect political significance.

There was a turbulent scene in the French Chamber of Deputies on Saturday. Mr. Thieveyer, a representative of the Socialist party, insisted on interrupting the proceedings of the House by shouting "Vive la Commune," and he had ultimately to be removed from the Chamber by force.

The appointment of Count Herbert Bismarck as German Ambassador to Austria, as the first result of the reconciliation between his father and Emperor William is regarded in Vienna as a very possible event.

The United States Legation in Rome was broken into on Sunday night, and large quantities of papers and archives were burned. Nothing was stolen, and the police are at a loss to account for the strange incendiarism.