

that this cold, haughty man possessed to make her love him so? That was the question she asked herself more than once as she lay there with the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"I will not! I will crush his memory from my heart forever," she cried, bitterly, "rather than nurse a hopeless love under the guise of friendship. I will not be a fool any longer. I will show George Watson that I can be happy without his love. O, George, George! Why was it ever ordained that you should cross my path?" she added, giving vent to a fresh shower of tears, while her poor heart seemed ready to break from grief. And thus the hours passed by, and Mabel did not show herself in the dining room till breakfast time next morning.

As George Watson and Mortimer Gray were sitting on the porch after supper that evening, totally unconscious of the grief poor Mabel was suffering, the former said, while a hard, cold look settled itself on his handsome brow—

"I am going away, soon, Mortimer. I have engaged to sell my interest in the mine to Harry Randall, and I intend to take my departure next Wednesday morning. To-day is Monday, so there remains but a short time for preparation."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet, Mortimer Gray could not have been more astounded. Rising to his feet, he exclaimed, while his face became almost livid in his excitement—

"George Watson, I demand that you tell me the truth. Has Mabel Randall trifled with your heart—has she dared to spurn your true, generous love?"

"There has never been a syllable of love spoken between us, Mortimer," George replied. "Don't be too hasty, my friend; I assure you that I esteem Miss Randall as a dear, true friend, and that I consider her incapable of wronging anyone. I am glad for your sake, as well as her own, that she loves you, Mortimer."

"Loves me!" Mortimer exclaimed, as he resumed his seat beside his friend, evidently more surprised than pleased. "What can you be thinking about, George? The idea of Mabel loving me, except in a friendly way, has never entered my head."

"Nevertheless, I believe that she loves you, Mortimer, and I am sure you can do no better than to marry her," George said, effectually concealing from his friend the true state of his own feelings for the girl whom they were discussing.

I have never thought of marriage since—since our little Dess died. I can never love again as I loved her, George, never."

"I do not doubt you, my noble friend, but it would be folly for you to make yourself miserable for a lifetime, simply on account of your exalted love

for her who has passed forever from this earthly abode. Mabel will make you happy, Mortimer, and I feel assured that she will never know perfect happiness, save as your wife."

It was from the innermost depths of his heart that he uttered these words, and he felt that in saying so much he had only discharged a duty toward bringing peace and happiness to two persons whom he loved more than all else in the world. Mortimer was silent and thoughtful. He could not see how George had come to know so much about a matter which had so effectually escaped himself, but he said nothing. It was George who at length broke the silence, which had become somewhat oppressive to both.

"I intend going to San Francisco, where it may be my good fortune to engage in some light, lucrative employment," he said. "My arm will never admit of any great physical labor, and it is not in my nature to remain idle week after week, especially here, where everything tends to remind me of a happiness which has passed from me forever. I hope you will write to me often, Mortimer, as I shall always be glad to learn of the welfare of all my friends at the Dale."

"I will do so, George, with pleasure; but I must say I shall miss you sadly," said Mortimer, evincing considerable emotion. "We have been together almost constantly for more than two years; we have shared each other's sorrows when life held few inducements for us to live; we have marched side by side, seeking to avenge the wrongs of the woman we both loved. You have been like a brother to me, George, and I shall never cease to esteem you as such. From the depths of my heart, George, I wish you health, wealth and happiness wherever you may go."

With this the two men clasped hands and parted for the night, both being deeply moved. Their devotion to each other was more than ordinary. There was no living person in the world, save one, whom George loved more than he did Mortimer, and when the hour drew near in which they were to utter the sad word "good-bye," perhaps never to meet again this side of the gates of Heaven, their grief was, indeed, a sad spectacle to witness.

Numerous friends had assembled to bid adieu to the man, whom, if they had not really loved, they had respected and esteemed very highly. Among the number present were Trapper Dan and his family, old man Randall, Harry, Mabel, and many others.

"Wal, my boy, I'm sorry ter see ye leave," the old trapper said, regretfully, as he clasped the young man's hand in his great, rough palm, "but the best o' friends mus' part, they say, though I'm durned ef I kin see the necessity of 'em stayin' parted."

The next to come forward was Mortimer Gray,