

CHAPTER LXXVI

Arthur read his letter, and his heart burnt with passionate love of the true woman he had dared to doubt. Then he flung himself upon the grass and looked at the ocean that sparkled and heaved before him, and tried to think; but as yet he could not. The engines of his mind were reversed full speed, whilst his mind itself, with quick shudders and confusion, still forged ahead upon its former course. He rose, and cast upon the scene around him that long look we give to the place where a great happiness has found us.

The sun was sinking fast behind the mountains, turning their slabbed sides and soaring pinnacles to giant shields and spears of fire. Beneath their mass, shadows--forerunners of the night--crept over the forests and the crested rollers, whilst further from him the ocean heaved in a rosy glow. Above, the ever-changing vault of heaven was of a beauty that no brush could paint. On a ground-work of burning red were piled, height upon height, deep ridges of purples and of crimsons. Nearer the horizon the colours brightened to a dazzling gold, till at length they narrowed to the white intensity of the half-hidden eye of the sun vanishing behind the mountains; whilst underlying the steady splendour of the upper skies flushed soft and melting shades of rose and lilac. Blue space above him was broken up by fantastic clouds that floated all on fire, and glowed like molten metal. The reflection, too, of all these massed and varied lights in the azure of the eastern skies was full of sharp contrasts and soft

surprises, and a travelling eagle, sailing through space before them, seemed to gather all their tints upon his vivid wings, and, as he passed away, to leave a rainbow track of broken light.

But such a glory was too bright to last. The sun sank swiftly, the celestial fires paled, the purples grew faint and died, and, where they had been, night trailed her sombre plumes across the sea and sky.

But still the quiet glow of evening lingered, and presently a line of light was shot athwart it, cutting a track of glory across the shadowed sea, so weird and sudden, that it might well have been the first ray of a resurrection morn breaking in upon the twilight of the dead.

He gazed almost in awe, till the majestic sight stilled the tumult of his heart, and his thoughts went up in thanks to the Creator for the pure love he had found again, and which had not betrayed him. Then he looked up, and there, stately and radiant, standing out clear against the shadows, her face illumined by that soft, yet vivid light, her trembling arms outstretched to clasp him--was his lost Angela.

He saw her questioning glances fall upon him, and the red blood waver on her cheek; he saw the love-lights gather in her eyes; and then he saw no more, for she was in his arms, murmuring sweet broken words.

Happy are those who thus shall find their Angela, whether it be here

or--on the further shore of yonder solemn sea!

And Mildred? She lay there before the stone symbol of inexorable judgment, and sobbed till the darkness covered her, and her heart broke in the silence.