

CHAPTER III.--HER GLOOM LIGHTENS A LITTLE

September 10.--I have inserted nothing in my diary for more than a fortnight. Events have been altogether too sad for me to have the spirit to put them on paper. And yet there comes a time when the act of recording one's trouble is recognized as a welcome method of dwelling upon it . . .

My dear mother has been brought home and buried here in the parish. It was not so much her own wish that this should be done as my father's, who particularly desired that she should lie in the family vault beside his first wife. I saw them side by side before the vault was closed--two women beloved by one man. As I stood, and Caroline by my side, I fell into a sort of dream, and had an odd fancy that Caroline and I might be also beloved of one, and lie like these together--an impossibility, of course, being sisters. When I awoke from my reverie Caroline took my hand and said it was time to leave.

September 14.--The wedding is indefinitely postponed. Caroline is like a girl awakening in the middle of a somnambulistic experience, and does not realize where she is, or how she stands. She walks about silently, and I cannot tell her thoughts, as I used to do. It was her own doing to write to M. de la Feste and tell him that the wedding could not possibly take place this autumn as originally planned. There is something depressing in this long postponement if she is to marry him at all; and yet I do not

see how it could be avoided.

October 20.--I have had so much to occupy me in consoling Caroline that I have been continually overlooking my diary. Her life was much nearer to my mother's than mine was. She has never, as I, lived away from home long enough to become self-dependent, and hence in her first loss, and all that it involved, she drooped like a rain-beaten lily. But she is of a nature whose wounds soon heal, even though they may be deep, and the supreme poignancy of her sorrow has already passed.

My father is of opinion that the wedding should not be delayed too long. While at Versailles he made the acquaintance of M. de la Feste, and though they had but a short and hurried communion with each other, he was much impressed by M. de la Feste's disposition and conduct, and is strongly in favour of his suit. It is odd that Caroline's betrothed should influence in his favour all who come near him. His portrait, which dear Caroline has shown me, exhibits him to be of a physique that partly accounts for this: but there must be something more than mere appearance, and it is probably some sort of glamour or fascinating power--the quality which prevented Caroline from describing him to me with any accuracy of detail. At the same time, I see from the photograph that his face and head are remarkably well formed; and though the contours of his mouth are hidden by his moustache, his arched brows show well the romantic disposition of a true lover and painter of Nature. I think that the owner of such a face as this must be tender and

sympathetic and true.

October 30.--As my sister's grief for her mother becomes more and more calmed, her love for M. de la Feste begins to reassume its former absorbing command of her. She thinks of him incessantly, and writes whole treatises to him by way of letters. Her blank disappointment at his announcement of his inability to pay us a visit quite so soon as he had promised, was quite tragic. I, too, am disappointed, for I wanted to see and estimate him. But having arranged to go to Holland to seize some aerial effects for his pictures, which are only to be obtained at this time of the autumn, he is obliged to postpone his journey this way, which is now to be made early in the new year. I think myself that he ought to have come at all sacrifices, considering Caroline's recent loss, the sad postponement of what she was looking forward to, and her single-minded affection for him. Still, who knows; his professional success is important. Moreover, she is cheerful, and hopeful, and the delay will soon be overpast.