

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### AFTER THE STORM.

The painful and unfortunate crises of life often arise and darken like a thunder-storm, and seem for the moment perfectly terrific and overwhelming; but wait a little, and the cloud sweeps by, and the earth, which seemed about to be torn to pieces and destroyed, comes out as good as new. Not a bird is dead; not a flower killed: and the sun shines just as he did before. So it was with John's financial trouble. When it came to be investigated and looked into, it proved much less terrible than had been feared. It was not utter ruin. The high character which John bore for honor and probity, the general respect which was felt for him by all to whom he stood indebted, led to an arrangement by which the whole business was put into his hands, and time given him to work it through. His brother-in-law came to his aid, advancing money, and entering into the business with him. Our friend Harry Endicott was only too happy to prove his devotion to Rose by offers of financial assistance.

In short, there seemed every reason to hope that, after a period of somewhat close sailing, the property might be brought into clear water again, and go on even better than before.

To say the truth, too, John was really relieved by that terrible burst

of confidence in his sister. It is a curious fact, that giving full expression to bitterness of feeling or indignation against one we love seems to be such a relief, that it always brings a revulsion of kindness. John never loved his sister so much as when he heard her plead his wife's cause with him; for, though in some bitter, impatient hour a man may feel, which John did, as if he would be glad to sunder all ties, and tear himself away from an uncongenial wife, yet a good man never can forget the woman that once he loved, and who is the mother of his children. Those sweet, sacred visions and illusions of first love will return again and again, even after disenchantment; and the better and the purer the man is, the more sacred is the appeal to him of woman's weakness. Because he is strong, and she is weak, he feels that it would be unmanly to desert her; and, if there ever was any thing for which John thanked his sister, it was when she went over and spent hours with his wife, patiently listening to her complainings, and soothing her as if she had been a petted child. All the circle of friends, in a like manner, bore with her for his sake.

Thanks to the intervention of Grace's husband and of Harry, John was not put to the trial and humiliation of being obliged to sell the family place, although constrained to live in it under a system of more rigid economy. Lillie's mother, although quite a commonplace woman as a companion, had been an economist in her day; she had known how to make the most of straitened circumstances, and, being put to it, could do it again.

To be sure, there was an end of Newport gayeties; for Lillie vowed and declared that she would not go to Newport and take cheap board, and live without a carriage. She didn't want the Follingsbees and the Tompkinses and the Simpkinses talking about her, and saying that they had failed. Her mother worked like a servant for her in smartening her up, and tidying her old dresses, of which one would think that she had a stock to last for many years. And thus, with everybody sympathizing with her, and everybody helping her, Lillie subsided into enacting the part of a patient, persecuted saint. She was touchingly resigned, and wore an air of pleasing melancholy. John had asked her pardon for all the hasty words he said to her in the terrible interview; and she had forgiven him with edifying meekness. "Of course," she remarked to her mother, "she knew he would be sorry for the way he had spoken to her; and she was very glad that he had the grace to confess it."

So life went on and on with John. He never forgot his sister's words, but received them into his heart as a message from his mother in heaven. From that time, no one could have judged by any word, look, or action of his that his wife was not what she had always been to him.

Meanwhile Rose was happily married, and settled down in the Ferguson place; where her husband and she formed one family with her parents. It was a pleasant, cosy, social, friendly neighborhood. After all, John found that his cross was not so very heavy to carry, when once he had made up his mind that it must be borne. By never expecting much, he was never disappointed. Having made up his mind that he was to

serve and to give without receiving, he did it, and began to find pleasure in it. By and by, the little Lillie, growing up by her mother's side, began to be a compensation for all he had suffered. The little creature inherited her mother's beauty, the dazzling delicacy of her complexion, the abundance of her golden hair; but there had been given to her also her father's magnanimous and generous nature. Lillie was a selfish, exacting mother; and such women often succeed in teaching to their children patience and self-denial. As soon as the little creature could walk, she was her father's constant play-fellow and companion. He took her with him everywhere. He was never weary of talking with her and playing with her; and gradually he relieved the mother of all care of her early training. When, in time, two others were added to the nursery troop, Lillie became a perfect model of a gracious, motherly, little older sister.

Did all this patience and devotion of the husband at last awaken any thing like love in the wife? Lillie was not naturally rich in emotion. Under the best education and development, she would have been rather wanting in the loving power; and the whole course of her education had been directed to suppress what little she had, and to concentrate all her feelings upon herself.

The factitious and unnatural life she had lived so many years had seriously undermined the stamina of her constitution; and, after the birth of her third child, her health failed altogether. Lillie thus became in time a chronic invalid, exacting, querulous, full of

troubles and wants which tasked the patience of all around her. During all these trying years, her husband's faithfulness never faltered.

As he gradually retrieved his circumstances, she was first in every calculation. Because he knew that here lay his greatest temptation, here he most rigidly performed his duty. Nothing that money could give to soften the weariness of sickness was withheld; and John was for hours and hours, whenever he could spare the time, himself a personal, assiduous, unwearied attendant in the sick-room.