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Lights and Shadows

RICH AND POOR.

BY E. AZILE CROSBY.

CHAPTER V.

Months of lights and shadows have passed away in the north, and south too.

The mutterings of war sending terror to the hearts of American people. Its dark shadows hover near many a fireside. Like the death angel it is picking from every flock, its brightest and best. For this mighty nation is calling, like a loved father calling to his household for help, and leaving their many occupations they heed the call.

Mothers sit in their homes, with anxious faces, while the evening shadows fall quietly around them to brush away the talling year, for they have given their manly boys, a sacrifice, to their country's call. Wives with their little flocks gathered around them, pray nightly, for the husbands and fathers; while hope and fear go hand in hand.

Raphael St. Clair is climbing fast up the ladder of fame, and making for himself a name. He too laid away brush and paint to answer his country's call.

After enlisting, he went home, to visit the old scenes, and Vivian Derimple. She had been called home to attend her father's funeral. He had died suddenly, was found dead in his bed.

Again 'tis night. The sun had sunk quietly away and the night shadows steal down over the earth. Silence and stillness creep in. Only the birds piping their little songs, in the distant trees, seemed to break the quiet.

Night seemed rocking to sleep the turmoil of the day. Slowly the moon rises over the tree tops, and silvers the waters of the little lake. It steals over two faces as they stand by the little gate which is almost tumbled down now. 'Tis Raphael's home of other days.

The eyes of the young couple speak volumes. Over their earnest faces is a lingering sadness.

"Vivian," he said, "how can I part with you now, when life would seem like one long summer day with you."

"Yes, Raphael," she said, her voice tremulous with emotion, she carried not to hide. Her life seemed so lonely even her father was gone.

"I heard, Vivian that Hubert had made up a company, and is captain of it. If you will go and stay with Fannie I should feel so much better about you. Your Uncle's home is in the South, where lies the fiercest of the strife."

"I must stay here, for awhile, at least. My step mother will not do us as yet. I wrote to Hubert to come, but do not know that he will accept anything from my father's estate, and if it be true, that he is going to the war, he may not come. I truly hope so, but Vivian every drop of blood in these veins is for my country if necessity demands it."

"Yes, Raphael," she said again, so solemnly.

"Vivian, dear girl, you are dear to me, O, so dear. Rest assured that I will sell my life dearly, if it comes to that. Love for you shall nerve this right arm to deeds of bravery. Vivian for you, I would dare anything everything to come back to you a man crowned with the scars of my country's glory and victory, for such it will be. To fill your life with happiness and

sunshine is the one ambition of my life but for my country I can die.

They walked on up toward the house over the old familiar road saying many words that were sacred and dear to them; alone, to be lived over again in memory.

At the gate they part again and as all the sorrow of parting can not be written neither will I write all the words. The good-bye kisses lay warm on their lips, while the briny tears wash away the anguish, and the silent stars look down on the two lives drifting apart, while the dark wings of war flapped over our sunny land, as the vultures hovered over the coming battle field.

They had plighted their childhood's troth anew, and the vows were registered deep in their own hearts.

He was gone, and Vivian listens at the gate to the dying sounds of his footsteps. While she stands listening the sound of file and drum breaks the stillness and she hears faintly wafted out on the night air "forward march," and she knew she would see him no more, perhaps forever.

The carnage of death went on over two years. The wounded and dying were borne from the many battle fields of this once sunny land. People waited and watched and read their newspapers with breathless anxiety.

Vivian Derimple too, read and her cheeks paled as she looked over the long list of the killed and wounded of Company B. Looking on among the wounded she found—bringer for roll call—name—R. St. Clair. The paper dropped from her trembling hand and laying her hand on her heart to still its wild beating, she asked God to help him that he might not die.

Fannie too, joined in the prayer that her brother might be spared. She had just come in to hear what the news was from the battle field. Taking up the paper dropped by Vivian she ran her eyes hastily over its columns. She read sketches of the terrible work while her face looked the anxiety she felt. Then she read aloud, "Captain Derimple came in, just in time with his relief, and hardly lost a man."

Three days later a lady, closely veiled, was seen at a station inquiring for a conveyance to the hospital. Not finding one, she hired a boy to go with her. She walks through the long alleys

with her veil drawn slightly back, scanning closely each pale face she walks on till her feet grow weary and hope fades out of the pale, sweet, anxious face. She pauses and listens as a faint voice reaches her ear, then it grows louder, calling for Hubert, saying "why don't he come?" Then his voice sinks into a low whisper again, and Vivian stands beside him, while he pleads, O, so earnestly for some one to come, saying, "Say, comrades, won't some one write for me?"

Laying her hand on his hot brow, she said:

"Sleep, young man, and when you have rested I will write for you," asking him very low who she should write to.

Pulling her ear close to his, she said: "To Vivian Derimple," in a half whisper, then dropped off to sleep for a few moments.

The doctor sat a little away from the rude bunk dealing out medicine. Vivian went to him with anxious face to make inquiries, first about Raphael. The doctor told her that he had been wounded, not so badly, but this terrible fever set in which threatened his life.

"Is there no hope Doctor?"

"Yes, always while there is life, but young lady I must say he is in a very critical condition. He has a good constitution, and possibly he may live. Good nursing has saved many a patient, but that is what they fail to get here," he said, looking straight into her eye.

"I would care for him if it is prudent for me to stay here," she said timidly.

"May I stay Doctor? I cannot leave him in this condition."

The doctor scanned her closely to see what the man was to her. It was not the first woman who had come to look after some loved one, during the past few months of blood shed and suffering.

"You shall be protected here, my dear young lady. I will look to that for you," and he scanned again closely the sweet, innocent face before him.

Days passed, and Raphael St. Clair hovered between life and death, almost unconscious of the passing hours.

When the fever came on he would talk wildly till exhausted and in his talk he learned of his undying love for her. He would plead so earnestly

for some one to write for him. He would not have her think him faithless.

The doctor told her to call him by his name carefully at first and then tell him who she was. It might help to call his mind back to consciousness again.

"Who called me Raphael? A name I have not heard for so long? Vivian did you say?" and he whispered it very low. "Don't mock me, Vivian," he said again and fell quietly to sleep while she held both of his hands in hers. Laying them gently down she moves quietly away to carry water to some other suffering mortal, or wet afresh the cloths on their burning foreheads. It was the extreme run of the fever, the last hope of life for Raphael St. Clair.

Vivian's fair face looks the anxiety and love, the love of her pure young soul for him who lies here so quiet and still and wasted to a skeleton.

The doctor with his kind old fatherly face came to watch with her past the crisis. It was a trying hour. He had laid so still for hours, sleeping for life or death, they knew not which. The white face almost transparent. They had tried many times to rouse him, but could not. The doctor saw that a change was taking place for he grew somewhat restless just after midnight. He had Vivian sit beside him saying: "When he opens his eyes, if he knows you 'tis well. Make no sign. Act your part."

Then administering a light stimulant he sat away, while Vivian kept her vigil. He slept quietly for half an hour. Raising his hand slowly over his head he opened his large, brown eyes. Then the lids closed slowly over them again.

Vivian sat in breathless anxiety, scanning his face closely. Turning his head a little, as if to look at her, he opened them again. The look of undying love and whispered words, "you are an angel," were stamped on heart and soul of the waiting, watching girl, never to be forgotten.

The deep, unspoken words as soul communes with soul can never be written.

We will not follow them as Raphael nursed slowly back to life, but as soon as he was able to be held up they were married there in that rude hospi-

al one bright evening when the shadows and the sunshine stole in, a fitting emblem of mortal life. Some of the lookers on looked on with a gathering tear, but many an eye kindled as they looked into the happy faces before them, as they joined hands to walk down the journey of life together.

'Twas a strange, sweet picture. The sunset brightness and glory falling in through the wavering shadows, touching some of the dying faces, as with a hale of glory.

Were I an artist with brush, I could not paint all that scene, neither would you kind reader, like to look in on a scene where the death angel is hovering so often. You might catch the faint rustle of his wings.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

The load roar of the cannon had died away in the eternity of the past. Peace has again spread her white wings over this nation of happy people, like the ever living presence of God's love, while only in memory lives the past, like a terrible dream.

Hubert Derimple came home from the war covered with honor, steadily growing from one place of trust to another. He prospered in the things of this world. Fannie is a good wife, while the mother love looks kindly out of her blue eyes into the little faces around her. Her fair face, a beautiful setting, for so rare a jewel as mother love.

One day in the autumn when the evening shadows crept into their happy home, a lone woman approached the gate.

"O, papa, see!" said Willie, as they stopped suddenly in their race. "See, papa, the poor woman!"

Reader, that woman was Mabel Lathrop. Foiled in his many schemes he had married Mable St. Clair for her wealth. Her adopted parents died, leaving her all. It was not so much as Lathrop had supposed, but he had squandered it and deserted her, after mistreating her for years. She has come to her old friends, broken hearted. Her children are dead, and the butterfly friends of prosperity have flown. In the silent grave alone, there is peace for the tired, aching heart. Hubert

and Fannie spared no pains to make this sad penitent sister's last days peaceful. But one early morn when the beautiful autumn tints, that had been chilled and shorn of their latest beauty by the heavy frost of the night before, were silently falling, Mabel hid her weeping friends adieu, and the aching heart ceased its troubling.

Here where Hubert commenced to make himself a home, and had grown rich and prosperous and life seemed gliding into one long summer day to be and Fanny, Mabel had come to die.

Step by step Hubert Derimple climbs up the ladder of fame. First filling offices of trust in his country then to the legislature and finally, to Congress, where the shy, little Fanny graces the parlors of the white house as quaintly as any.

The second wife of the Derimple home, walks slowly through her empty rooms. They are like halls of memory, glittering with wealth but empty of life. No pattering feet of merry children greet the ears. 'Tis a home, her home now, shorn of all its living beauties. She walks its silent chambers and empty rooms, empty because all that makes home sacred and beautiful, is gone.

Gold is there in great abundance, which she hugs to heart and soul. She counts again and again, the shining pieces. While she has counted her gold, heart and soul have died to all that make life grand and glorious.

Here we leave her, like a child counting its toys; yet to learn the grander and nobler lessons of life.

Raphael and Vivian's lives are, so far, like a summer day. The sunshine charming away the shadows. Bright beautiful children gladden their hearts and help to paint the pictures of home. Their lives flow peacefully on, as a river toward the ocean. Hand in hand they are gliding down the stream of life to the oceans of eternity.

Reader, the pictures of Raphael St. Clair decorate the walls of a picture gallery in St. Louis to-day, and the brown eyes still brighten with hope, that some day he may visit the halls of the old masters and learn more and more.

[THE END.]

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