

# North Carolina Argus.

NEW SERIES—VOL. V—NO. 13.]

WADESBOROUGH, N. C., THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1863.

[WHOLE NO. 225.]

## MY OWN STORY.

CONCLUDED.

He was a man of thirty; calm, self-reliant, earnest; a different type of manhood from any I had ever known. He seemed like one who could stand up alone and battle against all the world. He needed no circling arms of wife or children. Alone he labored in his Master's cause. He had not my father's ardent temperament and his creative imagination, and yet his sermons were full of burning, fervid eloquence, and he was the finest critic I had ever known.

By this time I had grown to understand something of my own nature. I had been brought up in the same house where my father died, for such was his wish. Mrs. Newell, the lady who had charge of our home and ourselves, loved my sister passionately; but she had no kind feeling of attachment for the unsightly little cripple, and she took very little pains to assist or understand me. My love of knowledge was intense from my earliest recollection; and for several years my father's study, containing his well-chosen library, had been tacitly abandoned to me. I read many books—works of imagination, poems, and novels. The theme was too often love; and poring over these enchanted pages, I grew rebellious over my own sad destiny. I read of fair ladies and gallant knights, and anon of peaceful, happy homes; and all this glorious world of poetry, and passion, and sentiment was shut out from me—I was a cripple! I read it in the very glances the children raised to my face as I passed along the street in my little invalid's chair. They looked up kindly, but in their eyes was only pity, never admiration or love.

And yet, even in those early days, I felt that my own heart was capable of intense devotion. I could love, I knew it, with all the passion of which novelists had dreamed, or poets sung. But no one would ever, no one could ever, love the dwarfed, crippled temple which enshrined this passionate beating heart. I looked in the glass, and saw there a dark, shallow complexion, wild-looking eyes, straight black hair, and a thin, nervous-looking figure; but not one pleasing lineament.

A contrast was ever beside me—my little sister Helen. She was bright, joyous, and beautiful as our mother had ever been, and the beauty-loving element in my nature was gladdened every time I looked on her; I loved her, too. I cherished with more than a mother's tenderness, this glad some creature five years younger than myself. I believe I almost worshipped her; I would have died for her at any time; but this was not much, for life had never been dear or precious to me, and I longed to lay the burden down. Helen loved me too, in her own cheerful, light-hearted fashion, and depended on me to do her tasks and perform her duties.

But at fifteen there came to me the dawning of a great change. Duncan Clavering taught me that I, unloved, unsought as I must ever be, I had something for which to live. For a week he had been my teacher, and now I handed him my first composition, "How the thorns came on the rose" was its subject. It was a fantastic legend of a lovely flower dwelling among those who cared not for it; it put forth thorns one by one as defenses against hands that would grasp it rudely. Into this legend I had woven the wild plaint of my own heart. It was a passionate cry which I thought no one could recognize or understand. Duncan Clavering read it in silence and slowly; then he said, "Lucy you have suffered much."

"Yes, sir," I replied. "In this composition, my child, there is morbid feeling, a sort of defiant hopelessness. But I have made another discovery," he continued. "There is something for you in life better and brighter than any of your dreams. Lucy, not in vain have you been baptized with the baptism of suffering; you are destined to be an author—you will win fame—you will do good."

The fame had been his first thought, and

I read his besetting sin. Until that hour I had not known that I was ambitious. I had indeed something now for which to live. All my father's soul rose within me. Lonely, unloved, my life might be; but the world should know that Lucy Emrey, the little cripple, had dwelt in it.

I found Duncan Clavering a hard master. He expected incessant toil. He taxed every nerve and sinew to its utmost tension. And yet he was not unkind; I grew to like his quiet, resolute, governing manner. His silence and terseness were not displeasing to me; and the only sentence of praise he ever uttered—"This is worthy of you, my pupil,"—grew in time to be more to me than all other applause. I no longer missed love, or sighed for it. Heart and soul were full. At twenty I found myself already a well-known and popular writer. It was at this time that Charles Stanley came to our neighborhood—he was an author; his ostensible object was to find, for a few months, a quiet home wherein to read, wherein to write; his real one, as I afterward found, to become acquainted with the Lucy Emrey of his favorite periodicals. He soon called upon me. He was brought into my own especial room, the study which had been my father's.

"I am happy to see you," I said, quietly; but you will excuse me from rising, as I am lame."

He looked at me with an expression of blended amazement and compassion.

"I wished to see Miss Lucy Emrey," he said, hesitatingly.

"I am Lucy Emrey," was my calm reply. "Forgive me," said he—"I beg ten thousand pardons—but I had been told that Miss Emrey was very young, scarcely twenty."

I glanced at a mirror opposite—his mistake was not strange—I looked at least thirty. Good as Duncan Clavering's discipline had been for my mind, it had made me sallow and thinner than ever; I had grown very old. There may have been a little bitterness in my smile as I said, "I am, indeed, no older than that, sir; but I have suffered much. I have been lame for many years, and I know little about the beauty or brightness of life."

I could see he was touched—that argued well for his disposition. I exerted myself to relieve his embarrassment; soon the conversation flowed into an easy channel, and he left me at length with the impression that I had passed with him one of the most agreeable hours of my life.

For the next few months he passed a portion of every day in my society. Sometimes he read to me, while I sat in my low chair at the open study window, inhaling the perfume and fragrance from without. He was very gifted, and his tastes and pursuits were so much like my own that I gave myself up to the delight of his society, without asking myself whither all this would tend? Helen, too, was always with us. She was now a blooming graceful creature of fifteen. She had never met any man that seemed to her Charles Stanley's equal. Unlike Duncan Clavering, he was very handsome. His manners possessed that polish which is only imparted by extensive intercourse with good society, and his conversation united the fascinations of playfulness, poetry, and subtle analysis. It was not long before I made the discovery that Helen loved him. My only little sister—the one being I had been accustomed to call my own—had cast out my love from the chief place in her heart, and yielded it up in tremulous joy to the handsome stranger. This knowledge came to me fraught with deepest anguish. It was revealed to me one morning by a chance expression on her face as he read aloud a legend from Rogers's poems.

Suddenly, though the summer sunshine was never brighter, the day seemed to grow black and dark. I could not bear their presence; I sent them both from me.

"I am tired of you," I said, with a forlorn attempt at playfulness. "That poem always excites me; and I am not strong. Go out, both of you, and play like good children; don't let me see you back for an hour."

Delighting they were, but when they came back when he had reached the door, saying,

You might let me say, Lucy's wish

"No, go along, both of you," I said; "I will have my own way sometimes."

I laughed as I spoke, but I felt ready to cry. I crept across the room, shut the door and locked it; I would have no interruption. I came back and sat in my writing chair by the table, and all this time not a tear fell. Until that hour I never even fancied I loved Charles Stanley. Now I could see that a feeling had been growing up in my heart which was not perhaps exactly love—a feeling that he belonged to me and no other.

To do him justice he had never striven to win Helen's regard. Of course, with his nature, he could not remain insensible to her beauty, but he had never seemed to take much interest in her society; his thoughts and attentions had all been for myself. But Helen, my little sister, loved him, and, knowing this, I would not have married him had his heart broken for love of me. But did he love me, a poor, unlovely cripple? With his nature this was not possible. Thank Heaven, I saw the truth plainly; my genius he might admire, but he did not love me, he never could. I remember at the time I wondered why this knowledge did not bring me a deeper thrill of pain. It was not this which gave birth to the wild throbs of agony which rocked my slight frame.

I believe that the thought that Helen's love was mine no longer grieved me still more than the feeling that I had no power to retain the chief place in Charles Stanley's heart. Worst of all was the old, desolate sense, that I was, and must ever be, alone in the world; set apart, isolated from human love, by my misfortune. Helen would go away, far away from me; the love which could never be for me, would brighten her blue eyes, and deepen the blushes on her cheek. All the rest of the world might find kindred hearts, and husband's and children's love, but I must be poor, crippled Lucy Emrey, all my life! Oh, in that hour, fame seemed how worthless! For one heart to love me, I would have given all the glory of the universe.

Wildly I threw my arms upward, and groaned, and sobbed in my despair. And then an angel came down from heaven, and stilled the troubled waters of my soul, and brought the bright waves of healing to my very lips. I prayed. The peace of the Infinite seemed to overshadow me. The cloud and the darkness passed over.

That evening I went to the vicar's house. I had a question for Duncan Clavering's solution in a new study I had undertaken. I rose up to go, at length, for Charles Stanley had come for me, and was waiting at the door. Duncan looked at me gravely and kindly.

"You know I predicted good things for your life, Lucy, my child," he said, in his calm, low tones, "and they have come. Fame is dawning for you; already I see its dawning in the east; and now this young Stanley loves you—you will have happiness."

Was it my fancy or did a shadow cross his face as he spoke—a look of intense physical pain! I made no reply. I went to the door, and bade him, as was my wont, a respectful good-night; but I looked back afterward, and saw him still standing where I left him, watching me moving slowly onward, with my crutch in my hand leaning on Charles Stanley's arm, and his face wore an expression I had never seen on it before.

That night, on my way home, Charles Stanley asked my hand in marriage—Charles Stanley, poet and dreamer! A moment I was silent. A little of the morning's pain came back to me—I, who, needing sympathy and tenderness so painfully, must yet put away the cup of love with my own hand. But I put the feeling resolutely down, and answered, "No Charles, I must not be your wife, I am not what your nature craves. You need appreciation, not rivalry, in a woman. You need one like Helen. You shall have her; I will give her to you, and you shall be a brother to me."

"But it is not Helen I want; it is you,"

"No, Charles, it is not I; it is Helen. Listen and you will believe me. You are

you are

You had a very pretty theory about souls loving each other. Love was to be very exalted—mind, not matter. You read my writings—they pleased you—you thought you discovered in them a kindred spirit. You resolved to make my acquaintance. You came here with the fullest intention of loving and marrying me. When you saw that I was lame, you were disappointed—I could see that—but your beautiful theory, your thought must be true. You continued to visit me. Our tastes harmonised. I had seen little of the world, therefore I was original. You liked to hear me talk, you became pleased with my society, and now you think you want to marry me. But you have not one emotion of passionate love for me in your heart, such as a man has for the elect woman who is to be his wife. You would do me grievous wrong to wed me. Look into your own heart, Charles Stanley, and answer me as you would answer Heaven—have I not spoken truly? You need, with all the soul-longings of your nature, a beautiful woman. You need beauty, I say; you must have it in your wife. You have all the poet's waywardness; you need a sunny, cheerful woman. I am old and sad, and withered before my time. You need peace; my life, quiet as it is, must be always restless. I should not suit you. Answer me truly, Charles Stanley, am I not right?"

"Thanks!" he faltered, "thanks, Lucy, you have shown me my own heart."

But his eyes did not turn to me; they were fixed on Helen, who was bounding down the path to meet us, for we were almost at home. Oh! how beautiful she looked, her dress of flowing white muslin, bound round her slender waist with an azure girdle, her garden hat upon her arm, her eyes bright, and her cheeks flushed with exercise, her golden curls floating on the gentle evening breeze. No wonder Charles Stanley watched her—but she was mine no longer.

I remembered with a slight pain that he had accepted my words so readily, that he had not even sought to ascertain if I loved him. I thought I never could have loved him with all the fullness of my nature. Ah! perhaps if I had I could not have given him up so easily.

One more pang came to me—it was a selfish one. I sat down by my study window, and looked forth into the garden; they were there together, and I could not help thinking what a handsome couple they were. He was helping to tie up a rose-bush, and I heard him say that its blossoms were no brighter or blither than herself. And this was the man who had asked me to be his wife only yesterday—the only lover I ever had. I had given him up to Helen; they were both forgetting me. "Is this you, Lucy Emrey?" I said, with a twinge of contempt for my self-pity, and then I took my pen, and resolutely turning my back upon sorrow, commenced to write a new book. In six weeks Duncan Clavering married them.

I was now twenty-five years old, and I looked ten years older than that. Five years had passed since my sister's marriage, and for the last twelve months she had been in her old home again; Charles Stanley's widow. Her poet-husband was dead, and she, always sensitive, but transitory in her emotions, though she grieved for him, had speedily regained her cheerfulness. They had been very happy; she had exactly satisfied the needs of his nature with her brightness and her beauty.

I never had another lover, and Duncan Clavering had been my only friend. I had by this time won the fame he had prophesied, and far more than myself, he gloried in it. Physically, I had not grown much stronger. There were hours when I would have given worlds for human love; to have rested my throbbing brow for one instant on some true heart which was mine own. But knowing this was not for me, resolutely put the thought away.

Of late Duncan Clavering had often come to see us; far oftener than before Helen's return. She had matured into a very accomplished woman. He would sit for hours and listen to her voice as she sang to

the