

CHAPTER XXVL

“Do sit down, my dear cousin,” said Miss Janet to Mr. Weston, who was walking up and down the drawing-room. “Here, in August, instead of being quiet and trying to keep cool, you are fussing about, and heating yourself so uselessly.”

“I will try,” said Mr. Weston, smiling, and seating himself on the sofa; but you must recollect that for three years I have not seen my only son, and that now he is coming home to stay. I cannot realize it; it is too much happiness. We are so blessed, Cousin Janet, we have so much of this world’s good, I sometimes tremble lest God should intend me to have my portion here.”

“It is very wrong to feel so,” said Cousin Janet; “even in this world, He can give his beloved rest.”

“But am I one of the beloved?” asked Mr. Weston, thoughtfully.

“I trust so,” said Cousin Janet. “I do not doubt it. How lamentable would be your situation and mine, if, while so near the grave, we were deprived of that hope, which takes from it all its gloom.”

“Are you talking of gloom?” said Mrs. Weston, “and Arthur within a few miles of us? It is a poor compliment to him. I never saw so many happy faces. The servants have all availed themselves of their afternoon’s holiday to dress; they look so respectable. Esther says they have gone to the outer gate to welcome Arthur first; Bacchus went an hour ago. Even poor Aunt Phillis has brightened up. She has on a head-handkerchief and apron white as snow, and looks quite comfortable, propped up by two or three pillows.

“Arthur will be sadly distressed to see Phillis, though he will not realize her condition at first. The nearer her disease approaches its consummation, the brighter she looks.”

“It seems but yesterday,” said Mr. Weston, “that Phillis sat at her cabin door, with Arthur (a baby) in her arms, and her own child, almost the same age, in the cradle near them. She has been no eye-servant. Faithfully has she done her duty, and now she is going to receive her reward. I never can forget the look of sympathy which was in her face, when I used to go to her cabin to see my motherless child. She always gave Arthur the preference, putting her own infant aside to attend to his wants. Phillis is by nature a conscientious woman; but nothing but the

grace of God could have given her the constant and firm principle that has actuated her life. But this example of Christian excellence will soon be taken from us; her days are numbered. Her days *here* are numbered; but how blessed the eternity! Sometimes, I have almost reproached myself that I have retained a woman like Phillis as a slave. She deserves every thing from me: I have always felt under obligations to her.

“You have discharged them,” said Mrs. Weston. “Phillis, though, a slave, has had a very happy life; she frequently says so. This is owing, in a great measure, to her own disposition and rectitude of character. Yet she has had every thing she needed, and a great deal more. You have nothing with which to reproach yourself.”

“I trust not,” said Mr. Weston. “I have endeavored, in my dealings with my servants, to remember the Allseeing eye was upon me, and that to Him who placed these human beings in a dependant position, would I have to render my account. Ah! here are the girls. Alice, we had almost forgotten Arthur; you and Ellen remind us of him.”