"Very," said Arthur; but he did not overflow with appreciation.

They sat there for what seemed to Laurens an unreasonably long time. Miss Jane came out and expressed a mild fear that Fannie might be getting cold; but still they sat there. Finally Laurens went indoors for a few minutes, and when he came out, they were approaching the house. There was the usual mild banter as they came up, which was received laughingly by Miss Way and with good-natured dignity by her companion. The two resumed their seats at the end of the porch, and Laurens, going among the last of the boarders, left them there talking in low tones, broken now and then by Miss Way's sweet, subdued laugh.

That night Laurens slept but little. Sometimes he would upbraid himself for being so troubled by the caprices of a thoughtless girl; then, in no calmer mood, he would realize that he was desperately in love with her, and had been so all along, in spite of his efforts to persuade himself out of it. As he tossed about, waiting for the light to come and quiet his weary brain, he resolved to face the uncertainty, and not prolong his suspense another day.

He watched for Miss Way's appearance after breakfast, but somehow missed her going out, and did not see her till noon, when she came in, followed by Thornbury, carrying her shawl and a bundle of stationery. She looked tired, and complained of the heat.

It was evening when Laurens at last found an opportunity to carry out his purpose. Miss Way was standing alone in the doorway, looking out on the hills, about whose tops the mist was beginning to gather. At his invitation to walk, she looked up quickly with a questioning glance, but did not refuse. They went slowly down the road, the conversation flagging after the first few minutes.

"Miss Way," said he, after a pause, "I shall probably leave within a day or two."

"We shall miss you very much," she said simply.

"You don't speak for yourself."

"Oh, you'll never know how much I miss you;" she said, with a touch of her bright, bantering manner.

"Miss Way," said he, with a quiet deliberateness which surprised himself, "I wish to tell you that I love you. If the information gives you pleasure of any kind, I'm glad of it. If I had any hope of your returning it, I would say that if you would be my wife, I could give you many things that might make you happy. I don't say much for myself, but, such as I am, I would devote myself to you."

He looked at her intently; her head was bent, and her face was troubled, but did not soften.

"If you don't care for me, you have at least the satisfaction of making a conquest. You are welcome to it."

"Mr. Laurens," said she, turning from him indignantly with wet eyes, "I don't know what I have done to make you talk to me as you do to-night."

"What have you done?" he said passionately. "Why, nothing. What do women ever do for which they can be called to account? I have loved you all along against hope, and in spite of myself. But I do love you!"

"I cannot let you go on," she said with much dignity. "You know nothing of my circumstances."

"I don't care for your circumstances. It's you I want."

"But there are circumstances which make it impossible for me to listen to you."

"You are already engaged?"

She made no denial.

"Is it Thornbury? I think I have some little claim to know."

She shook her head with just a curl of her lip.

A flash of light came to Laurens' mind.

"It can't be that you are engaged to that student, Sniggins?"

Her color deepened, and she bent her head.