

puzzled how, even in the farthest-off jest, she could have got the name of grannie. But I could at the same time recall expressions of her countenance, which would much better agree with the name than that which now shone from it.

"Would you like to hear," she said, when our merriment had a little subsided, "how I have so easily arrived at the honourable name of grannie—at least all I know about it?"

"I should be delighted," said my father.

"You don't know what you are pledging yourself to when you say so," she rejoined, again laughing. "You will have to hear the whole of my story from the beginning."

"Again I say I shall be delighted," returned my father, confident that her history could be the source of nothing but pleasure to him.

#### CHAPTER XX.—HER STORY.

THEREUPON Miss Clare began. I do not pretend to give her very words, but I must tell her story as if she were telling it herself. I shall be as true as I can to the facts, and hope to catch something of the tone of the narrator as I go on.

"My mother died when I was very young, and I was left alone with my father, for I was his only child. He was a studious and thoughtful man. It *may* be the partiality of a daughter, I know, but I am not necessarily wrong in believing that diffidence in his own powers alone prevented him from distinguishing himself. As it was, he supported himself and me by literary work of, I presume, a secondary order. He would spend all his mornings for many weeks in the library of the British Museum—reading and making notes; after which he would sit writing at home for as long or longer. I should have found it very dull during the former of these times had he not early discovered that I had some capacity for music, and provided for me what I now know to have been the best instruction to be had. His feeling alone had guided him right, for he was without musical knowledge: I believe he could not have found me a better teacher in all Europe. Her character was lovely, and her music the natural outcome of its harmony. But I must not forget it is about myself I have to tell you. I went to her, then, almost every day for a time—but how long that was I can only guess. It must have been several years, I think, else I could not have attained what proficiency I had when my sorrow came upon me.

"What my father wrote I cannot tell. How gladly would I now read the shortest sentence I knew to be his! He never told me for what journals he wrote, or even for what publishers. I fancy it was work in which his brain was more

interested than his heart, and which he was always hoping to exchange for something more to his mind. After his death I could discover scarcely a scrap of his writing, and not a hint to guide me to what he had written.

"I believe we went on living from hand to mouth, my father never getting so far ahead of the wolf as to be able to pause and choose his way. But I was very happy, and would have been no whit less happy if he had explained our circumstances, for that would have conveyed to me no hint of danger. Neither has any of the suffering I have had—at least any keen enough to be worth dwelling upon—sprung from personal privation, although I am not unacquainted with hunger and cold.

"My happiest time was when my father asked me to play to him while he wrote, and I sat down to my old cabinet Broadwood—the one you see there is as like it as I could find—and played anything and everything I liked—for somehow I never forgot what I had once learned—while my father sat, as he said, like a mere extension of the instrument, operated upon, rather than listening, as he wrote. What I then *thought* I cannot tell, I don't believe I thought at all. I only *musicated*, as a little pupil of mine once said to me, when, having found her sitting with her hands on her lap before the piano, I asked her what she was doing; 'I am only musicating,' she answered. But the enjoyment was none the less that there was no conscious thought in it.

"Other branches, he taught me himself, and I believe I got on very fairly for my age. We lived then in the neighbourhood of the Museum, where I was well known to all the people of the place, for I used often to go there, and would linger about looking at things, sometimes for hours before my father came to me; but he always came at the very minute he had said, and always found me at the appointed spot. I gained a great deal by thus haunting the Museum—a great deal more than I supposed at the time. One gain was, that I knew perfectly where in the place any given sort of thing was to be found, if it were there at all: I had unconsciously learned something of classification.

"One afternoon I was waiting as usual, but my father did not come at the time appointed. I waited on and on till it grew dark, and the hour for closing arrived, by which time I was in great uneasiness; but I was forced to go home without him. I must hasten over this part of my history, for even yet I can scarcely bear to speak of it. I found that while I was waiting, he had been seized with some kind of fit in the reading-room, and had been carried home, and that I was alone in the world. The landlady, for we only rented

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)