

led the way along a winding path into the very heart of the now rapidly darkening wood. Carl had no alternative but to follow.

Darkness had settled perceptibly, and the myriad stars were out ere his guide stopped before a solitary cottage and bade him enter. Wondering, and yet with a feeling of absolute security, Carl entered. In the long hall a single lamp was burning, but even by its dim light he could see evidences of taste and refinement. And still his wonder grew.

But puzzled and curious as he was, it was not until the plain supper was over, and he and his fair hostess had wandered out upon the wide portico, that he learned the reason for her self-burial in the depths of the forest.

It seemed that when she was yet but a child her mother had died, and her father, broken-hearted, had given up his worldly pursuits and had come into the very heart of nature, that he might not be tortured by the recollections which familiar scenes would bring. And here they had lived ever since, with but one faithful servant, and with nature and books for companions.

While she told her plain little story, Carl sat in the shadow and listened, at times with closed eyes, to the sweet, bird-like voice of the speaker. And at other times he watched the moonlight playing in her hair, and felt his soul stirred by the lightning changes of emotion depicted on her face. And all the while a great idea had been forming in his mind. For it had suddenly come to him that he *was* able to paint this beauty with full justice, and he set his whole heart upon it, and declared to himself that this should be his master-piece, as well as the work which should make him famous.

It was not until the next morning that Carl dared to broach the subject nearest his heart. And even then he did it not without some fear and trembling. At first her father was stern and unyielding, but as he saw the look of intense disappointment that filled the petitioner's face he relented and gave a reluctant consent. And Carl was happy beyond measure.

He chose a well-lighted, east room in the cottage, and there, next day, he transferred his materials. And before the week was out he was at work. And so absorbed in his work did he become that he scarce took time to eat and sleep. And he always breathed a great sigh of regret when evening came and darkness ended his work for the day.