

## After the Storm

### The Lovers

By Timothy Shay Arthur

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#### Chapter 2

*Irene Delancy* was a girl of quick, strong feelings, and an undisciplined will. Her mother died before she reached her tenth year. From that time, she was either at home under the care of servants, or within the scarcely more favorable surroundings of a boarding-school. She grew up beautiful and accomplished, but capricious and with a natural impatience of *control*, that unwise reactions on the part of those who attempted to *govern her* in no degree tempered.

*Hartley Emerson*, as a boy, was self-willed and passionate, but possessed many fine qualities. A weak mother yielded to his resolute struggles to have his own way, and so he acquired, at an early age, control over his own movements. He went to college, studied hard, because he was ambitious, and graduated with honor. Law he chose as a profession; and, in order to secure the highest advantages, entered the office of a distinguished attorney in the city of New York, and gave to its study the best efforts of a clear, acute and logical mind. Self-reliant, proud, and in the habit of reaching his ends by the nearest ways, he took his place at the bar with a promise of success rarely exceeded. From his widowed mother, who died before he reached his majority, Hartley Emerson inherited a moderate fortune with which to begin the world. Few young men started forward on their life-journey with so small a number of vices, or with so spotless a moral character. The fine intellectual cast of his mind, and his devotion to study — lifted him above the baser allurements of sense and kept his garments pure.

Such were Irene Delancy and Hartley Emerson — lovers and betrothed at the time we present them to our readers. They met, two years before, at Saratoga, and drew together by a mutual attraction. She was the first to whom his heart had bowed in homage; and until she looked upon him, her pulse had never beat quicker at sight of a manly form.

Mr. *Edmund Delancy*, a gentleman of some wealth and advanced in years, saw no reason to interpose objections. The family of *Emerson* occupied a social position equal with his own; and the young man's character and habits were

blameless. So far, the course of love ran smooth; and only three months intervened until the wedding-day.

The closer relation into which the minds of the lovers came after their betrothal and the removal of a degree of deference and self-constraint, gave opportunity for the real character of each to show itself. *Irene* could not always repress her willfulness, and impatience of another's *control*; nor her lover hold a firm hand on quick-springing anger when anything checked his purpose. Pride and tenacity of character, under such conditions of mind, were dangerous foes to peace; and both were *proud* and *tenacious*.

The little break in the *harmonious flow* of their lives, noticed as occurring while the tempest raged, was one of many such incidents; and it was in consequence of Mr. Delancy's observation of these unpromising features in their relationship, that he spoke with so much earnestness about the *irreparable ruin that followed in the wake of storms*.

At least once a week Emerson left the city, and his books and cases, to spend a day with Irene in her tasteful home; and sometimes he lingered there for two or three days at a time. It happened, almost invariably, that some *harsh notes* jarred in the music of their lives during these pleasant seasons, and left on both their hearts, a feeling of oppression, or, worse — a brooding sense of injustice. Then there grew up between them an *affected opposition and indifference*, and a kind of half-sportive, half-earnest *wrangling about trifles*, which too often grew serious.

Mr. Delancy saw this with a feeling of regret, and often interposed to restore some *broken links* in the *chain of harmony*.

"You must be more *conciliating*, Irene," he would often say to his daughter. "Hartley is earnest and impulsive, and you should *yield to him gracefully*, even when you do not always see and feel as he does. This constant opposition and standing on your opinion about trifles, is fretting both of you, and bodes evil in the future."

"Would you have me assent if he said black was white?" she answered to her father's remonstrance one day, balancing her little head firmly and setting her lips together in a resolute way.

"It might be wiser to *say nothing* — than to utter dissent, if, in so doing, both were made unhappy," returned her father.

"And so let him think me a passive fool?" she asked.

"No; a prudent girl, shaming his unreasonableness and her self-control."

"I have read somewhere," said Irene, "that *all men are self-willed tyrants* — the

words do not apply to you, my father, and so there is an *exception* to the rule." She smiled a tender smile as she looked into the face of a parent who had ever been too indulgent. "But, from my experience with a lover, I can well believe the sentiment based in truth. Hartley must have me *think* just as he thinks, and *do* what he wants me to do — or he gets ruffled. Now I don't expect, when I am married, to sink into a *mere nobody* — to be my husband's *echo* and *shadow*; and the quicker I can make Hartley comprehend this, the better will it be for both of us! A few rufflings of his feathers now, will teach him how to keep them smooth and glossy in the time to come."

"You are in error, my child," replied Mr. Delancy, speaking very seriously. "Between those who love — a cloud should never interpose; and I beg you, Irene, as you value your peace and that of the man who is about to become your husband, to be wise in the very beginning, and *dissolve with a smile of affection* every vapor that threatens a coming storm. Keep the sky always bright!"

"I will do everything that I can, father, to keep the sky of our lives always bright, except give up my own *freedom of thought* and *independence of action*. A wife should not sink her individuality in that of her husband, any more than a husband should sink his individuality in that of his wife. They are *two equals* — and should be content to remain equals. There is no love in *subordination*."

Mr. Delancy sighed deeply: "Is argument of any avail with her? Can words stir conviction in her mind?" He was silent for a time, and then said —

"Better, Irene, that you stop where you are, and go through life *alone* — than venture upon marriage, in your state of feeling, with a man like Hartley Emerson."

"Dear father, you are altogether too serious!" exclaimed the warm-hearted girl, putting her arms around his neck and kissing him. "Hartley and I love each other too well to be made very unhappy by any little *jar* that takes place in the first reciprocal movement of our lives. We shall soon come to understand each other, and then the harmonies will be *restored*."

"The harmonies should never be *lost*, my child," returned Mr. Delancy. "In that lies the danger. When the enemy gets into the *citadel* — who can say that he will ever be dislodged? There is no safety — but in keeping him out."

"You are still too serious, father," said Irene. "There is no danger to be feared from any *formidable enemy*. All these are *very little things*."

"It is the *little foxes* which spoil the tender grapes, my daughter," Mr. Delancy replied; "and if the tender grapes are spoiled, what hope is there in the time of vintage? Alas for us, if in the later years, the *wine of life* shall fail!"

There was so sad a *tone* in her father's voice, and so sad an *expression* on his

face — that Irene was touched with a new feeling toward him. She again put her arms around his neck and kissed him tenderly.

"Do not fear for us," she replied. "These are only *little summer showers*, that make the earth greener and the flowers more beautiful. The *sky* is of a more heavenly azure when they pass away, and the *sun* shines more gloriously than before."

But the father could not be satisfied, and answered —

"Beware of even *summer* showers, my darling. I have known fearful ravages to follow in their path — seen many a goodly tree go down. After every storm, though the sky may be clearer, the earth upon which it fell has suffered some loss which is a loss forever. Begin, then, by *conciliation* and *forbearance*. Look past the external, which may seem at times too exacting or imperative, and see only the true heart pulsing beneath — the true, brave heart, that would give to every muscle the strength of steel for your protection if danger threatened. Can you not be satisfied with knowing that you are loved — deeply, truly, tenderly? What more can a woman ask? Can you not wait until this love puts on its rightly-adjusted exterior, as it assuredly will. It is yet mingled with self-love, and its action modified by impulse and habit. Wait — wait — wait, my daughter. Bear and forbear for a time — as you value peace in your marriage."

"I will try, father, for your sake, to guard myself," she answered.

"No, no, Irene. Not for *my* sake — but for the sake of *right*," returned Mr. Delancy.

They were sitting in the vine-covered portico that looked down, over a sloping lawn toward the river.

"There is Hartley now!" exclaimed Irene, as the form of her lover came suddenly into view, moving forward along the road that approached from the landing, and she sprung forward and went rapidly down to meet him. There an ardent kiss, an entwining of arms, warmly spoken words and earnest gestures. Mr. Delancy looked at them as they stood fondly together, and sighed. He could not help it, for he knew there was *trouble* before them. After standing and talking for a short time, they began moving toward the house — but paused at every few paces — sometimes to admire a picturesque view — sometimes to listen one to the other, and respond to pleasant sentiments — and sometimes in fond dispute. This was Mr. Delancy's reading of their actions and gestures, as he sat looking at and observing them closely.

A little way from the path by which they were advancing toward the house, was a rustic arbor, so placed as to command a fine sweep of river from one line of view — and *West Point* from another. Irene paused and made a motion of her hand

toward this arbor, as if she wished to go there; but Hartley looked to the house and plainly signified a wish to go there first. At this Irene pulled him gently toward the arbor; he resisted, and she drew upon his arm more resolutely, when, planting his feet firmly, he stood like a rock. Still she urged and still he declined going in that direction. It was *play* at first — but Mr. Delancy saw that it was growing to be earnest. A few moments longer, and he saw Irene separate from Hartley and move toward the arbor; at the same time the young man came forward in the direction of the house. Mr. Delancy, as he stepped from the portico to meet him, noticed that his *color* was heightened and his eyes unusually bright.

"What's the matter with that *self-willed* girl of mine?" he asked, as he took the hand of Hartley, affecting a lightness of tone that did not correspond with his real feelings.

"Oh, nothing serious," the young man replied. "She's only in a *little peeve* because I wouldn't go with her to the arbor, before I paid my respects to you."

"She's a *spoiled little puss*," said the father, in a fond yet serious way, "and you'll have to humor her a little at first, Hartley. She never had the wise discipline of a mother, and so has grown up unused to that beneficial *control* which is so necessary for young people. But she has a warm, true heart and pure principles; and these are the foundation-stones on which to build the *temple of happiness*."

"Don't fear but that it will be all right between us. I love her too well to let any flitting humors affect me."

He stepped upon the portico as he spoke and sat down. Irene had before this reached the arbor and taken a seat there. Mr. Delancy could do no less than resume the chair from which he had arisen on the young man's approach. In looking into Hartley's face, he noticed a *resolute expression* about his mouth. For nearly ten minutes they sat and talked, Irene remaining alone in the arbor. Mr. Delancy then said, in a pleasant off-handed way,

"Come, Hartley, you have *punished* her long enough. I don't like to see you even *play at disagreement*."

He did not seem to notice the remark — but started a subject of conversation that it was almost impossible to dismiss for the next ten minutes. Then he stepped down from the portico, and was moving leisurely toward the arbor when he perceived that Irene had already left it and was returning by another path. So he came back and seated himself again, to await her approach. But, instead of joining him, she passed around the house and entered on the opposite side. For several minutes he sat, expecting every instant to see her come out on the portico — but she did not make her appearance.

It was early in the afternoon. Hartley, affecting not to notice the *absence* of Irene,

kept up an animated conversation with Mr. Delancy. A whole hour went by, and still the young lady was absent. Suddenly starting up, at the end of this time, Hartley exclaimed —

"As I live, there comes the boat! and I must be in New York tonight!"

"Stay," said Mr. Delancy, "until I call Irene."

"I can't linger for a moment, sir. It will take quick walking to reach the landing by the time the boat is there." The young man spoke hurriedly, shook hands with Mr. Delancy, and then sprung away, moving at a rapid pace.

"What's the matter, father? Where is Hartley going?" exclaimed Irene, coming out into the portico and grasping her father's arm. Her face was pale and her lips trembled.

"He is going to New York," replied Mr. Delancy.

"To New York!" She looked almost frightened.

"Yes. The boat is coming, and he says that he must be in the city tonight."

Irene sat down, looking pale and troubled.

"Why have you remained away from Hartley ever since his arrival?" asked Mr. Delancy, fixing his eyes upon Irene, and evincing some displeasure.

Irene did not answer, but her father saw the color coming back to her face.

"I think, from his manner, that he was hurt by your singular treatment. What possessed you to do so?"

"Because I was not pleased with him," said Irene. Her voice was now steady.

"Why not?"

"I wished him to go to the arbor."

"He was your guest, and, in simple courtesy, if there was no other motive, you should have let *his wishes* govern your movements," Mr. Delancy replied.

"He is always *opposing* me!" said Irene, giving way to a flood of tears and weeping for a time bitterly.

"It is not at all unlikely, my daughter," replied Mr. Delancy, after the tears began to flow less freely, "that Hartley is now saying the same thing of you, and

*treasuring up bitter things* in his heart. I have no idea that any *business* calls him to New York tonight."

"Nor I. He takes this means to punish me," said Irene.

"Don't take that for granted. Your conduct has hurt him, and he is acting now from blind impulse. Before he is half-way to New York, he will regret this hasty step as sincerely as I trust you are already regretting its occasion."

Irene did not reply.

"I did not think," he resumed, "that my late earnest remonstrance, would have so soon received an *illustration* like this. But it may be as well. Trifles as light as air have many times proved the beginning of life-long separations between friends and lovers who possessed all the substantial qualities for a life-long and happy companionship. Oh, my daughter, beware! beware of these *little beginnings of discord*. How *easy* would it have been for you to have yielded to Hartley's wishes! — how *hard* will it to endure the pain that must now be suffered! And remember that you do not suffer alone; your conduct has made him an equal sufferer. He came up all the way from the city, full of sweet anticipations. It was for your sake that he came; and love pictured you as embodying all attractions. But how has he found you? Ah, my daughter, your *self-will* has wounded the heart that turned to you for love. He came in joy — but goes back in sorrow."

Irene went up to her chamber, feeling sadder than she had ever felt in her life; yet, mingling, with her sadness and self-reproaches, were complaining thoughts of her lover. For a little half-playful pettishness, was she to be visited with a *punishment* like this? If he had *really* loved her — so she queried — would he have flung himself away after this hasty fashion? *Pride* came to her aid in the conflict of feeling, and gave her self-control and endurance. At tea-time she met her father, and surprised him with her calm, almost cheerful, aspect. But his glance was too keen not to penetrate the disguise. After tea, she sat reading — or at least affecting to read — in the portico, until the evening shadows came down, and then she retired to her chamber.

Not many hours of sleep, brought forgetfulness of suffering through the night that followed. Sometimes the unhappy girl heaped mountains of *reproaches* upon her own head; and sometimes pride and indignation, gaining rule in her heart, would whisper *self-justification*, and throw the weight of responsibility upon her lover.

Her pale face and troubled eyes, revealed too plainly, on the next morning — the *conflict* through which she had passed.

"Write him a letter of apology or explanation," said Mr. Delancy.

But Irene was not in a state of mind for this. *Pride* came whispering too many

humiliating objections in her ear. Morning passed, and in the early hours of the afternoon, when the New York boat usually came up the river, she was out on the portico watching for its appearance. Hope whispered that, repenting of his hasty return on the day before — her lover was now hurrying back to meet her. At last the white hull of the boat came gliding into view, and in less than half an hour it was at the landing. Then it moved on its course again. Almost to a second of time, had Irene learned to calculate the minutes it required for Hartley to make the distance between the landing and the nearest point in the road where his form could meet her view. She held her breath in eager expectation as that moment of time approached. It came — it passed; the white spot in the road, where his handsome form first revealed itself, was touched by no obscuring shadow. For more than ten minutes Irene sat motionless, gazing still toward that point; then, sighing deeply, she arose and went up to her room, from which she did not come down until summoned to join her father at tea.

The next day passed as this had done, and so did the next. Hartley neither came nor sent a message of any kind. The maiden's heart began to fail. *Grief* and *fear* took the place of *accusation* and *self-reproach*. What if he had left her forever! The thought made her heart shiver, as if an icy wind had passed over it. Two or three times she took up her pen to write him a few words and entreat him to come back to her again. But she could form no sentences against which *pride* did not come with strong objection; and so she suffered on, and made no attempt to write.

A whole week at last intervened. Then the enduring heart began to grow stronger to bear, and, in self-protection, to put on *sterner moods*. Hers was not a spirit to yield weakly in any struggle. She was formed for endurance — *pride* and *self-reliance* giving her strength above common natures. But this did not really lessen her suffering, for she was not only capable of deep affection — but really loved Hartley almost as her own life; and the thought of losing him, whenever it grew distinct, filled her with terrible anguish.

With pain her father saw the color leave her cheeks, her eyes grow fixed and dreamy, and her lips shrink from their full outline.

"Write to Hartley," he said to her one day, after a week had passed.

"*Never!*" was her quick, firm, almost sharply uttered response. "*I would die first!*"

"But, my daughter — "

"Father," she interrupted him, two bright spots suddenly burning on her cheeks, "don't, I beg you, urge me on this point. I have courage enough to *break* — but I will not *bend*. I gave him no offence. What right has he to assume that I was not engaged in domestic duties while he sat talking with you? He said that he had an engagement in New York. Very well; there was a sufficient reason for his sudden



departure; and I accept the reason. But *why* does he remain away? If simply because I preferred a seat in the arbor, to one in the portico — why, the whole thing is so unmanly, that I can have no patience with it. Write to him, and *humor a whim* like this! No, no — Irene Delancy is not made of the right stuff. He went *away* from me — and he must *return* again. I cannot go to him. My *pride* forbids it. And so I shall remain silent and passive — even if my heart breaks!"

It was in the afternoon, and they were sitting in the portico, where, at this hour, Irene might have been found every day for the past week. The boat from New York came in sight as she closed the last sentence. She saw it — for her eyes were on the look-out — the moment it turned the distant point of land that hid the river beyond. Mr. Delancy also observed the boat. Its appearance was an incident of sufficient importance, taking things as they were, to check the conversation, which was far from being satisfactory on either side.

The figure of Irene was half buried in a deep cushioned chair, which had been wheeled out upon the portico, and now her small, slender form seemed to shrink farther back among the cushions, and she sat as motionless as one asleep. Steadily onward came the boat, throwing backward her dusky trail and lashing the quiet waters into foamy turbulence, with her great revolving wheels. Onward, until the dark crowd of human forms could be seen upon her decks; then, turning sharply, she was lost to view behind a bank of forest trees. Ten minutes more, and the shriek of escaping steam was heard as she stopped her ponderous machinery at the landing.

From that time, Irene almost held her breath, as so she counted the moments that must elapse before Hartley could reach the point of view in the road that led up from the river, should he have been a passenger in the steamboat. The number was fully counted — but it was today, as it was yesterday. There was no sign of his coming. And so the eyelids, weary with vain expectation, drooped heavily over the dimming eyes. But she had not stirred, nor shown a sign of feeling. A little while she sat with her long lashes shading her pale cheeks; then she slowly raised them and looked out toward the river again. What a quick start she gave! Did her eyes deceive her? No, it was Hartley, just in the spot she had looked to see him only a minute or two before. But how *slowly* he moved, and with what a weary step! and, even at this long distance, his face looked white against the wavy masses of his dark-brown hair.

Irene started up with an exclamation, stood as if in doubt for a moment, then, springing from the portico, she went flying to meet him, as swiftly as if moving on winged feet. All the forces of her ardent, impulsive nature were bearing her forward. There was no remembrance of *coldness* or *imagined wrong* — *pride* did not even struggle to lift its head — *love* conquered everything. The young man stood still, from weariness or surprise, before she reached him. As she drew near, Irene saw that his face was not only pale, but thin and wasted.

"Oh, Hartley! dear Hartley!" came almost wildly from her lips, as she flung her arms around his neck, and kissed him over and over again, on lips, cheeks and brow, with an ardor and tenderness that no *maiden delicacy* could restrain. "Have you been sick, or hurt? Why are you so pale, darling?"

"I have been ill for a week — ever since I was last here," the young man replied, speaking in a slow, tremulous voice.

"And I knew it not!" Tears were glittering in her eyes and pressing out in great pearly beads from between the fringing lashes. "Why did you not send for me, Hartley?"

And she laid her small hands upon each side of his face, as you have seen a mother press the cheeks of her child, and looked up tenderly into his love-beaming eyes.

"But come, dear," she added, removing her hands from his face and drawing her arm within his — not to *lean* on, but to offer *support*. "My father, who has, with me, suffered great anxiety on your account, is waiting your arrival at the house."

Then, with slow steps, they moved along the upward sloping way, crowding the moments with loving words.

And so the *storm* passed — and the *sun* came out again in the *sky of their souls*. But did he looked down on no *tempest-marks*? Had not the *ruthless tread of bitterness* marred the earth's fair surface? Were no goodly trees upturned, or clinging vines wrenched from their support? Alas! was there *ever* a storm that did not leave some *ruined hope* behind? ever a storm that did not strew the sea with wrecks, or mar the earth's fair beauty?

As when the pain of a crushed limb ceases, there comes to the sufferer, a sense of precious ease; so, after the *storm* had passed, the lovers sat in the warm sunshine and dreamed of unclouded happiness in the future. But in the week that Hartley spent with his betrothed, were revealed to their eyes, many times, *desolate places where flowers had been*; and their hearts grew sad as they turned their eyes away, and sighed because of *hopes departed, faith shaken, and untroubled confidence in each other* for the future before them, forever gone.

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