



C H A P T E R 2 8

SUSY PASSED FROM LIFE IN THE HARTFORD HOME THE 18TH OF AUGUST, 1896. With her when the end came were Jean and Katy Leary and the gardener and his wife. Clara and her mother and I arrived in England from around the world on the 31st of July and took a house in Guildford. A week later, when Susy, Katy and Jean should have been arriving from America, we got a letter instead.

It explained that Susy was slightly ill—nothing to worry about. But we were uneasy and began to cable for later news. This was Friday. All day no answer—and the ship to leave Southampton next day at noon. Clara and her mother began packing, to be ready in case the news should be bad. Finally came a cable saying, “Wait for cable in the morning.” This was not satisfactory—not reassuring. I cabled again, asking that the answer be sent to Southampton, for the day was now closing. We sat silent at home till one in the morning, waiting—waiting for we knew not what. Then we took the earliest morning train and when we reached Southampton the message was there. It said the recovery would be long but certain. This was a great relief to me but not to my wife. She was frightened. She and Clara went aboard ship at once and sailed for America to nurse Susy. I remained behind to search for another and large house in Guildford.

That was the 15th of August, 1896. Three days later, when my wife and Clara were about halfway across the ocean, I was standing in our dining room, thinking of nothing in particular, when a cable was put into my hand. It said, "Susy was peacefully released today."

It is one of the mysteries of our nature that a man, all unprepared, can receive a thunderstroke like that and live. There is but one reasonable explanation of it. The mind is knocked out by the shock and barely gathers the meaning of the words. The power to realize their full import is mercifully wanting. The mind has a dumb sense of vast loss—that is all. It will take mind and memory months and possibly years to gather together the details and thus learn and know the whole extent of the loss.

The 18th of August brought me the awful news. The mother and the sister were out there in mid-Atlantic, ignorant of what was happening, flying to meet this dreadful event. All that could be done to protect them from the full force of the shock was done by relatives and good friends. They went down the Bay and met the ship at night but did not show themselves until morning, and then only to Clara. When she returned to the stateroom she did not speak and did not need to. Her mother looked at her and said, "Susy is dead."

At half past ten o'clock that night Clara and her mother completed their circle of the globe and drew up at Elmira by the same train and in the same car which had taken them and me westward from it one year, one month, and one week before. And again Susy was there—not waving her welcome as she had waved her farewell to us thirteen months before, but lying white and fair in her **coffin** in the house where she was born.

The last thirteen days of Susy's life were spent in our own house in Hartford, the home of her childhood and always the dearest place on earth to her. About her she had faithful old friends; her uncle and aunt; Patrick, the coachman; Katy, who had begun to serve us when Susy was a child of eight; John and Ellen, who had been with us many years. Also, Jean was there.

At the hour when my wife and Clara set sail for America, Susy was in no danger. Three hours later there came a sudden change for the

worse. **Meningitis** set in and it was immediately apparent that she was death-struck. That was Saturday, the 15th of August.

“That evening she took food for the last time. (Jean’s letter to me.) The next morning the brain fever was raging. She walked the floor a little in her pain and high fever, then grew very weak and returned to her bed. Previously she had found hanging in a closet a gown which she had seen her mother wear. She thought it was her mother, dead, and she kissed it and cried. About noon she became blind (an effect of the disease). About one in the afternoon Susy spoke for the last time.”

It was only one word that she said when she spoke that last time and it told of her longing. She felt with her hands and found Katy and stroked her face and said, “Mamma.”

About two o’clock she composed herself as if for sleep and never moved again. She fell into unconsciousness and so remained two days and five hours, until Tuesday evening at seven minutes past seven, when the release came. She was twenty-four years and five months old.

On the 23rd her mother and her sisters saw her laid to rest—she that had been our wonder and our worship.