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BESSIE'S FORTUNE.

A Novel.

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES,

AUTHOR OF

TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE. — DARKNESS AND DAYLIGHT. — MILBANK. — ENGLISH ORPHANS. — LENA RIVERS. — ETHELYN'S MISTAKE. — HUGH WORTHINGTON. — MADELINE. — WEST LAWN. — MARIAN GREY — EDNA BROWNING, ETC.

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TO MY NEPHEW,

WALTER H. TWICHELL

(OF WORCESTER. MASS.)

I DEDICATE THIS STORY OF BESSIE,

WHICH WILL REMIND HIM OF A HAPPY YEAR IN EUROPE.

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BESSIE'S FORTUNE.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE JERROLDS OF BOSTON.

Mrs. Geraldine Jerrold, of Boston, had in her girlhood been Miss Geraldine Grey, of Allington, one of those quiet, pretty little towns which so thickly dot the hills and valleys Of New England. Her father, who died before her marriage, had been a sea-captain, and a man of great wealth, and was looked upon as a kind of autocrat, whose opinion was a law and whose friendship was an

honor. When a young lady, Miss Geraldine had chafed at the stupid town and the stupider people, as she designated the citizens of Allington, and had only been happy when the house at Grey's Park was full of guests after the manner of English houses, where hospitality is dispensed on a larger scale than is common in America. She had been abroad, and had spent some weeks in Derbyshire at the Peacock Inn, close to the park of Chatsworth, which she admired so much that on her return to Allington she never rested until the five acres of land, in the midst of which her father's house stood, were improved and fitted up as nearly as possible like the beautiful grounds across the sea. With good taste and plenty of money, she succeeded beyond her most sanguine hopes, and Grey's Park was the pride of the town, and the wonder of the entire county. A kind of show place it became, and Miss Geraldine was never happier or prouder than when strangers were going over the grounds or through the house, which was filled with rare pictures and choice statuary gathered from all parts of the world, for Captain Grey had brought something curious and costly from every port at which his vessel touched, so that the house was like a museum, or, as Miss Geraldine fancied, like the palaces and castles in Europe, which are shown to strangers in the absence of the family.

At the age of twenty-two, Miss Geraldine had married Burton Jerrold, a young man from one of the leading banks in Boston, and whose father, Peter Jerrold, had, for years, lived on a small farm a mile or more from the town of Allington. So far as Geraldine knew, the Jerrold blood was as good as the Grey's, even if old Peter did live a hermit life and wear a drab overcoat which must have dated back more years than she could remember. No one had ever breathed a word of censure against the peculiar man, who was never known to smile, and who seldom spoke except he was spoken to, and who, with his long white hair falling around his thin face, looked like some old picture of a saint, when on Sunday he sat in his accustomed pew by the door, and like the publican, seemed almost to smite upon his breast as he confessed himself to be a miserable sinner.

Had Burton Jerrold remained at home and been content to till the barren soil of his father's rocky farm, not his handsome face, or polished manners, or adoration of herself as the queen of queens, could have won a second thought from Geraldine, for she hated farmers, who smelled of the barn and wore cowhide boots, and would sooner have died than been a farmer's wife. But Burton had never tilled the soil, nor worn cowhide boots nor smelled of the barn, for when he was a mere boy, his mother died, and an old aunt, who lived in Boston, took him for her own, and gave him all the advantages of a city education until he was old enough to enter one of the principal banks as a clerk; then she died and left him all her fortune, except a thousand dollars which she gave to his sister Hannah, who still lived at home upon the farm, and was almost as silent and peculiar as the father himself.

"Marry one of the Grey girls if you can," the aunt had said to her nephew upon her death bed. "It is a good family, and blood is worth more than money; it goes further toward securing you a good position in Boston society. The Jerrold blood is good, for aught I know, though not equal to that of the Greys. Your father is greatly respected in Allington, where he is known, but he is a codger of the strictest type, and clings to everything old-fashioned and *outre*. He has resisted all my efforts to have him change the house into something more modern, even when, for the sake of your mother, I offered to do it at my own expense. Especially was I anxious to tear down that projection which he calls a lean-to, but when I suggested it to him, and said I would bring a carpenter at once, he flew into such a passion as fairly frightened me. 'The lean-to should not be touched for a million of dollars; he preferred it as it was,' he said; so I let him alone. He is a strange man, and—and—Burton, I may be mistaken, but I have thought there was something he was hiding. Else, why does he never smile, or talk, or look you straight in the face? And why is he always brooding, with his head bent down and his hands clenched together? Yes, there *is* something hidden, and Hannah knows it, and this it is which turned her hair grey so early, and has made her as queer and reticent as your father. There is a secret between them, but do not try to discover it. There may be disgrace of some kind which would affect your whole life, so let it alone. Make good use of what I leave you, and marry one of the Greys. Lucy is the sweeter and the more amiable, but Geraldine is more ambitious and will help you to reach the top."

This was the last conversation Mrs. Wetherby ever held with her nephew, for in two days more she was dead, and Burton buried her in Mt. Auburn, and went back to the house which was now his, conscious of three distinct ideas which even during the funeral had recurred to him constantly. First, that he was the owner of a large house and twenty thousand dollars; second, that he must marry one of the Greys, if possible; and third, that there was some secret between his father and his sister Hannah; something which had made them what they were; something which had given his father the name of the half-crazy hermit, and to his sister that of the recluse; something which he must never try to unearth, lest it bring disquiet and disgrace.

That last word had an ugly sound to Burton Jerrold, who was more ambitious even than his aunt, more anxious that people in high positions should think well of him, and he shivered as he repeated it to himself, while all sorts of fancies flitted though his brain.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed at last, as he arose, and, walking to the window, looked out upon the common, where groups of children were playing. "There is nothing hidden. Why should there be? My father has never stolen, or forged, or embezzled, or set any one's house on fire. They esteem him a saint in Allington, and I know he reads his Bible all the time when he is not praying, and once he was on his knees in his bedroom a whole hour, for I timed him, and thought he *must* be crazy. Of course so good a man can have nothing concealed, and yet—"

Here Burton shivered again, and continued: "And yet, I always seem to be in a nightmare when I am at the old hut, and once I told Hannah I believed the house was haunted, for I heard strange sounds at night, soft footsteps, and moans, and whisperings, and the old dog Rover howled so dismally, that he kept me awake, and made me nervous and wretched, I don't remember what Hannah said, except that she made light of my fears, and told me that she would keep Rover in her room at night on the floor by her bed, which she did ever after when I was at home. No, there is nothing, but I may as well sound Hannah a little, and will go to her at once."

When Mrs. Wetherby died, her nephew sent a message to his father and sister, announcing her death, and the time of the funeral. He felt it his duty to do so much, but he did not say to them, "Come, I expect you." In fact, away down in his heart, there was a hope that they would not come. His father was well enough in Allington, where he was known; but, what a figure he would cut in Boston, in his old drab surtout and white hat, which he had worn since Burton could remember. Hannah was different, and must have been pretty in her early girlhood. Indeed, she was pretty now, and no one could look into her pale, sad face, and soft dark eyes, or listen to her low, sweet voice, without being attracted to her and knowing instinctively that, in spite of her plain Quakerish dress, she was a lady in the true sense of the word. So, when she came alone to pay the last token of respect to the aunt who had never been very gracious to her, Burton felt relieved, though he wished that her bonnet was a little more fashionable, and suggested her buying a new one, which he would pay for. But Hannah said "no," very quietly and firmly, and that was the end of it. The old style bonnet was worn as well as the old style cloak, and Burton felt keenly the difference between her personal appearance and his own. He, the Boston dandy, with every article of dress as faultless as the best tailor could make it, and she, the plain countrywoman, with no attempt at style or fashion, with nothing but her own sterling worth to commend her, and this was far more priceless than all the wealth of the Indies. Hannah Jerrold had been tried in the fire, and had come out purified and almost Christlike in her sweet gentleness and purity of soul. She knew her brother was ashamed of her—whether designedly or not, he always made her feel it—but she had felt it her duty to attend her aunt's funeral, even though it stirred anew all the bitterness of her joyless life.

And now the funeral was over, and she was going home that very afternoon—to the gloomy house among the rocks, where she had grown old, and her hair gray long before her time—going back to the burden which pressed so heavily upon her, and from which she shrank as she had never done before. Not that she wished to stay in that grand house, where she was so sadly out of place, but she wanted to go somewhere, anywhere, so that she escaped from the one spot so horrible to her. She was thinking of all this and standing with her face to the window, when her brother entered the room and began, abruptly:

"I say, Hannah, I want to ask you something. Just before Aunt Wetherby died, she had a long talk with me on various matters, and among other things she said she believed there was something troubling you and father, some secret you were hiding from me and the world. Is it so? Do you know anything which I do not?"

"Yes, many things."

The voice which gave this reply was not like Hannah's voice, but was hard and sharp, and sounded as if a great ways off, and Burton could see how violently his sister was agitated, even though she stood with her back to him. Suddenly he remembered that his aunt had also said: "If there is a secret, never seek to discover it, lest it should bring disgrace." And here he was, trying to find it out almost before she was cold. A great fear took possession of Burton then, for he was the veriest moral coward in the world, and before Hannah could say another word, he continued:

"Yes, Aunt Wetherby was right. There is something; there has always been something; but don't tell me, please, I'd rather not know."

He spoke very gently for him, for somehow, there had been awakened within him a great pity for his sister, and by some sudden intuition he seemed to understand all her loneliness and pain. If there had been a wrongdoing it was not her fault; and as she still stood with her back to him, and did not speak, he went up to her, and laying his hand upon her shoulder, said to her:

"I regret that I asked a question which has so agitated you, and, believe me, I am sorry for you, for whatever it is, you are innocent."

Then she turned toward him with a face as white as ashes and a look of terror in her large black eyes, before which he quailed. Never in his life, since he was a little child, had he seen her cry, but now, after regarding him fixedly a moment, she broke into such a wild fit of sobbing that he became alarmed, and passing his arm around her, lead her to a seat and made her lean her head upon him, while he smoothed her heavy hair, which was more than half gray, and she was only three years his senior.

At last she grew calm, and rising up, said to him:

"Excuse me, I am not often so upset—I have not cried in years—not since Rover died," here her voice trembled again, but she went on quite steadily. "He was all the companion I had, you know, and he was so faithful, so true. Oh, it almost broke my heart when he died and left me there alone!"

There was a world of pathos in her voice, as she uttered the last two words, "There alone," and it flashed upon Burton that there was more meaning in them than was at first indicated; that to live

there alone was something from which his sister recoiled. Standing before her, with his hand still upon her head, he remembered, that she had not always been as she was now, so quiet and impassive, with no smile upon her face, no joy in her dark eyes. As a young girl, in the days when he, too, lived at home, and slept under the rafters in the low-roofed house, she had been full of life and frolic, and played with him all day long. She was very pretty then, and her checks, now so colorless, were red as the damask roses which grew by the kitchen door, while her wavy hair was brown, like the chestnuts they used to gather from the trees, in the rocky pasture land. It was wavy still, and soft and luxurient, but it was iron grey, and she wore it plain, in a knot at the back of her head, and only a few short hairs, which would curl about her forehead in spite of her, softened the severity of her face. Just when the change began in his sister. Burton could not remember, for, on the rare occasions when he visited his home he had not been a close observer, and had only been conscious of a desire to shorten his stay as much as possible, and return to his aunt's house, which was much more to his taste. He should die if he had to live in that lonely spot, he thought, and in his newly awakened pity for his sister, he said to her, impulsively:

"Don't go back there to stay. Live with me. I am all alone, and must have some one to keep my house. Von and I can get on nicely together."

He made no mention of his father, and he did not half mean what he said to his sister, and had she accepted his offer he would have regretted that it had ever been made. But she did not accept it, and she answered him at once:

"No, Burton, so long as father lives I must stay with him, and you will be happier without than with me. We are not at all alike. But I thank you for asking me all the same, and now it is time for me to go, if I take the four o'clock train. Father will be expecting me."

Burton went with her to the train, and saw her into the car, and bought her *Harper's Monthly*, and bade her good-by, and then, in passing out, met and lifted his hat to the Misses Grey, Lucy and Geraldine, who had been visiting in Boston, and were returning to Allington.

This encounter drove his sister from his mind, and made him think of his aunt's injunction to marry one of the Greys. Lacy was the prettier and gentler of the two, the one whom everybody loved, and who would make him the better wife. Probably, too, she would be more easily won than the haughty Geraldine, who had not many friends. And so, before he reached his house on Beacon street, he had planned a matrimonial campaign and carried it to a successful issue, and made sweet Lucy Grey the mistress of his home.

It is not our purpose to enter into the details of Burton's wooing. Suffice it to say, that it was unsuccessful, for Lucy said "No," very promptly, and then he tried the proud Geraldine, who listened to his suit, and, after a little, accepted him, quite as much to his surprise as to that of her acquaintances, who knew her ambitious nature.

"Anything to get away from stupid Allington," she said to her sister Lucy, who she never suspected had been Burton's first choice. "I hate the country, and I like Boston, and like Mr. Jerrold well enough. He is good-looking, and well-mannered, and has a house and twenty thousand dollars, a good position in the bank, and no bad habits. Of course, I would rather that his father and sister were not such oddities: but I am not marrying them, and shall take good care to keep them in their places, which places are not in Boston."

And so the two were married, Burton Jerrold and Geraldine Grey, and there was a grand wedding, at Grey's Park, and the supper was served on the lawn, where there was a dance, and music, and fireworks in the evening; and Sam Lawton, a half-witted fellow, went up in a balloon, and came down on a pile of rocks on the Jerrold farm, and broke his leg; and people were there from Boston, and Worcester, and Springfield, and New York, but very few from Allington, for the reason that very few were bidden. Could Lucy have had her way, the whole town would have been invited; but Geraldine overruled her, and made herself life-long enemies of the people who had known her from childhood. Peter Jerrold staid at home, just as Burton hoped he would, but Hannah was present, in a new gray silk, with some old lace, and a bit of scarlet ribbon at her throat, and her hair arranged somewhat after the fashion of the times. This was the suggestion of Lucy Grey, who had more influence over Hannah Jerrold than any one else in the world, and when she advised the new silk, and the old lace, and the scarlet ribbon, Hannah assented readily, and looked so youthful and pretty, in spite of her thirty years, that the Rev. Mr. Sanford, who was a bachelor, and had preached in Allington for several years, paid her marked attention, helping her to ices, and walking with her for half an hour on the long terrace in a corner of the park.

There was a trip to Saratoga, and Newport, and the Catskills, and then, early in September, Burton brought his bride to the house on Beacon street, which Geraldine at once remodeled and fitted up in a style worthy of her means, and of the position she meant her husband to occupy. He was a growing man, and from being clerk in a bank, soon came to be cashier, and then president, and money and friends poured in upon him, and Geraldine's drawing-rooms were filled with the elite of the city. The fashionables, the scholars, the artists, and musicians, and whoever was in any degree famous, met with favor from Mrs. Geraldine, who liked nothing better than to fill her house with such people, and fancy herself a second Madame De Stael, in her character as hostess. All this was very pleasing to Burton, who, having recovered from any sentimental feeling he might have entertained for Lucy, blessed the good fortune which gave him Geraldine instead. He never asked himself if he loved her; he only knew that he admired, and revered, and worshiped her as a woman of genius and tact; that what she thought, he thought; what she wished, he wished; and what she did he was bound to say was right, and make others think so

too. There had been a condescension on her part when she married him, and she never let him forget it; while he, too, mentally acknowledged it, and felt that, for it, he owed her perfect allegiance, from which he never swerved.

CHAPTER II.

GREY JERROLD.

Just a year after the grand wedding at Grey's Park, there was born to Burton and Geraldine a little boy, so small and frail and puny, that much solicitude would have been felt for him had there not been a greater anxiety for the young mother, who went so far down toward the river of death that every other thought was lost in the great fear for her. Then the two sisters, Hannah and Lucy, came, the latter giving all her time to Geraldine, and the former devoting herself to the feeble little child, whose constant wail so disturbed the mother that she begged them to take it away where she could not hear it cry, it made her so nervous.

Geraldine did not like children, and she seemed to care so little for her baby that Hannah, who had loved it with her whole soul the moment she took it in her arms and felt its soft cheek against her own, said to her brother one day:

"I must go home to-morrow, but let me take baby with me. His crying disturbs your wife, who hears him however far he may be from her room. He is a weak little thing, but I will take the best of care of him, and bring him back a healthy boy."

Burton saw no objection to the plan, and readily gave his consent, provided his wife was willing.

Although out of danger, Geraldine was still too sick to care for her baby, and so it went with Hannah to the old home among the rocks, where it grew round and plump, and pretty, and filled the house with the music of its cooing and its laughter, and learned to stretch its fat hands toward the old grandfather, who never took it in his arms, or laid his hands upon it. But Hannah once saw him kneeling by the cradle where the child was sleeping, and heard him whisper through his tears:

"God bless you, my darling boy, and may you never know what it is to sin as I have sinned, until I am not worthy to touch you with my finger. Oh, God forgive and make me clean as this little child."

Then Hannah knew why her father kept aloof from his grandson, and pitied him more than she had done before.

It was the first of October before Geraldine came up to Allington to claim her boy, of whom she really knew nothing.

Only once since her marriage had she been to the farm-house, and then she had driven to the door in her handsome carriage with the high-stepping bays, and had held up her rich silk dress as she passed through the kitchen into the "best room," around which she glanced a little contemptuously.

"Not as well furnished as my cook's room," she thought, but she tried to be gracious, and said how clean every thing was, and asked Hannah if she did not get very tired doing her own work, and praised the dahlias growing by the south door, and ate a few plums, and drank some water, which she said was so cold that it made her think of the famous well at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight.

"Your well must be very deep. Where is it?" she asked, not because she cared, but because she must say something.

On being told it was in the woodshed she started for it, and mistaking the door, was walking into a bedroom, when she was seized roughly by her father-in-law, whose face was white as ashes, and whose voice shook, as he said:

"Not in there; this is the way."

For an instant Geraldine looked at him in surprise he seemed so agitated; then, thinking to herself that probably his room was in disorder, and the bed unmade, she dismissed it from her mind, and went to investigate the well, whose water tasted like that at Carisbrooke Castle.

Half an hour in all she remained at the farm-house, and that was the only time she had honored it with her presence until the day when she came to take her boy away.

Not yet fully recovered from her dangerous illness, she assumed all the airs of an invalid, and kept her wraps around her, and shrank a little when her husband put her boy in her lap, and asked her if he was not a beauty, and did not do justice to Hannah's care, and the brindle cow whose milk he had fed upon. And in truth he was a healthy, beautiful child, with eyes as blue as the skies of June, and light chestnut hair, which lay in thick curls upon his head. But he was strange to Geraldine, and she was strange to him, and after regarding her a moment with his

great blue eyes, he turned toward Hannah, and with a quivering lip began to cry for her. And Hannah took him in her arms and hugging him to her bosom, felt that her heart was breaking. She loved him so much, he had been so much company for her, and had helped to drive away in part, the horror with which her life was invested, and now he was going from her; all she had to love in the wide world, and so far as she knew, the only living being that loved her with a pure, unselfish love.

"Oh, brother! oh, sister!" she cried, as she covered the baby's dimpled hands with kisses, "don't take him from me; let me have him; let him stay awhile longer. I shall die here alone with baby gone."

But Mrs. Geraldine said "No," very decidedly, for though as yet she cared but little for her child, she cared a great deal for the proprieties, and her friends were beginning to wonder at the protracted absence of the boy; so she must take him from poor Hannah, who tied on his scarlet cloak and cap of costly lace, and carried him to the carriage and put him into the arms of the red-haired German woman who was hereafter to be his nurse and win his love from her.

Then the carriage drove off, but, as long as it was in sight, Hannah stood just where it had left her, watching it with a feeling of such utter desolation as she had never felt before.

"Oh, baby, baby! come back to me!" she moaned piteously. "What shall I do without you?"

"God will comfort you, my daughter. He can be more to you than baby was," the old father said to her, and she replied:

"I know that. Yes, but just now I cannot pray, and I am so desolate."

The burden was pressing more heavily than ever, and Hannah's face grew whiter, and her eyes larger, and sadder, and brighter as the days went by, and there was nothing left of baby but a rattle-box with which he had played, and the cradle in which he had slept. This last she carried to her room up stairs and made it the shrine over which her prayers were said, not twice or thrice, but many times a day, for Hannah had early learned to take every care, great and small, to God, knowing that peace would come at last, though it might tarry long.

Geraldine sent her a black silk dress, and a white Paisley shawl in token of her gratitude for all she had done for the baby. She also wrote her a letter telling of the grand christening they had had, and of the handsome robe from Paris which baby had worn at the ceremony.

"We have called him Grey," Geraldine wrote, "and perhaps, he will visit you again next summer," but it was not until Grey was two years old, that he went once more to the farm-house and staid for several months, while his parents were in Europe.

What a summer that was for Hannah, and how swiftly the days went by, while the burden pressed so lightly that sometimes she forgot it for hours at a time, and only remembered it when she saw how persistently her father shrank from the advances of the little boy, who, utterly ignoring his apparent indifference, pursued him constantly, plying him with questions, and sometimes regarding him curiously, as if wondering at his silence.

One day, when the old man was sitting in his arm-chair under the apple trees in the yard, Grey came up to him, with his straw hat hanging down his back, his blue eyes shining like stars, and all over his face that sweet smile which made him so beautiful. Folding his little white hands together upon his grandfather's knee, he stood a moment gazing fixedly into the sad face, which never relaxed a muscle, though every nerve of the wretched man was strung to its utmost tension and quivering with pain. The searching blue eyes of the boy troubled him, for it seemed as if they pierced to the depths of his soul and saw what was there.

"Da-da," Grey said at last. "Take me, peese; I'se tired."

Oh, how the old man longed to snatch the child to his bosom and cover his face with the kisses he had so hungered to give him, but in his morbid state of mind he dared not, lest he should contaminate him, so he restrained himself with a mighty effort, and replied:

"No, Grey, no; I cannot take you. I am tired, too."

"Is you sick?" was Grey's next question, to which his grandfather replied:

"No, I am not sick," while he clasped both his hands tightly over his head out of reach of the baby fingers, which sometimes tried to touch them.

"Is you sorry, then?" Grey continued, and the grandfather replied:

"Yes, child, very, very sorry."

There was the sound of a sob in the old man's voice, and Grey's blue eyes opened wider as they looked wistfully at the lips trembling with emotion.

"Has you been a naughty boy?" he said; and, with a sound like a moan, Grandpa Jerrold replied:

"Yes, yes, very, very naughty. God grant you may never know how naughty."

"Then why don't Auntie Hannah sut oo up in 'e bed'oom?" Grey asked, with the utmost gravity, for, in his mind, naughtiness and being shut up in his aunt's bedroom, the only punishment ever inflicted upon him, were closely connected with each other.

Almost any one would have smiled at this remark, but Grandpa Jerrold did not. On the contrary there came into his eyes a look of horror as he exclaimed:

"Shut me in the bedroom! That would be dreadful indeed."

Then, springing up, he hurried away into the field and disappeared behind a ledge of rocks, where, unseen by any eye save that of God, he wept more bitterly than he had ever done before.

"Why, oh, why," he cried, "must this innocent baby's questions torture me so? and why can I never take him in my arms or lay my hands upon him lest they should leave a stain?"

Then holding up before him his hard, toil-worn hands, he tried to recall what it was he had heard or read of another than himself who tried to rid his hands of the foul spot and could not.

"Only the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," he whispered to himself, while his lips moved spasmodically with the prayer habitual to them; four words only, "Forgive me, Lord, forgive."

It had always been a strong desire with Grey to be led around the premises by his grandfather, who had steadily resisted all advances of that kind, until with a child's quick intuition, Grey seemed to understand that his grandfather's hands were something he must not touch.

That afternoon, however, as Mr. Jerrold was walking on the green sward by the kitchen door, with his head bent down and his hands clasped behind him, Grey stole noiselessly up to him, and grasping the right hand in both his own, held it fast, while he jumped up and down as he called out to Hannah, who was standing near:

"I'se dot it, I'se dot it—dada's han', an' I sal keep it, too, and tiss it hard, like dat," and the baby's lips were pressed upon the rough hand, which lay helpless and subdued in the two small palms holding it so tight.

It was like the casting out of an evil spirit, and Granpa Jerrold felt half his burden rolling away beneath that caress. There was a healing power in the touch of Grey's lips, and the stain, if stain there were upon the wrinkled hand, was kissed away, and the pain and remorse were not so great after that.

Grey had conquered and was free to do what he pleased with the old man, who became his very slave, going wherever Grey liked, whether up the steep hill-side in the rear of the house or down upon the pond near by, where the white lilies grew and where there was a little boat in which the old man and the child spent hours together, during the long summer afternoons.

In the large woodshed opposite the well, and very near the window of Granpa Jerrold's bedroom, a rude bench had been placed for the use of pails and washbasins, but Grey had early appropriated this to himself and persisted in keeping his playthings there, in spite of all his grandfather's remonstrances to the contrary. If his toys were removed twenty times a day to some other locality, twenty times a day he brought them back, and arranging them upon the bench sat down by them defiantly, kicking vigorously against the side of the house in token of his victory, and wholly unconscious that every thud of his little heels sent a stab to his grandfather's heart.

What if he should kick through the clapboards? What if the floor should cave in? Such were the questions which tortured the half crazed man, as he wiped the perspiration from his face and wondered at the perversity of the boy in selecting that spot of all others, where he must play and sit and kick as only a healthy, active child can do.

But after the day when Grey succeeded in capturing his hands, Granpa Jerrold ceased to interfere with the play-house, and the boy was left in peace upon the bench, though his grandfather often sat near and watched him anxiously, and always seemed relieved when the child tired of that particular spot and wandered elsewhere in quest of amusement.

There was, however, one place in the house which Grey never sought to penetrate, and that was his grandfather's bedroom. It is true he had never been allowed to enter it, for one of Hannah's first lessons was that her father did not like children in his room. Ordinarily this would have made no difference with Grey, who had a way of going where he pleased; but the gloomy appearance of the room where the curtains were always down did not attract him, and he would only go as far as the door and look in, saying to his aunt:

"Bears in there! Grey not go."

And Hannah let him believe in the bears, and breathed more freely when he came away from the door, though she frequently whispered to herself.

"Some time Grey will know, for I must tell him, and he will help me."

This fancy that Grey was to lift the cloud which overshadowed her, was a consolation to Hannah, and helped to make life endurable, when at last his parents returned from Europe, and he went to his home in Boston. After that Grey spent some portion of every summer at the farm-house growing more and more fond of his Aunt Hannah, notwithstanding her quiet manner and the severe plainness of her personal appearance so different from his mother and his Aunt Lucy Grey. His Aunt Hannah always wore a calico dress, or something equally as plain and inexpensive, and her hands were rough and hard with toil, for she never had any one to help her.

She could not afford it, she said, and that was always her excuse for the self-denials she practiced. And still Grey knew that she sometimes had money, for he had seen his father give her gold in exchange for bills, and he once asked her why she did not use it for her comfort. There was a look of deep pain in her eyes, and her voice was sadder than its wont, as she replied:

"I cannot touch that money. It is not mine; it would be stealing, to take a penny of it."

Grey saw the question troubled his Aunt Hannah, and so he said no more on the subject, but thought that when he was a man, and had means of his own, he would improve and beautify the old farm-house, which, though scrupulously neat and clean, was in its furnishing plain in the extreme. Not a superfluous article, except what had been sent from Boston, had been bought since he could remember, and the carpet, and chairs, and curtains in the best room had been there ever since his father was a boy. And still Grey loved the place better than Grey's Park, where he was always a welcome guest, and where his Aunt Lucy petted him, if possible, more than did his Aunt Hannah.

And sweet Lucy Grey, in her trailing dress of rich, black silk, with ruffles of soft lace at her throat and wrists, and costly diamonds on her white fingers, made a picture perfectly harmonious with Grey's natural taste and ideas of a lady. She was lovely as are the pictures of Murillo's Madonnas, and Grey, who knew her story, reverenced her as something saintly and pure above any woman he had ever known. And here, perhaps, as well as elsewhere, we may very briefly tell her story, in order that the reader may better understand her character.

CHAPTER III.

LUCY.

She was five years older than her sister Geraldine, and between the two there had been a brother —Robert, or Robin, as he was familiarly called—a little blue-eyed, golden-haired boy, with a face always wreathed in smiles, and a mouth which seemed made to kiss and be kissed in return. He was three years younger than Lucy, who, having been petted so long as the only child, looked somewhat askance at the brother who had come to interfere with her, and as he grew older, and developed that wonderful beauty and winning sweetness for which he was so remarkable, the demon of jealousy took possession of the little girl, who felt at times as if she hated him for the beauty she envied so much.

"Oh, I wish he was blind!" she once said, in anger, when his soft blue eyes had been extolled in her hearing and compared with her own, which were black as midnight and bright as the wintry stars.

And, as if in answer to her wish, an accident occurred not long after, which darkened forever the eyes which had caused her so much annoyance. Just how it happened no one knew. The two children had been playing in the dining-room, when a great crash was heard, and a wild cry, and Robin was found upon the floor screaming with agony, while near him lay a broken cup, which had contained a quantity of red pepper, which the housemaid had left upon the sideboard until ready to replenish the caster. Lucy was crying, too, with pain, for the fiery powder was in her eyes, also. But she had not received as much as Robin, who from that hour, never again saw the light of day.

There were weeks of fearful suffering when the little hands were tied to keep them from the eyes which the poor baby, who was only two years and a half old, said, "Bite Robin so bad," and which, when at last the pain had ceased, and the inflammation subsided, were found to be hopelessly blind.

"Blind! blind! Oh, Robin, I wish I was dead!" Lucy had exclaimed, when they told her the sad news, and with a bitter cry she threw herself beside her brother on his little bed and sobbed piteously. "Oh, Robbie, Robbie, you must not be blind! Can't you see me just a little? Try, Robbie. You must see me; *you must*."

Slowly the lids unclosed, and the sightless eyes turned upward toward the white face above them, and then Lucy saw there was no hope; the beautiful blue she had so envied in her wicked moods, was burned out, leaving only a blood-shot, whitish mass which would never again in this world see her or any other object.

"No, shister," the little boy said, "I tan't see 'oo now. It 'marts some yet, but bime by I see 'oo. Don't ty;" and the little hand was raised and groped to find the bowed head of the girl weeping in such agony beside him.

"What for 'oo ty so? I see 'oo bime by," he persisted, as Lucy made no reply, but wept on until her strength was exhausted and she was taken from the room in a state of unconsciousness, which resulted in a low nervous fever, from which she did not recover until Robbie was as well as he ever would be, and his voice was heard again through the house in baby laughter, for he had not yet learned what it was to be blind and helpless.

Lucy had said, when questioned with regard to the accident, that she had climbed up in a chair to

get some sugar for herself and Robin from the bowl on the shelf of the sideboard, that she saw the cup of pepper and took it up to see what it was, and let it drop from her hand, directly into the face of Robin, who was looking up at her. Thus she was answerable for his blindness, and she grew suddenly old beyond her years, and devoted herself to her brother, with a solicitude and care marvelous in one so young, for she was not yet six years old.

"I must be his eyes always as long as I live," she said, and she seldom left his side or allowed another to care for him in the least.

He slept in a little cot near hers. She undressed him at night, and dressed him in the morning and gave him his breakfast, always selecting the daintiest bits for him and giving him the larger share of everything. Together they wandered in the park, she leading him by the hand and telling him where they were, or carrying him in her arms, when the way was rough, and then, when she put him down, always kissing him tenderly, while on her face there was a look of sadness pitiful to see in one so young.

When she was seven years old, and Robin four, her mother, who had been an invalid, ever since the birth of Geraldine, died, and that made Lucy's burden still heavier to bear. They told her, her mother would not live till night, and with a look on her face, such as a martyr might wear when going to the stake, Lucy put Robin from her, and going to her mother's room, asked to be left alone with her.

"There is something I must tell her. I cannot let her die until I do," she said, and so the watchers went out and left the mother and child together.

What Lucy had to tell, no one knew; but when at the going down of the sun, the mother was dying, Lucy's head was upon her neck, and so long as life remained, the pale hand smoothed the dark tresses of the sobbing girl, and the white lips whispered, softly:

"God bless my little Lucy, He knows it all. He can forgive all. Try to be happy, and never forsake poor Robbie."

"Never, mother, never," was Lucy's reply, and she kept the vow to the letter, becoming mother, sister, nurse, and teacher all in one, to the little blind Robin, who loved her in return with all the intensity of his nature.

It was the wish of Mr. Grey, that Lucy should be sent to school with the children of her age, but she objected strongly, as it would take her so much from Robin; so, a governess was employed in the house and whatever Lucy learned, she repeated to her brother, who drank in her lessons so eagerly, that he soon became her equal in everything except the power to read and write. Particularly was he interested in the countries of Europe, which he hoped to visit some day, in company with his sister.

"Not that I can ever see them," he said, "but I shall know just how they look, because you will describe them so vividly, and I can hear the dash of the sea at Naples, and feel the old pavements in Pompeii, and the hot lava of Vesuvius. And, oh, perhaps we will go to the Holy Land, and stand just where Christ once stood, and you will see the hills He looked upon, and the spot on which He suffered. And I shall be so glad and somehow feel nearer to Him. And, oh, if He could be there as He was once—a man, you know—I'd cry to Him louder than ever old Bartimeus did, and tell Him I was a little blind boy from America, but that I loved Him, and wanted Him to make me see. And He would, I know."

Such were the dreams of the enthusiastic boy, but they were never to be realized. Always delicate as a child, he grew more and more so as he became older, so that at last all mental labor was put aside, and when he was sixteen, and Lucy nineteen, they took him to St. Augustine, where he could hear the moan of the sea and fancy it was the Mediterranean in far-off Italy. Lucy was of course with him, and made him see everything with her eyes, and took him to the old fort and led him upon the sea wall and through the narrow streets and out beneath the orange trees, where he liked best to sit and feel the soft, warm air upon his face and inhale the sweet perfume of the southern flowers.

But all this did not give him strength. On the contrary, the hectic flush on his cheek deepened daily, his hands grew thinner and paler, and the eyelids seemed to droop more heavily over the sightless eyes. Robin was going to die, and he knew it, and talked of it freely with his sister, and of Heaven, where Christ would make him whole.

"It will be such joy to see," he said to her one night when they sat together by the window of his room, with the silvery moonlight falling on his beautiful face and making it like the face of an angel. "Such joy to see again, and the very first one I shall look at after Christ and mother, will be old blind Bartimeus, who sat by the roadside and begged. I have not had to do that, and my life has been very, very happy, for you have been my eyes, and made me see everything. You know I have a faint recollection of the grass, and the flowers, and the trees in the park, and that has helped me so much; and I have you in my mind, too, and you are so lovely I know, for I have heard people talk of your sweet face and beautiful eyes; starry eyes I have heard them called."

"Oh, Robbie, Robbie, don't!" came like cry of pain from Lucy's quivering lips. But Robin did not heed her, and went on:

"Starry eyes—that's just what they are, I think; and I can imagine how lovingly they look at me, and how pityingly, too. There is always something so sad in your voice when you speak to me,

and I say to myself, 'That's how Lucy's eyes look at me, just as her voice sounds when it says brother Robbie.' I shall know you in heaven, the moment you come, and I shall be waiting for you, and when I see your eyes I shall say, 'That is sister Lucy, come at last!' Oh, it will be such joy!—no night, no blindness, no pain, and you with me again as you have been here, only there, I shall be the guide, and lead you through the green pastures beside the still waters, where never-fading flowers are blooming sweeter than the orange blossoms near our window."

Lucy was sobbing hysterically, with her head in his lap, while he smoothed the dark braids of her hair, and tried to comfort her by asking if she ought not to be glad that he was going where there was no more night for him, and where she, too, would join him in a little while.

"It is not that!" Lucy cried, "though it breaks my heart to think of you gone forever. How can I live without you? What shall I do when my expiatory work is finished?"

"Expiatory work?" Robin repeated, questioningly. "What do you mean? What have you to expiate?—you, the noblest, most unselfish sister in the world!"

"Much, much. Oh, Robbie, I cannot let you die with this upon my mind, even if the confession turn your love for me into hate—and you do love me, I have made your life a little less sad than it might have been but for me."

"Yes, sister, you have made my life so full of happiness that, darkened as it is, I would like to cling to it longer, though I know heaven is so much better."

"Thank you, Robbie—thank you for that" Lucy said; then, lifting up her head, and looking straight into her brother's face, she continued: "You say you have a faint recollection of the grass, and the flowers, and the trees in the park. Have you also any remembrance, however slight, how I looked when we were little children playing together at home?"

"I don't know for sure," Robin replied, while for an instant a deep flush stained his pale cheeks: "I don't know for sure. Sometimes out of those dim shadows of the past which I have struggled so hard to retain, there comes a vision of a little girl—or, rather, there is a picture which comes before my mind more distinct than the grass, and the trees, and the flowers, though I always try to put it away; but it repeats itself over and over again, and I see it in my dreams so vividly, and especially of late, when life is slipping from me."

"What is the picture?" Lucy said, and her face was whiter than the one above her.

"It is this," Robin replied. "I seem to see myself looking up, with outstretched arms, toward a little girl who is standing above me, looking down at me with a face which cannot—cannot be the one I shall welcome to heaven and know as my sister's; for this in the picture has a cruel expression on it, and there is hatred in the eyes, which are so large and black, and stare so fixedly at me. Then there is a crash, and darkness, and a horrible pain, and loud cries, and the eyes fade away in the blackness, and I know no more till you are sobbing over me and begging me to say that I can see you. I remember that, I am sure, or else it has been told me so often that it seems as if I did; but the other, the face above me, is all a fancy and a delusion of the brain. You never looked at me that way—never could."

Here he paused, and the girl beside him withdrew herself from him, and clasping her hands tightly together, knelt abjectly at his feet as she said:

"Oh, Robbie, Robbie! my darling, if you could know with what shame, and anguish, and remorse I am kneeling before you, you would pity and perhaps forgive me when I have told you what I must tell you now. But don't touch me—don't put your hands upon me, for that would quite unnerve me," she continued, as she saw the thin hands groping to find her. "Sit quite still and listen, and then, if you do not loathe me with a loathing unutterable, call me sister once more, and that will be enough."

The old cathedral clock was striking twelve when that interview ended, and when it struck the hour of midnight again Robin Grey lay dead in the room which looked toward the sea, and the soft south wind, sweet with the perfume of roses and orange blossoms, kissed his white face and stirred the thick curls of golden hair clustering about his brow. As is often the case with consumptives, his death had been sudden at the last, so sudden that Lucy scarcely realized that he was dying, until she held him dead upon her bosom. But so long as life lasted he kept repeating her name in accents of unutterable tenderness and love.

"Lucy, Lucy, my precious sister, God bless you for all you have been to me, and comfort you when I am gone, darling, darling Lucy, I love you so much; Lucy, Lucy, Lucy where are you? You must not leave me. Give me your hand till I reach the river-bank where the angels are waiting for me, I can see them and the beautiful city over the dark river, though I can't see you; but I shall in heaven, and I am almost there. Good-by, good-by, Lucy."

It almost seemed as if, he were calling to her from the other world, for death came and froze her name upon his lips which never moved again, and Lucy's work was done. Other hands than hers cared for the dead body, which was embalmed, and then sent to its northern home.

There were crowds of people at the church where the funeral was held and where Robin had been baptized. The son of Captain Grey was worthy of respect, and the citizens turned out *en masse*, so that there was scarcely standing room in the aisles for all who came to see the last of Robin. Very touchingly the rector spoke of the deceased, whose short life had been so pure and

holy, and then he eulogized the sister who had devoted herself so unselfishly to the helpless brother, and who, he said, could have nothing to regret, nothing to wish undone, so absolute and entire had been her sacrifice. Hitherto Lucy had sat as rigid as a stone, but as she listened to her own praises she moved uneasily in her seat, and once put up her hand deprecatingly as if imploring him to stop. When at last the services were over, and the curious ones had taken their last look at the dead, and the undertaker came forward to close the coffin-lid, her mind, which had been strained to its utmost, gave way, and not realizing what she did or meant to do, she arose suddenly, and gliding swiftly past her father, stepped to the side of the coffin, and throwing back her heavy crape vail; stooped and kissed the eyelids of her brother, saying as she did so:

"Dear Robbie, can you see me now, and do you know what I am going to do?"

There was a glitter in her eyes which told that she was half-crazed, and her father arose to lead her to her seat beside him; but she waved him back authoritatively, and in a clear, distinct voice, which rang like a bell through the church, said to the astonished people:

"Wait a little. There is something I must tell you. I have tried to put it away, but I cannot. My brain is on fire, and will never be cool again until I confess by Robbie's coffin; then you may judge me as you please. It will make no difference, for I shall have done my duty and ceased to live a lie, for my life has been one long series of hypocrisies and deceit. Our clergyman has described me as a saint, worthy of a martyr's crown, and some of you believe him, and look upon the care I gave to Robbie as something unheard-of and wonderful. And I have let you think so, and felt myself the veriest hypocrite that ever breathed. Don't you know that what I did was done in expiation of a crime, a horrid, cruel deed, for I put out Robbie's eyes. I made him blind.

"I knew you would shudder and turn from me in loathing," she continued, in a louder, clearer tone, as she felt the thrill of surprise which ran through the assembly, and grew more and more excited, "But it is the truth, I tell you. I put out those beautiful eyes of which I was so envious because the people praised them so much. I could not bear it, and the demon of jealousy had full possession of me, young as I was, and sometimes, when I saw him preferred to me, I wished him dead, *dead*, just as he is now. Oh, Robbie, my heart is breaking with agony and shame, but I must go on. I must tell how I hated you and the pretty baby ways which made you so attractive, and when I climbed up in the chair after the lumps of sugar and saw the cup of Cayenne pepper, and you standing below me with wide-open eyes and outstretched hands, asking me to give, the devil look possession of me and whispered that now was my chance to ruin those eyes looking up so eagerly at me. I had heard that red pepper would make one blind, and—and—oh, horror, how can I tell the rest?"

Lucy's voice was like a wailing cry of agony, as, covering her white face with her hands, she went on:

"I held the cup toward Robbie, and said: 'Is it this you want?' and when in his ignorance he answered: 'Yes, div me some,' I dropped it into his hands, saying to myself, 'it is not my fault if he gets it in his eyes.'

"You know the rest, how from that moment he never looked on me or any one again; but you do not, cannot know the anguish and remorse which filled my soul, when I realized what I had done. From that day to the hour of Robbie's death there has never been a moment when I would not have given my sight—yes, my life for his. And that is why I have been the devoted sister, as you have called me. I was trying to atone, and I did a little. Robbie told me so, for I confessed it all to him before he died; I told him just how vile I was, and he forgave me, and loved me just the same and went to sleep with my name on his lips. I can see it there now, the formation of the word Lucy, and it will be the first he utters when he welcomes me to heaven, if I am permitted to enter there.

"I have made this confession because I thought I ought, that you might not think me better than I am, I know you will despise me, but it does not matter; Robbie forgave and loved me to the last, and that alone will keep me from going mad."

She ceased speaking, and with a low, gasping sob fell forward into the arms of her father, who had stepped to her side in time to receive her.

It was a blustering March day when they buried Robert Grey in the cemetery at Allington, while his sister, who had been taken directly from the church to her home, lay unconscious in her room, only moaning occasionally, and whispering of Robbie, whose eyes she had put out.

"People will hate me always," she said, when after weeks of brain fever she was herself again. But in this she was mistaken, for the people who knew her best loved her most, and as the years went on, and all felt the influence of her pure, stainless, unselfish life, they came to esteem her as almost a saint, and no house was complete which had not in it some likeness of the sad, but inexpressibly sweet face which had a smile for every one, and which was oftenest seen in the cheerless houses where hunger and sickness were. There Lucy Grey was a ministering angel, and the good she did could never be told in words, but was known and felt by those who never breathed a prayer which did not have in it a thought of her and a wish for her happiness.

When Grey was first laid in her arms, and she saw in his great blue eyes a look like those other eyes hidden beneath the coffin-lid, she felt as if Robbie had come back to her, and there awoke within her a love for the child greater even than his own mother felt for him. And yet, so wholly unselfish was her nature that she never mourned or uttered a word of protest when, as the boy

grew older, he evinced a preference for the farm-house in the pasture, rather than for the grand old place at Grey's Park, where, since her sister's marriage and her father's death, she had lived alone.

"Hannah needs him more than I do," she would say to herself, but her sweet face was always brighter, and in her great black eyes there was a softer light when she knew he was coming to break the monotony of her lonely life.

After her marriage, Geraldine did not often honor Allington with her presence. It was far too quiet there to suit her, and Lucy lived too much the life of a recluse. No little breakfasts, no lunches, no evening parties at which she could display her elegant Paris costumes; nothing except now and then a stupid dinner party, to which the rector and his wife were invited, and that detestable Miss McPherson, who said such rude things, and told her her complexion was not what it used to be, and that she looked older than her sister Lucy. Miss McPherson was an abomination, and going to the country was a bore, but still Geraldine felt obliged to visit Allington occasionally, and especially on Thanksgiving day, when it is expected that the sons and daughters of New England will return to the old home, and grow young again under the roof which sheltered their childhood.

And so, on the morning when our story properly opens, Mr. and Mrs. Burton Jerrold and their son Grey, a well grown lad of fourteen, left their home on Beacon street, and with crowds of other city people took the train for the country, to keep the festal day.

CHAPTER IV.

THANKSGIVING DAY AT GREY'S PARK.

The season had been unusually warm and pleasant for New England, and until the morning of Thanksgiving Day the grass upon the lawn at Grey's Park had been almost as fresh and green as in the May days of spring, for only the autumnal rains had fallen upon it, and the November wind had blown as softly as if it had just kissed the wave of some southern sea, where it is summer always. But with the dawning of Thanksgiving Day, there was a change, and the carriage which was sent from Grey's Park to the station to meet the guests from Boston was covered with snow, and Mrs. Geraldine shivered, and drew her fur-lined cloak more closely around her as she stepped from the train, and looking ruefully down at her little French boots, said petulantly:

"Why do they never clear the snow from the platform, I wonder, and how am I to walk to the carriage? It is positively ankle deep, and I with silk stockings on!"

Mrs. Geraldine was not in an enviable frame of mind. She had declined an invitation to a grand dinner party, for the sake of going to Allington, where it was always snowing or raining or doing something disagreeable, and her face was anything but pleasant as she stood there in the snow.

A very slave to her opinions and wishes, her husband always thought as she thought, and fondly agreed with her that going to Allington was a bore, and that he did not know how she was to wade through all that snow in thin boots and silk stockings, and not endanger her life by the exposure.

Only Grey was happy; Grey, grown from the blue-eyed baby boy, who used to dig his little heels so vigorously into the rotten base-board under the bench in the wood-shed of the farm house, into the tall, blue-eyed, open-faced lad of fourteen, of whom it could be truly said that never had his parents been called upon to blush for a mean or vicious act committed by him. Faulty he was, of course, with a hot temper when roused, and a strong, indomitable will, which, however, was seldom exercised on the wrong side. Honorable, generous, affectionate, and pure in all his thoughts as a young girl, he was the idol of his aunts and the pride of his father and mother, the latter of whom he treated with a teasing playfulness such as he would have shown to a sister, if he had one.

Mrs. Jerrold was very proud of her bright, handsome boy, and had a brilliant career marked out for him; Andover first, then Harvard, and two years or more at Oxford, and then some high-born English wife, for Mrs. Jerrold was thoroughly European in her tastes, and toadied to the English in a most disgusting manner.

During her many trips across the water, she had been presented to the queen, had attended, by invitation, a garden party, and a ball at which the Prince and Princess of Wales were present, and had spent several weeks in the country houses of some of the wealthy English. Consequently, she considered herself quite *au fait* with their style and customs, which she never failed to descant upon, greatly to the amusement of her listeners, and the mortification of Grey, who was now old enough to see how ridiculous it made his mother appear.

Grey was delighted to go to Allington, and the grandest dinner party in the world, with all the peers of England as guests, would have been a small compensation for the good cheer he expected both at Grey's Park, and at the farm-house. He was glad, too, for the snow and as the express train sped swiftly on, and he watched it from the window, falling in blinding sheets and covering all the hill-tops, he thought what fun it would be on the morrow to drive his Aunt Lucy's

bays over to the farm-house after his Aunt Hannah, whom he would take for a long drive across the country, and frighten with the rapidity with which the bays would skim along.

"Hurrah! There's Allington, and there's Tom," he cried, springing up as the train shot under the bridge near the station. "Come on, mother, I have your traps, great box, little box, soap-stone, and bag. Here we are! And, my eyes what a blizzard! It's storming great guns, but here goes," and the eager boy jumped from the car into the snow, and shook hands with Tom, his Aunt Lucy's coachman, and the baggage-master, and the boy from the market where his aunt bought her meat, and Saul Sullivan, the fiddler, the most shiftless, easy-going fellow in Allington, who wore one of Grey's discarded hats given to him the previous year.

"Holloa! holloa! how are you?" he kept repeating, as one after another pressed up to him, all glad to welcome the city boy who was so popular among them. Hearing his mother's lamentations over the snow, he said to the coachman: "Here, Tom, take these traps, while I carry mother to the carriage." Then, turning to her, he continued; "Now, little mother, it will never do for those silk stockings to be spoiled, when there is a great strapping fellow like me to whom you are only a feather's weight," and lifting the lady in his arms as if she had really been a child, he carried her to the carriage, and put her in, tucking the blankets around her, and carefully brushing the snow from her bonnet. "Now, father, jump in, and let me shut the door. I'm going on the box with Tom. I like the snow, and it is not cold. I am going to drive myself." And in spite of his mother's protestations, Grey mounted to the box, and taking the reins, started the willing horses at a rapid rate toward Grey's Park, where Miss Lucy waited for them.

Bounding up the steps, Grey dashed into the hall, and shaking the snow from his coat and cap, seized his aunt around the waist, and after two or three hearty kisses, commenced waltzing around the parlor with her, talking incessantly, and telling her how delighted he was to be at Grey's Park again.

"Only think, I have not seen you for more than a year, and I've been to Europe since, and am a traveled young man. Don't you see marks of foreign culture in me?" and he laughed mischievously, for he knew his aunt would comprehend his meaning. "Then, too," he continued, "I'm an Andover chap now, but find it awful poky. I almost wish I had gone to Easthampton. Such fun as the boys have there! Sent a whole car-load of gates down to Springfield one night! I'd like to have seen the Easthamptonites when they found their gates gone, and the Springfielders when they opened that car. Holloa, mother! Isn't it jolly here? And don't you smell the mince pies? I am going to eat two pieces!" And the wild boy waltzed into the library in time to see his mother drop languidly into an arm-chair, with the air of one who had endured all it was possible to endure, and who considered herself a martyr.

"Pray be quiet, and come and unfasten my cloak. You forget that your Aunt Lucy is no longer young, to be whirled round like a top."

"Young or not, she is as pretty as a girl, any day," Grey replied, releasing his aunt and hastening to his mother.

Knowing her sister's dislike to the country, Miss Grey had spared no pains to make the house as attractive as possible. There was no furnace, but there were fires in every grate, and in the wide fire-place in the large dining-room, where the bay-window looked out upon the hills and the pretty little pond. Lucy's greenhouse had been stripped of its flowers, which, in bouquets, and baskets, and bowls, were seen everywhere, while pots of azaleas, and camellias, and rare lilies stood in every nook and corner, filling the rooms with a perfume like early June, when the air is full of sweetness.

But Mrs. Geraldine found the atmosphere stifling, and asked that a window might be opened, and that Grey would find her smelling-salts directly, as her head was beginning to ache.

Grey knew it always ached when she was in a crank, as he called her moods, and he brought her salts, and undid her cloak and bonnet, and kissed her once or twice, while his father, who was hot because she was hot, said it was like an August day all over the house, and opened a window, but shut it almost immediately, for a cloud of snow came drifting in, and Mrs. Geraldine knew she should get neuralgia in such a frightful draught.

"Come to your room and lie down. You will feel better when you are rested," Lucy said, with a troubled look on her sweet face, as she led the way to the large, cheerful chamber which her sister always occupied when at Grey's Park.

"What time do you dine?" Geraldine asked, as she caught the savory smell of something cooking in the kitchen.

"I have fixed the dinner hour at half-past two," Lucy replied, and Geraldine rejoined:

"Half-past two! What a heathenish hour! and I do so detest early dinners."

"Yes, I know," Lucy answered, in an apologetic tone, "but Hannah cannot stay late, on account of her father" then, turning to her brother-in-law, who had just come in, she added: "You know, I suppose, that your father has not been as well as usual for several weeks. Hannah thinks he is failing very fast."

"Yes, she wrote me to that effect," Burton replied, "but she is easily alarmed, and so I did not attach much importance to it. Do you think him seriously ill?"

"I don't know except from Hannah herself, as he sees no one. I was there yesterday, but he would not allow me to enter his room. I am told that he has taken a fancy that no one shall go into his bedroom but Hannah and the doctor. That looks as if his mind might be a little unsettled."

Instantly there came back to Burton's mind what his aunt had said to him on her dying-bed: "There is a secret between them, but never try to discover it, lest it should affect you, too. There may be disgrace in it." Years had passed since Burton heard these words, and much good fortune had come to him. He had married Geraldine Grey, and had become president of a bank; he had increased in wealth and distinction, until no one stood higher on the social platform of Boston than he did. He had been to the Legislature twice and to Congress once, and was the Hon. Burton Jerrold, respected by every one, and, what to his narrow mind was better still, he was looked upon as an aristocrat of the bluest type. None of his friends had ever seen the queer old hermit at the farm-house, or Hannah either for that matter, for she had seldom been in Boston since Grey was a baby, and on the rare occasions when she did go she only passed the day, and had her lunch in the privacy of Mrs. Geraldine's room. Once or twice a year, as was convenient, Burton had been to the farm-house to see his father, whom he always found the same silent, brooding man, with hair as white as snow, and shoulders so bent that it was difficult to believe he had ever been upright. And so, gradually, Burton had ceased to wonder at his father's peculiarities and had forgotten his suspicions; but now they returned to him again, and he shivered as there swept suddenly over him one of those undefinable presentiments which sometimes come to us, and for which we cannot account.

"What time is Hannah coming?" he asked.

"I hardly know," Lucy replied; "the boy who stays here to do the outdoor work is to bring her as soon as she can leave her father, who will have no one with him in his room during her absence. He is very anxious to see Grey, but I doubt if he will even let him into the bedroom."

During this conversation Grey had listened intently, and now he exclaimed;

"I have it. My dinner will taste better if I see grandpa first, and show him my Alpenstock, with all those names burned on it. I mean to drive over after Aunt Hannah myself. It will be such fun to surprise them both."

"Grey, are you crazy to think of going out in this storm?" Mrs. Jerrold exclaimed.

But Grey persisted, and, pointing to the window, said:

"It is not snowing half as fast as it did; and look, there's a bit of blue sky. I can go, can't I, Aunt Lucy?"

"Ye-es, if Tom is willing," Lucy said, a little doubtfully; for she stood somewhat in awe of Tom, who did not like to harness oftener than was necessary.

"Pho! I'll risk Tom," Grey said. "Tom knows me;" and in less than ten minutes one of the bays was harnessed to the cutter, and Grey was driving along in the direction of the farm-house, which, for the first time in his life, struck him as something weird-like and dreary, standing there alone among the rocks, with the snow piled upon the roof and clinging in masses to the small window-panes. "I don't wonder mother thinks it seems like some old haunted house we read about. It is just the spot for a lively ghost. I wish I could see one," he thought, as he drove into the side-yard, and, giving his horse to the care of the chore-boy, Sam, who was in the barn, he went stamping into the kitchen.

CHAPTER V.

THE OLD MAN AND THE BOY.

Old Mr. Jerrold had failed rapidly within a few weeks, but as long as possible he dressed himself every day and sat in his arm-chair in the kitchen, for the front room was rarely used in winter. At one time, when Hannah saw how weak her father was growing, and knew that he must soon take to his bed, she suggested that he should occupy the south room, it was so much more sunny and cheerful than his sleeping apartment, which was always dark, and gloomy, and cheerless. But her father said no very decidedly.

"It has been a part of my punishment to keep watch in that room all these dreadful years, and I shall stay there till I die. And, Hannah, when I cannot get up any more, but must lie there all day and all night long, don't let any one in, not even Miss Grey, for it seems to me there are mirrors everywhere, and that the walls and floor have tongues, and I am getting such a coward, Hannah —such a coward, I am too old to confess it now. God has forgiven me; I am sure of that, and the world need not know what we have kept so long, you and I. How long is it, Hannah? My memory fails me, and sometimes it seems a thousand years, I have suffered so much, and then again it is but yesterday—last night. How long did you say, Hannah!

"Thirty-one years next Thanksgiving, was Hannah's reply, spoken, oh, so mournfully low.

"Thirty-one years, and you were a girl of fifteen, and your hair was so brown and glossy, just like

your mother's Hannah—just like hers, and now it is so grey Poor child! I am so sorry for you, but God knows all you have borne for me, and some day you will shine as a star in His crown, while I, if I am permitted to enter the gates, must have the lowest seat."

It was the last of October when this conversation took place, and the next day but one the old man did not get up as usual, but staid in bed all that day, and the next, and the next, until it came to be understood between himself and Hannah that he would never get up again.

"Shall I send for Burton?" Hannah asked, and he replied:

"No, he does not care to come, and why trouble him sooner than necessary? He is not like you. He is grand and high, and ashamed of his old father, but he is my son, and I must see him once more. He will be up on Thanksgiving Day, and I shall live till then. Don't send for him. I cannot have him in this room—can't have anybody—don't let them in! Can no one see under the bed?"

"No, father, no one can see: no one shall come in," Hannah answered.

Then for weeks she kept her lonely watch over the half-crazed old man, who started at every sound and whispered piteously:

"Don't let them come here, Hannah. I am too old; and there is Grey—the boy—for his sake, Hannah, we will not let them come for me now!"

"No, father, they shall not come. Grey need not know," Hannah always replied, though she had secretly cherished a hope that some time in the future, when the poor old father was dead, she would tell Grey and ask his help to do what she fully meant to do when her hands, bound for thirty years, should be loosened from the chain.

She could trust Grey, could tell him everything, and feel sure that his earnest, truthful blue eyes would took just as lovingly at her as ever, and that he would comfort and help her as no one else could do.

Such was the state of affairs at the farm-house on the morning of Thanksgiving Day, when Hannah was making her preparations to go to Grey's Park for two hours or more, just to sit through the dinner and see Grey, whom she had not seen since his return from Europe.

Her father was not as well that morning. Thanksgiving was always a terrible anniversary for him, for as on that day the several members of a family meet again around the old hearth-stone, so the ghosts of the past all came back to torture him and fill him with remorse.

"How it blows," he said, as the wind shook the windows of his room, and went screaming around the corner of the house. "How it blows, and I seem to hear voices in the storm—your voice, Hannah, as it sounded thirty years ago, when you cried out so loudly, and I struck you for it, and beat old Rover, too. Do you remember it?"

"Yes, yes, father, but don't talk of it to-day; try to forget; try to think only that Grey is here, and that you will see him to-morrow."

"Grey, the boy with the big blue eyes which look so straight at you that I used sometimes to wonder if he did not see into my heart and know what I was hiding?" the old man replied. "Grey, the little boy who would sit on that bench in the woodshed, and kick the floor until I sweat at every pore with fear, and whom I would not touch till he captured my hands, and held them in his soft, warm ones, and kissed them, too, my wicked old hands, kissed by Grey's baby lips. Would he touch them now if he knew? I used to think if I lived till he was a man I would tell him; and maybe you will do it after I am dead. He is coming here to-morrow, you say, and Burton; but Burton isn't like Grey. He is proud and worldly, and a little hard, I am afraid; but the boy, tell him how I love him; try to make him understand, and when he comes to-morrow maybe he will kiss me again. It will be for the last time. I shall never see him more. But hark, what's that? Don't you hear bells? And there is the stamping of feet at the door. Go, child, quickly, and not let them in here."

Hannah, too, heard the sound and the opening of the kitchen door, and hurrying from her father's bedside, she called out, sharply:

"Who is it? Who's there?"

"My name is Norval, on the Grampian hills," was replied, in the well-remembered voice of Grey, who continued, merrily, as he approached her: "And you, dear Aunt Hannah, you are the dame with the wonderful name which forward and backward still reads the same."

He did not attempt to waltz with her, as he had done with Lucy; he had tried it once, but she went the wrong way, and he told her there was no more dance in her than in the kitchen tongs. So now he only wound his arms around her and kissed her many times, and when she sat down in a chair, he stood over her and smoothed her hair and thought how gray it had grown within the year. He had no suspicion that there was any secret sorrow weighing upon her, but he knew that her life was a hard one, owing to the peculiarities of his grandfather, and now as he looked at her, he felt a great pity for her, and there was a lump in his throat, as he stooped to kiss her again and said:

"Poor auntie, you look so tired and pale. Is grandpa so very sick, and more troublesome than usual?"

Hannah had not cried in years. Indeed it was the effort of her life to keep her tears back, but

now, at the sound of Grey's sympathetic voice and the touch of his fresh, warm lips upon her own, she broke down entirely, and for a few moments sobbed as if her heart would break, while Grey in great concern, knelt down before her, and tried to comfort her.

"What is it, auntie?" he said. "Is it because you are so lonely, and are afraid grandpa will die? I'll take care of you then, and we will go to Europe together, and you shall ride on a mule and cross the Mer-de-Glace. I used to think when I was over there how we would some day go together, and I would show you everything."

At the mention of Europe, Hannah's tears ceased, and commanding her voice, she said, abruptly:

"Did you go to Wales?"

"Yes, we went there first. Don't you remember?"

Without answering that question, Hannah continued:

"Did you go to Carnarvon?"

"Carnarvon! I guess we did. We spent a whole day at the old castle, and went all over it, and into the room where the first Prince of Wales was born. It isn't much bigger than our bath-room. But I tell you those old ruins are grand;" and with all a boy's enthusiasm over his first trip to Europe, Grey launched out into a graphic description of what, he had seen and done, repeating everything ridiculous in order to make his Aunt Hannah laugh.

"You ought to have heard father try to talk French," he said. "It was enough to kill one with laughing. He bought a little book and would study some phrase, and then fire it off at the waiters, screaming at the top of his voice, as if that would make them understand better; and once it was too funny. We were in a shop in Lucerne, and father wanted to know the price of something, so he held it up before a little dapper man with blue eyes and yellow hair, and said, 'Com-bi-on'—that's the way he pronounced it—'com-bi-on;' but the man didn't com-bi-on worth a cent, and only stared at him as if he thought him a lunatic. Then father tried again, and yelled as loud as he could, '*Pree—pree!* how much-ee, much-ee?' Then there was a glimmer of a smile on the man's face, and when father, wholly out of patience, roared out, 'Damnation, are you a fool?' he replied, 'No, but I'm a Yankee like yourself, and the price of the carving is twenty-five francs;' and, sure enough, he was a chap from Maine. After that father always asked them first if they *parlez-vous-ed* English. Mother got on better, because she knew more of the language, and always gave a twist to the words which made them sound Frenchy; but she was afraid to talk much, for fear she'd make a mistake and Miss Grundy would laugh at her. She is awfully afraid of Miss Grundy, especially if the *genus homo* happens to be English. But I did not care. I wanted to learn, and I studied in the railway car, and at the table, and in bed, and had a teacher when we staid long enough in a place, and then I plunged in, mistake or no mistake, and talked to everybody. I used to sit on the box with the driver when we drove, so as to talk to him, and you have no idea what a lot you pick up that way, or how glad they are to help you; and now, though I do not suppose I always use good grammar or get the right accent, I can *parlez* with the best of them, and can speak German, too, a little. I think I have improved some; don't you, auntie."

Of course she did, and she told him so, and smiled fondly upon the bright, handsome boy, knowing that in what he said of himself there was neither conceit nor vanity, but a frankness and openness which she liked to see in him.

"And now for grandpa," he suddenly exclaimed, "he will think I am never coming."

And before she could stop him he had entered the low, dark room, where, on the bed, pushed close to the side-wall near the woodshed, and just where it had stood for thirty years, the old man lay, or rather sat, for he was bolstered upright, with chair and pillows behind him, his long white hair parted in the middle and combed behind his ears, and his arms folded across his bosom.

At Grey's abrupt entrance he started, and his face flushed for a moment, but when he saw who it was, the look of fear gave way to one of joy, and his pale face lighted up with gladness as he welcomed the eager boy, who told him first how sorry he was to find him so sick, and then what a grand time he had in Europe.

"I have been to the top of Rigi, and old Pilatus and Vesuvius, and Flegere, and crossed the Mer-de-Glace and Tete Noir, and the Simplon, and they are all here on my Alpenstock; look, see! but no, you cannot, it is so dark! I'll raise the curtain."

And Grey hastened to the window, while his grandfather cried out in alarm:

"Stop, Grey, stop. I'll call your Aunt Hannah! Hannah, come here!"

She was at his side in an instant, bending over him while he whispered:

"Is it safe? Can he see nothing, sure?"

"Nothing, father, nothing," was the reply, and thus reassured the old man took the Alpenstock, which had done such good service, and looked at the queer names burned upon it, lingering longest upon the first one,

"Grey Jerrold, Boston, Mass., 18—."

Very rapidly Grey talked of his travels, and the wonders beyond the sea.

"But, after all, America is best," he said, "and I am glad I am an American. Boston is the place to be born in. Don't you think so, grandpa?"

"Yes, yes. Did you go to Wales? To Carnarvon?" the old man said, so abruptly that Grey stopped short and stared at him blankly.

His Aunt Hannah had asked the same question. Could it be they were more interested in Carnarvon than in Mont Blanc and Vesuvius? If so, he would confine himself to Carnarvon, and he began again to describe the old castle, and the birth-room of the first Prince of Wales. Then his grandfather interrupted him by asking:

"Did you hear of any family there by the name of Rogers?"

"Rogers? No. Why? Did you ever know any one by that name who lived in Carnarvon?" Grey asked, and his grandfather replied:

"Yes, a great many years ago, longer than you can remember. Joel Rogers, that was the name, and he had a sister, Elizabeth. You did not hear of her?"

"Father, father; you are talking too much; you are getting excited and tired," Hannah interposed in some alarm, but her father replied:

"No. I'm not afraid of Grey, now that I see his face again; it's a face to be trusted. Grey would not harm his old grandfather. Would you, boy?" and the childish old man began to cry piteously, while Grey looked inquiringly at his aunt, and touched his forehead meaningly, as much as to say:

"I know, I understand; a little out of his head."

She let him think so, and laying his hand on his grandfather's hair, Grey said:

"Don't cry; of course I would not harm you, the best grandpa in all the world."

"No, no, Grey; the worst, the worst; and yet it does me good to know you love and respect me, and you always will when I am dead and gone, won't you, even if you should ever know how bad I was, and you may sometime, for it is impressed on me this morning that in some way you will help Hannah out of it. You two, and no more. Poor Hannah. She has suffered so much for my sake. Be good to her, Grey, when I am gone; be good to Hannah. Poor Hannah."

"Yes, grandpa, I will," Grey said, in a tearful voice, as he involuntarily wound his arms around the woman he was to be good to. "I will always care for Aunt Hannah, and love her above all women. Don't you worry about that. She shall live with me when I am a man, and we will go to Europe together."

"Yes, to Carnarvon, perhaps," Mr. Jerrold interposed, and then said, suddenly: "Do you remember the day you caught and kissed my old hands, and did me so much good? Would you mind kissing them again?—this one; it burns so and aches!" and he raised his thin, right hand, winch Grey took in his own, and kissed reverently and lovingly, saying as he did so:

"Poor, tired hand, which has done so much hard work, but never a bad act."

"Oh, oh! My boy, my boy, you hurt me!" grandpa cried, as he snatched his hand from Grey, who looked at him wonderingly and said:

"I am sorry. I did not mean to hurt you. Is your hand sore?"

"Sore? Yes, sorer than you know or guess; so sore that it aches down to my very heart."

"Come, Grey, I think it is time we were off. Father is getting tired and excited. You will see him again to-morrow," Hannah said, and her father rejoined:

"To-morrow! Who knows? To-day is all we can call our own, and I will bless my boy to-day. Kneel down, Grey, and let me put both hands on your head."

With a feeling of awe Grey knelt beside the bed, while his grandfather laid his hands on his head and said:

"May God bless my boy Grey, and make him a good man—not like me, the chief of sinners, but Christlike and pure, so that he may one day reach the eternal home where I hope to meet him, through the merits of the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin—all sin, even mine. God bless my boy!"

It seemed like a funeral, and Grey's eyes were full of tears as he rose from his knees and said:

"Good-by, grandpa. We must go now, but I will come again to-morrow, and stay all day and all the next, for I do not go back to Andover till Monday, and next summer I will spend all my vacation with you. Good-by;" and stooping, he kissed the white forehead and quivering lips, around which a smile of peace was setting.

Then, he left the room, never dreaming that it was good-by forever.

Once in the open air, with his Aunt Hannah by his side, the cloud which in the sick-room had settled upon him lifted, and he talked and laughed merrily as they drove swiftly toward Grey's Park where dinner was waiting for them.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS BETSEY McPHERSON.

The table was laid in the large dining-room, which faced the south, and whose long French windows looked into the terraced flower-garden and upon the evergreens fashioned after those in the park at Versailles. When alone, Lucy took all her meals in the pleasant little breakfast room, where only two pictures hung upon the wall, and both of Robin—one taken in all his infantile beauty, when he was two years old, and the other at the age of fourteen, after the lovely blue eyes which smiled so brightly upon you from the first canvas were darkened forever, and the eyelids were closed over them. This was Lucy's favorite room, for there Robin seemed nearer to her. But Geraldine did not like it. It was like attending a funeral all the time, she said; and so, though it was quite large enough to accommodate her Thanksgiving guests, Lucy had ordered the dinner to be served in the larger room, which looked very warm and cheerful with the crimson hangings at the windows and the bright fire on the hearth.

After having regaled herself with a glass of sherry, a biscuit, a piece of sponge cake, and some fruit, Mrs. Geraldine had descended to the dining-room to see a new rug, of which Lucy told her. Glancing at the table, which was glittering with china, and glass, and silver, she began counting:

"One, two, three, four, five, six places. You surely did not expect Burton's father?"

Lucy flushed a little, as she replied:

"Oh, no; the sixth place is for Miss McPherson."

"Miss McPherson! What possessed you to invite her? I detest her, with her sharp tongue and prying ways. Why, she is positively rude at times, and exasperates me so," Geraldine said, angrily; and her sister rejoined:

"I know she is peculiar and outspoken, but at heart she is true as steel, and I thought she would be very lonely taking her Thanksgiving dinner alone. And then she will be glad to see you and inquire after her brother's family, whom she knows you met abroad."

"Yes, we spent a week with her brother, the Hon. John McPherson, and his wife Lady Jane, at the house of Captain Smithers in Middlesex. Miss McPherson is, at least, well connected," Geraldine said, mollified at once as she recalled her intimacy with Lady Jane McPherson.

To be acquainted with a titled lady was, in her opinion, something to be proud of, and since her return from Europe she had wearied and disgusted her friends with her frequent allusions to Lady Jane and her visit to Penrhyn Park where she had met her. And Miss McPherson was her sister-in-law, and on that account she must be tolerated and treated, at least, with a show of friendship. So when she heard that she had arrived she went to meet her with a good deal of gush and demonstration, which, however, did not in the least mislead the lady with regard to her real sentiments, for she and Geraldine had always been at odds, and from the very nature of things there could be no real sympathy between the fashionable lady of society, whose life was all a deception, and the blunt, outspoken woman, who called a spade a spade, and whose rule of action was, as she expressed it, the naked truth and nothing but the naked truth. Had she worn false teeth and supposed any one thought them natural, she would at once have taken them out to show that they were not; and as to false hair, and frizzes, and powder, and all the many devices used, as she said, "to build a woman," she abominated them, and preferred to be just what the Lord had made her, without any attempt to improve upon his work. Once Lucy Grey had asked her why she did not call herself Elizabeth, or Lizzie, instead of Betsey, which was so old-fashioned, and she had retorted, sharply, that though of all names upon earth she thought Betsey the worst, it was given to her by her sponsors in baptism, and Betsey she would remain to the day of her death.

She was tall and angular, with large features, sharp nose, and little bright, black, bead-like eyes, which seemed to look you through, and read your most secret thoughts. As her name indicated, she was of Scotch descent; indeed, her grandfather was Scotch by birth, but he had moved into England, where her father and mother, and herself were born, so that she called herself English, though she gloried in her Scotch blood and her Scotch face, which was unmistakable.

After her birth, her father had bought a place in Bangor, Wales, which he called Stoneleigh, and there her two brothers, Hugh and John, were born, and her parents had died.

She had come alone to Allington, when comparatively young, and, settling down quietly, had for a time watched closely the habits of the people around her, and posted herself thoroughly with regard to the workings and institutions of a Republic, and then she adopted them heartily, and became an out-and-out American, and only lamented that she could not vote and take part in the politics of the country. Of her past life she never spoke, and of her family seldom. Her father and mother were dead; she had two brothers, both well enough in their way, but wholly unlike each other, she had once told Lucy Grey, whom she had always liked, and with whom she was more intimate than with any one else in Allington, unless it were Hannah Jerrold. Although very proud of her family name and family blood, she was no boaster, and no one in Allington would ever have known that one of her brothers had been in Parliament, and that his wife was a Lady Jane

Trevellian, if chance had not thrown them in the way of Mrs. Geraldine.

Once, and once only, had she returned to her native land, and that two or three years before our story opens. Then she had been absent three or four months, and when she returned to Allington, she seemed grimmer and sterner than ever, and more intolerant of everything which did not savor of the "naked truth." And yet, as Lucy Grey had said of her to her sister, she was true as steel to her friends, and at heart was one of the kindest and best of women, and, with the exception of Miss Lucy Grey, no one in Allington was found so often in the houses of the poor as she, and though she rebuked sharply when it was necessary, and told them they were dirty and shiftless when they were, she made her kindness felt in so many ways that she was, if possible, more popular than Lucy herself, for, while Lucy only gave them money and sympathy, she helped them with her hands, and, if necessary, swept their floors, and washed their faces, and made their beds, and sometimes took their children home and kept them with her for days.

Such was Miss Betsey McPherson, who, as she is to figure conspicuously in this story, merits this introduction to the reader, and who, in her black silk of a dozen years old, with a long, heavy gold chain around her neck and a cap fashioned after the English style upon her head, stood up very tall and stiff to receive Mrs. Geraldine, but did not bend her head when she saw it was that lady's intention to kiss her.

"I know she would as soon kiss a piece of sole-leather as me, and I would rather kiss a flour-barrel than that powdered face," was her thought; and so she only gave her hand to Mrs. Jerrold, who told her how glad she was to see her and how much she was pleased with her brother, the Hon. John McPherson, and his charming wife, the Lady Jane.

"Why have you never spoken of them to us? I should be proud of such relatives," she said; and Miss McPherson replied:

"Umph! What's the use? I'm no better, no worse for them."

Just then the sound of bells was heard, and Hannah and Grey came in, and were received most cordially by Miss McPherson, who unbent to them as she had not done to the Boston lady. Indeed, there was something even tender in her voice as she spoke to Hannah and inquired after her father. Then, turning to Grey, she laid one hand on his head, and taking his chin in the other, looked searchingly in his face as she said:

"I wonder if you are the same boy I used to like so much, or has a trip to Europe spoiled you, as it does so many Americans?"

"Not a bit of it," Grey answered, merrily. "Europe is grand; Europe is beautiful; but she is very old, and I like young America better, with her freedom and her go-ahead, even if she is not as intensely respectable, and dignified, as her mother across the water."

The dinner-bell here put an end to the conversation, and Lucy preceded her guests to the dining-room, followed by her brother, who had been more than usually affectionate in his greeting to his sister, whom he took in to dinner, while Grey escorted his mother and Miss McPherson.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DINNER, AT WHICH BESSIE IS INTRODUCED.

The soup and fish had been served, and during the interval while Mr. Jerrold carved the big turkey which Hannah had contributed, and which she had fattened all the summer in anticipation of Grey's return and this very dinner, Mrs. Geraldine took occasion to introduce her favorite subject of conversation, Europe, and its customs, which she thought so infinitely superior to those this side the water.

"Umph!" ejaculated Miss McPherson, with an upward toss of the chin. Then, turning to Grey, she said, "And did you, too, like all the foreign habits?"

"No, indeed," was Grey's reply. "Just think of having your coffee and roll brought to you in the morning while you are in bed, and eating it in the smelling room, without washing your hands, and then going to sleep again. That is what I call very *narsty*, as the English say, though they do not use the word in that sense."

"You forget that Miss McPherson is English," Mrs. Jerrold said, and the lady in question at once rejoined:

"Never mind. I do not believe in spoiling a story for relation's sake, or country's either, and I fully agree with Grey that the Continental habit of breakfasting in bed, with unwashed face and hands, is a very *nasty* one, in the American sense of the word. I never did it, and never would."

"You have been on the Continent, then?" Mr. Jerrold asked, and instantly there came upon Miss McPherson's face an expression of bitter pain, as if some sad memory had been stirred; then, quickly recovering herself, she answered:

"Yes, I was at school in Paris a year, and traveled another year all over Switzerland, Germany, and Italy. It may seem strange to Grey, who probably cannot realize that I was ever young, to know that I, too, have my Alpenstock as a voucher for the mountains I have climbed and the chasms I have crossed. Did you go to Monte-Carlo?"

The question was addressed to Grey, who replied:

"Yes, we were there four days."

"Did you play?"

"No, I did not even see them play. They would not let me in; I was too young, and I should not have played anyway, for I promised Aunt Lucy I would not," Grey said, and Miss McPherson replied, with startling vehemence:

"That's right, my boy! that's right! Never, never play for money so long as you live. You have no idea what perils lurk around the gaming-table, or what an accursed spot Monte-Carlo is, beautiful as it is to look at. Those lovely grounds are haunted with the ghosts of the suicides who, ruined body and soul, have rushed unprepared into the presence of their Maker."

None of the guests had ever seen Miss McPherson so excited, and for a moment there was silence while they gazed at her wonderingly, as she sat with lips compressed and nostrils dilated, looking intently over their heads at something they could not see, but which evidently was very vivid to her.

Mrs. Geraldine was the first to speak, and she said, half laughingly:

"You are quite as much prejudiced against *Rouge et Noir* as your brother, for when I told him I tried my luck at Monte-Carlo and won twenty-five dollars, he seemed horrified, and I think it took him some hours to regard me with favor again."

"Yes, and he had reason. The McPhersons have all good cause to abhor the very name of gambling," Miss McPherson replied, hitching her chair a little further away from Geraldine as from something poisonous; then, in her characteristic way of suddenly changing the conversation, she said: "You saw my nephew, Neil McPherson?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Jerrold replied. "We saw a good deal of him; he is very fine-looking, with such gentlemanly manners for a boy. I should be glad if Grey would imitate him," and she glanced at her son, on whose face a cloud instantly fell.

Miss McPherson saw it, and turning to him she asked:

"How did you like Neil? Boys are sometimes better judges of each other than older people. Did you think him very nice?"

Remembering Miss McPherson's love for the *naked truth*, Grey spoke out boldly.

"No, madam; at first I did not like him at all. We had a fight!"

"A fight!" Miss McPherson repeated, in surprise, as did both Hannah and Lucy simultaneously, while Mrs. Jerrold interposed:

"I think, Grey, I would not mention that, as it reflects no credit upon you."

"But he insulted me first," Grey replied, and Miss McPherson insisted:

"Tell it, Grey, and do not omit anything, because I am his aunt. Tell it exactly as it was. I want the truth."

Thus encouraged, Grey began: "I know I did not do right, but he made me so angry. It was the Fourth of July and we were at Melrose stopping at the George Inn, while Mr. McPherson's family were at the Abbey Hotel close to the old ruin. There were several Americans at our house, and because of that the proprietor hung out our national flag. It was such a lovely morning, and when I went into the street and saw the Stars and Stripes waving in the English wind, I hurrahed with all my might and threw up my cap in the air.

"'May I ask why you are making so much noise?' somebody said close to me, and turning round I saw a lad about my own age, wearing a tall stove-pipe hat, for he was an Eton boy.

"His manner provoked me quite as much as his words, it was so overbearing, and picking up my cap, I said: 'Why, it's the Fourth of July, and that is the Star-spangled Banner!'

"'Star-spangled fiddlestick!' he retorted, tapping the ground with the tip of his boot.' And so you are a Yankee? I heard there was a lot of them here.'

"'Yes, I'm a Yankee,' I replied; 'a genuine down-easter and proud of it too, and who, are you?'

"'I? Why, I am Neil McPherson, an Eton boy, and my father is the Hon. John McPherson, and my mother is Lady Jane McPherson,' he replied, in a tone intended to annihilate me wholly.

"But I stood my ground, and said:

"'Oh, you are Neil McPherson, are you? and your father is an honorable, and your mother a lady? Well, I am Grey Jerrold, of Boston, and my father is an honorable, and my mother is a lady, too!"

"'Now, reely, you make me larf,' he cried. 'Your father may be an honorable—I believe you have such things—but your mother is not a lady; there are no ladies in America—born ladies, such as we have in the United Kingdom. And pray what have you Yankees done, except to make money, that you should all be so infernally proud of your country and that rag?' pointing to the flag.

"By this time my blood was up, and I squared up to him, saying:

"'What have we done? We have whipped Johnny Bull just as I am going to thrash you under that very flag which you were pleased to designate a rag.'

"He saw I meant business, and bucked off, saying:

"'Oh, but you carn't. I'm the son of Lady Jane McPherson, you know, and you carn't touch me.'

"'We'll see if I carn't,' I answered, and then I pitched in and thrashed him till he cried for quarter, and I let him go, threatening all sorts of vengeance upon me, the worst of which was that he would tell his mother and have me arrested for assault and battery.

"That was my introduction to Neil McPherson, and I am ashamed of it now, for I came to like him very much."

During the recital Miss McPherson had laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks, a thing very unusual to her, while neither Hannah nor Lucy could repress a smile at Grey's earnestness, but Mr. Jerrold looked very grave, and his wife annoyed and displeased.

"I am glad to hear you acknowledge that you are ashamed," Mr. Jerrold said; "for I was very *much* ashamed that a son of mine should so far forget himself as to fight a stranger whom he had never seen before. But, in justice to you, I must add what you have omitted, which is that you went and apologized to the boy for the affront."

"Did you?" Miss McPherson said, turning to Grey, who replied:

"Yes; and I must say that he received my rather bungling apology better than I supposed he would.

"'All right,' he said, offering me his hand; 'I dare say I was a cad to say what I did of your flag, but you needn't have hit me quite so hard. Where did you learn boxing?'

"'I never learned it,' I told him. 'It was natural to all the Yankees, who were born with clenched fists, ready to go at it.'

"He believed me, and said 'Reely, is that so?' and then he invited me to play billiards with him, and we got to be good friends, and he asked all sorts of questions about America, and said that our girls were the prettiest in the world when they were young. All the English say that, and Neil had heard it forty times, so it was not original with him. He said, however, that pretty as they were, his cousin, Bessie, was far prettier, that she was a most beautiful little creature, and as sweet as she was beautiful."

"Bessie!" Miss McPherson exclaimed, with a peculiar ring in her voice, and a manner of greater interest than she had evinced in Grey's recital of his encounter with Neil, "Do you mean the daughter of Archibald McPherson, my nephew, and did you see her? Did you see Archie?"

Grey colored, and replied;

"No, I did not, for mother wished to punish me for fighting Neil, and so when a Mrs. Smithers asked us to spend a week with the McPhersons at her home in Middlesex, I was left behind in London with some friends, but I had great fun. I went to the Tower, and the circus, and the Abbey, and the museum, and everywhere, though I was sorry not to see Bessie, who with her father and mother, was also at Captain Smithers'."

"You saw them, then," Miss McPherson continued, addressing herself to Mrs. Jerrold, "You saw Archie, and his wife and Bessie. What is Archie like? I never saw him, but I have his wife. She was the daughter of a milliner, or dressmaker, or ballet-dancer, from Wales, in the vicinity of Bangor, or Carnarvon, I believe."

"Carnarvon!" Hannah repeated quickly, while a sudden pallor came to her lips and forehead, but no one noticed it, and Geraldine hesitated a little, uncertain as to how far she dared to tell the truth and not give offense.

But she was soon relieved from all uneasiness on that score, by Miss McPherson, who, noticing her hesitancy, said:

"Don't be afraid to tell me exactly as it is, for were Archie ten times my nephew, I would rather hear the whole truth just as Grey told it of Neil. So, then, what did you think of Archie? I have an idea he is a good-natured, good for nothing, shiftless fellow, who never earned a penny in his life, and who gets his living from any one who will give it to him."

She spoke with a great asperity of manner, and then waited for Geraldine, who replied:

"You have stated the case in much stronger language than I should have done, but in the main I believe you are right. Mr. Archibald McPherson is one whom you could not possibly mistake for other than a gentleman. He is courteous, and kind, and agreeable, but very indolent, I should say, for he never stands when he can sit, and never sits when he can recline; indeed, his position is

always a lounging one, and he impressed me as if he were afraid of falling to pieces if he exerted himself."

"Just so, that is what I thought," Miss Betsey said, emphatically. "He takes it from his father, rather than his mother. She, I believe, had some energy and snap She was a chorus singer in some opera, and I did not like the match, though I now believe she was too good for Hugh. And now for Archie's wife, Daisy they call her. What of her?"

Mrs. Jerrold evidently had no scruples about freeing her mind with regard to Daisy McPherson, and she answered, promptly:

"I did not like her at all, neither did Lady Jane, and I tried my best to keep aloof from her, but could not; she is pushing and aggressive and sweetly unconscious that she is not wanted. And yet she is exceedingly pretty, with that innocent kind of face and childish, appealing way which women detest, but which takes with the men," and Mrs. Geraldine glanced sharply at her husband, who was just then very busy with his pudding, and pretended not to hear her, while she went on: "She has some accomplishments, speaks French and German, I believe, perfectly, sings simple ballads tolerably well, but rolls her eyes frightfully, and is so conscious of herself that she disgusts you. I should call her a regular Becky Sharp, always managing to get the best of everything, and, as she told me herself, always having on her list two or three invitations for as many weeks, to as many different places."

"But how does she do it?" Miss Betsey asked, and Mrs. Jerrold replied:

"I hardly know, nor do the ladies themselves. Sometimes, as in the case of Mrs. Smithers, the invitation is genuine and sincere, but oftener it is a mere form at which Daisy jumps at once, thanking the lady sweetly, and either asking her to fix a time, or more frequently fixing it herself to suit her own convenience. She has a most wonderful talent, too, forgetting presents of clothes and jewelry for herself and Bessie, and that is the way they live, for they have no means, or, at least, very little, except what she manages to get from the men by philopoenas, or bets, or games at cards and chess, where they allow her to win, because she almost begs them to let her do so. She even got five pounds from my husband on a wager, which he did not at first think in earnest."

And again the black eyes flashed at Button, who now looked up from the orange he was peeling and said laughingly:

"Yes, Daisy did me out of twenty-five dollars in the neatest possible manner, and would have fleeced me out of twenty-five more if I had not been on my guard against her. She got twenty-five pounds out of Lord Hardy who was a guest at the Smithers', but he acted as if it were a pleasure to be cheated by so pretty a woman, and she is the prettiest woman I ever saw."

"Umph!" Miss Betsey said again, while Geraldine continued:

"Yes, she is pretty, with a pink and white complexion, blue eyes and golden hair, which curls naturally, and which she still wears hanging down her back so as to show it to good advantage, and she a woman of thirty."

"No, Geraldine, you are mistaken," Mr. Jerrold said, quickly. "You forget that she was married at seventeen, and Bessie is only eight; so, at the most, Daisy cannot be more than twenty-six."

"I am glad you know her age so well," Mrs. Geraldine retorted, "I think twenty-six too old to wear one's hair streaming down the back. We were all disgusted, and especially Lady Jane, whose room was just across the hall, directly opposite hers. She told me herself that she would never have accepted Mrs. Smithers' invitation had she known that adventuress was to be there. And yet she was very kind to little Bessie. Indeed, no one could look at that child and not love her at once, and pity her, too, for the influence with which she was surrounded."

"Yes, Bessie—tell me of her," and Miss McPherson leaned forward eagerly. "They pretend she was named for me. Then why not call her Betsey, if that is her name?"

"Would you call a child Betsey?" Hannah asked, joining for the first time in the conversation.

"No, of course not. I think it horrid, but if I was christened Betsey, no power on earth could turn me into a Bessie; but go on and tell me about her," and she turned to Mrs. Geraldine, who continued:

"She has her mother's wonderful beauty, with all its refinement of her father, and such a sweet expression that you feel like kissing her. Her eyes, like her mother's, are blue, but so clear and dark that at times they seemed almost black, especially when there came into them as there often did, a troubled look, when Daisy was relating some of her adventures, which we knew could not be true. At such times, it was curious to watch the child as she listened with her great wide-open eyes and flushed cheeks, while her breath came in short gasps, as if she were longing to contradict her mother, and this she sometimes did.

"'Mamma, mamma, please,' she would say. 'Haven't you forgotten? Wasn't it this way?' but a look would silence her, and there would settle upon her face and about her mouth that patient, sorrowful expression pitiful to see in one so young."

"And her father, was he fond of her?" Miss McPherson asked, and Mrs. Jerrold replied:

"Yes, very, and she of him. She seemed to recognize the difference between him and her mother,

and kept by him most of the time. It was a very pretty sight to see her with her arms around his neck and her bright head leaning on his arm, while she looked up at him so lovingly and sympathizingly, too, as they watched the maneuvers of her mother. Once I heard her say to him, when Daisy was flirting more than usual and attracting all eyes to her, 'I shall never do like that; but mamma is very pretty, isn't she?'

"'Yes, darling, very pretty,' he answered, and then they kissed each other very quietly. I wish you could see Bessie."

It was not often that Geraldine praised anything or anybody as she praised this little English girl who had made a strong impression upon her, and of whom she might have said more if Miss McPherson had not rejoined:

"I did see her once, and her mother, too. I was home three years ago, you know, and I went to Aberystwyth in Wales, where I heard Archie was staying, but I did not make myself known to him, I was so disgusted with what I heard of his wife's conduct, which he allowed without a word of protest. But I was anxious to see the child, and one morning I sat on a bench on the Marine Terrace watching a group of children playing near me. I was almost sure that the one with the blue eyes and bright hair was Archie's and so I called aloud, 'Betsey McPherson, are you there?'

"Instantly she came to me, and folding her hands in my lap, looked up at me with her wondering eyes and said:

"'I am Bessie McPherson, not Betsey.'

"'Weren't you christened Betsey?' I asked, and she replied:

"'Yes, but they never call me that. It's a horrid name, mamma says.'

"'Then why did she give it to you?' I said, and she answered with the utmost gravity:

"'For some old auntie in America who has money; but she never sent me a thing, nor answered papa's letter. I think she is mean, don't you?'

"I did not tell her what I thought of the old auntie, though I could not repress a smile at her frankness, which pleased me more than prevarication would have done.

"'Where is your papa?' I asked, and she replied:

"'At the Queen's Hotel, but it is awful expensive there, and papa says we can't afford it much longer. But mamma says we must stay till she finds some place to visit. There she is now, and that is Lord Hardy with her; they are going over to the old ruins,' and she pointed to a young woman in the distance, bedizened out in white muslin and blue ribbons, with her yellow hair hanging down her back, and her big straw hat in her hand instead of on her head; and she was talking and laughing and coquetting with a short, spindle-legged chap, not much taller than herself, and looking with his light curly hair and mustache like a poodle-dog.

"'Who did you say he was?' I asked, and the child answered me:

"'Lord Hardy, mamma's friend. He is very rich and very nice. He gives me lots of things, and sometimes buys us all first class tickets, and then it is so grand. I don't like to go second-class, but, you see, papa is very poor.'

"'How, then, can he afford to stop at expensive hotels?' I asked, and she said, while a shadow came over her face:

"'We couldn't if we didn't have one small room on the top floor, where I sleep on the lounge. I never go to *table d'hote* but stay in my room and eat whatever mamma can slip into her pocket without the waiters seeing her. Sometimes it is not much, and then I am so hungry; but mamma will get us an invitation to visit somebody soon, and then I can eat all I want.'"

The guests had listened very attentively to this recital, and none more so than Grey, who leaned eagerly forward, with quivering lips and moistened eyes, as he exclaimed:

"Poor little girl, how I wish she had some of my dinner! Why didn't you bring her home with you, away from her wicked mother?"

Miss McPherson did not reply, for there dawned upon her suddenly a fear lest she had talked too much, and her manner changed at once, while she sank into an abstracted mood, and her eyes had in them a far-off look, as if she were seeing the child who came to her upon the sands of Aberystwyth and looked into her face with eyes she had never been able to forget, and which she could now see so plainly, though the little girl was thousands of miles away.

Dinner being over Hannah said it was time for her to go home, and Lucy accordingly ordered the sleigh to be brought to the door.

"You will come to-morrow as early as possible," Hannah said to her brother, who replied:

"Yes, immediately after breakfast, for I must go back to Boston on the afternoon train, I have an engagement for Saturday."

"So soon?" Hannah said, in a tone of disappointment: "I hoped you would stay longer; father will be so sorry; he has anticipated your visit so much."

"It is impossible. I have promised for Saturday, and must keep the appointment," and Burton Jerrold leisurely scraped and trimmed his thumb nail, but did not explain that the appointment he must keep was with the members of his club, who gave a dinner on Saturday.

He knew very well that he could remain in Allington until Saturday afternoon and then reach home in time for the dinner; but the place was almost as distasteful to him as to his wife, and he gladly seized upon any pretext to shorten his stay as much as possible.

"Shall I tell father that you will come with Burton to-morrow?" Hannah asked her sister, who instantly assumed that air of invalidism which she found so convenient when anything disagreeable was suggested for her to do.

Drawing her shawl more closely about her, and glancing with a little shiver at the window, she replied:

"N-no, I hardly think I shall go out to-morrow, it will be so cold, and probably stormy; but you may expect me for a little while on Saturday, if the day is fine."

"But *I* shall come and stay till Monday, and I hope you have a lot of mince pies baked up. Last Thanksgiving we were in Paris, and had pea soup, and brains, and eels, and stewed celery for dinner," Grey said, as he kissed his aunt and bade her good-by.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE DINNER.

The carriage which took Hannah home also took Miss McPherson to the door of her dwelling, a large, old-fashioned New England house, with a wide hall through the center, and a square room on either side; one the drawing-room or parlor in which the massive furniture had not been changed during the twenty years and more that Miss Betsey had lived there; the other the living room where the lady sat, and ate, and received her friends and where now a bright fire was burning in the Franklin stove, and the kettle was singing upon the hob, while a little round Swiss table was standing on the Persian rug before the fire, and on it the delicate cup and saucer, and sugar bowl, and creamer, which Miss McPherson had herself bought at Sevres years ago, when the life she looked forward to was very different from what had actually come to her. Possibly the memory of the day when she walked through those brilliant rooms at Sevres, and bought her costly wares, softened a little her somewhat harsh, uncompromising nature, for there was a very womanly expression on her usually severe face as she sipped her favorite oolong, and gazed dreamily into the fire, where she seemed to see again the sweet face of the child who had talked to her on the shores of Cardigan Bay, and whose innocent prattle had by turns amused, and interested, and enraged her. And, as she gazed she thought:

"Yes, Grey was right. Why didn't I take the little thing in my arms and bring her home with me? To think of her being hungry, when there is enough wasted in this house every day to feed her! And why did I so far forget myself as to talk as I did to-day—I, who am usually so silent with regard to my affairs! Why need I have told them that Archie's wife was a trollop. I suppose the venom is still rankling in me for the name she called me, 'Old Sour Krout!'" and Miss Betsey smiled grimly as she remembered all, the child upon the terrace had said to her that summer morning three years ago, "She is truthful, at all events," she continued, "and I like that, and wish I had her here. She would be a comfort to me, now that I am old, and the house has no young life in it, except my cats. There's the bedroom at the end of the hall, opening from my room. She could have that, and I should be so happy fitting it up for her. I'd trim it with blue, and have hangings at the bed, and—"

Here she stopped, seized with a sudden inspiration, and summoning the housemaid, Flora, to her, she said:

"Remove the tea things and bring my writing-desk."

Flora obeyed, and her mistress was soon deep in the construction of a letter to Archibald McPherson, to whom she made the proposition that he should bring his daughter Betsey to her, or if he did not care to cross the ocean himself, that he place her under the charge of some reliable person who was coming to America and who would see her safely to Allington, or, that failing, she did not know but she would come herself for the child, so anxious was she to have her.

> "I shall not try to conceal from you that I have seen her. You know that by the result. I did see her on the terrace, and saw your wife, too, and I liked the child, and want her for my own, to train as I please and to bring up to some useful occupation, so that, if necessary, she can earn her own living. There has been too much false pride in our family on account of birth and blood. The idea that because you are born a gentleman or lady you must not work is absurd. Would it not be more honorable to sweep the streets, or scour knives and pare potatoes, than to sponge one's living out of strangers who despise you in then hearts even when inviting you to their houses? We have men, and women too, in America who do not

work but get their living from others, and we call them tramps, and have them arrested as vagrants. But that is neither here nor there. I want you to give little Betsey to me, and she, at least, will never regret it. But don't let me hope of a fortune influence you, for my will was made years ago, and not a McPherson is remembered in it. Still, if Betsey pleases me, I may add a codicil and give her a few thousands, but don't count upon it, or my death either. We are a long-lived race, and I am perfectly strong and well; so, if you let me have her, do it because you think it will be better for her, morally and spiritually, to be removed from the poisonous atmosphere which surrounds her. I liked her face; I liked her voice; I liked her frankness. I shall like her; so send her, and I will bear the expense; or write and say you can't, and that will close the book.

"Your aunt, Miss BETSEY McPHERSON. Allington, Mass.

"P.S. I shall direct this to the old home in Wales, though I have no idea you are there, as I hear your wife prefers to be traveling."

The letter finished and directed, Miss Betsey sat a long time gazing dreamily into the fire and thinking of the past, the present, and the possible future, when a bright-haired child might be sitting there by her side and making her life less lonely and aimless than it was now.

Meanwhile the party at Grey's Park had gathered around the fire in the drawing-room, and Geraldine was repeating to her sister the particulars of her presentation to the queen, shivering occasionally as she heard the sleet and snow beating against the window, for with the going down of the sun the storm had commenced again with redoubled fury, and the wind howled dismally as it swept past the corners of the house, bearing with it blinding sheets of snow and rain, and sounding some times like human sobbing as it died away in the distance.

"Is there some one crying outside, or is it the wind?" Mr. Jerrold asked, as the sobbing seemed like a wail of anguish, while there crept over him one of those indefinable presentiments which we have all felt at times and could not explain; a presentiment in his case of coming evil, whose shadow was already upon him.

"It is the wind," Grey said. "What an awful storm for Thanksgiving night!" and rising, he walked to the window just as outside there was the sound of a fast-coming vehicle, which stopped at the side piazza.

A few moments later the door of the drawing-room opened, and a servant appeared with a note, which she handed to Mr. Jerrold, saying:

"Sam Powley brought this from your sister. He says your father is very bad."

Mr. Jerrold was not greatly surprised. It seemed to him he had expected this, for the sobbing of the wind had sounded to him like his father's voice calling to him in the storm. Taking the note from the girl, he tore it open and read:

"DEAR BROTHER: On my return home I found our father much worse, indeed, I have never seen him so bad, and he insists upon your coming to him to-night, so I have sent Sam for you, with instructions to call on his return for our clergyman, Mr. Sanford, as he wishes particularly to see him. Come at once, and *come alone*."

"HANNAH."

The words "come alone" were underscored, and Burton felt intuitively that the secret he had long suspected and which had shadowed his father's life, was at last coming to him unsought. He was sure of it, and knew why Hannah had written "come alone." It meant that Grey must not come with him, and when the boy who had stood beside him and read the note with him, exclaimed, "Grandpa is worse; he is going to die; let us go at once," he said, very decidedly:

"No, my son, not to-night. To-morrow you shall go and stay all day, but not to-night, in this storm."

Very unwillingly Grey yielded, and saw his father depart without him.

"How is my father? How does he seem?" Mr. Jerrold asked of the boy Sam, who replied:

"I don't know; I have not seen him. He would not even let me in this afternoon when Miss Hannah was gone. He locked the door, and I heard him working at something on the floor by his bed, as if trying to tear up the plank. He was there when Miss Hannah came home and found him. I guess he is pretty crazy. But here we are at the minister's, I was to stop for him, you know. You will have to hold the horse. I sha'n't be long," and reining up to the gate of the rectory Sam plunged into the snow, and wading to the door, gave a tremendous peal upon the brass knocker.

The Rev. Mr. Sanford, who had for many years been rector of the little church in Allington, was taking his evening tea with his better-half, Mrs. Martha Sanford, a little, plump, red-faced woman, with light gray eyes and yellow hair, who ruled her husband with a rod of iron, and would have ruled his parish if they had not rebelled against her. With all her faults, however, she took excellent care of her lord and master, and looked after his health as carefully as she did after his household interests; and on this particular night, because he had complained of a slight hoarseness to which he was subject, she had at once enveloped his throat with folds of red flannel, under which was a slice of salt pork, her favorite remedy for all troubles of a bronchial

nature. And, in his warmly wadded dressing-gown and padded slippers, the reverend man sat enjoying his tea and crisp slices of toast, which Mrs. Martha prepared for him herself, when the sound of the brass knocker startled them both, and made Mrs. Martha start so suddenly that the slice of bread she was toasting dropped from the fork upon the hot coals, where it was soon reduced to ashes.

"Who can be pounding like that on such a night as this?" she asked, as she hastened to open the hall-door, which admitted such a gust of wind that she came near shutting it in Sam's face.

But the boy managed to crowd into the hall, and shaking a whole snow-bank of snow from his cap and coat, he began:

"If you please, ma'am, old Mr. Jerrold is very bad indeed, and Miss Hannah wants the minister to come right off. Mr. Burton Jerrold is out in the sleigh, waiting for him, and says he must hurry."

"Mr. Sanford go out such a night as this! It's impossible! He is half sick now. What does old Mr. Jerrold want?" Mrs. Sanford said, sharply; and Sam replied, as he shook down another mass of snow upon the carpet:

"Don't know; the Sacrament, mebby, as I guess he's going to die," and the boy advanced a step or two into the warmly lighted room, where the rector, who had risen to his feet, was beginning to divest himself of his dressing-gown.

"Stay back; you have brought snow enough into the hall without spoiling the parlor carpet, too," Mrs. Martha said, angrily; then, going to her husband, whose purpose she divined, she continued; "Charles, are you crazy, to think of going out in this storm?"

"But, my dear," the rector began, meekly, "if the poor old man is dying—and Hannah would never have sent in such a storm unless she thought so—if he is dying and desires the comfort of the communion, shall I refuse it to him because of a little inconvenience to myself? No, no; I have not so learned Christ. Please bring me my coat, Martha, and my boots, and the little communion service."

"A pretty time of day to think of that, just as the candle is burned to the snuff," Mrs. Martha retorted. "Here for years you have exhorted and entreated him to be confirmed, and he has resisted all your appeals with the excuse that for him to go to the Lord's table would be a mortal sin; and now, just at the last, in such a storm, he sends for you. I consider it an insult to his Creator and to you, too."

"Will you please bring my coat and boots and things? I can never quite find them myself," was all the rector said, and knowing that further opposition was useless, Mrs. Martha went in quest of the boots and overshoes, and coat and overcoat and muffler, and fur cap and mittens, and heavy shawl, in which she enveloped her husband, lamenting that there was not ready a hot soap-stone for his feet, which were sure to suffer.

But the little man did not need the soap-stone; he had the warmest, kindest, most unselfish heart that ever beat in a human breast, and never thought of the storm, as he waded through the deep snow and took his seat beside Burton Jerrold in the sleigh, which Sam drove rapidly toward the farm-house in the pasture.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HORROR AT THE FARM-HOUSE.

When Hannah reached home the gray November afternoon was already merging into the dark night, which was made still darker by the violence of the increasing storm, and never had Hannah's home seemed so desolate and dreary as it did when the sleigh turned from the highway into the cross-road which lead to it, and she saw through the gathering gloom the low, snow-covered roof and the windows from which no welcoming light was shining. It had been so bright, and cheerful, and warm in the drawing-room at Grey's Park, and here all was cold, and cheerless, and dark, as she went into the house with a vague presentiment of the horror awaiting her.

Entering through the wood-shed she stumbled upon Sam, who was sitting on a pile of wood, and who said to her:

"I guess your father is mighty bad. I didn't go near him till I heard him groaning and praying, and taking on so, that I opened the door and asked if he wanted anything. Then he jumped out of bed and told me to be gone, spying on him, and he locked the door on me, and I heard him as if he was under the bed trying to tear up the floor, and I ran out here, for I was afraid."

"Under the bed!" Hannah repeated, while a cold sweat oozed from every pore. "He must be crazy! But do not come with me to his room; it would make him worse. I can manage him alone; but please make a fire in the summer kitchen and stay there this evening. Father seems to know when any one is in the next room and it troubles him."

"Yes-m," the boy replied, thinking it a very strange freak that the old man would allow no one

with him except his daughter.

But Sam was neither quick nor suspicious, and glad of any change from the cold wood-shed, he started to kindle a fire in the room adjoining, which in summer was used for a kitchen, while Hannah, lighting a candle, hastened to the door of her father's room, which she found locked, while from within she heard labored breathing, and a sound like tugging at a board which evidently offered resistance.

"Father," she cried, in terror, "let me in! It is I, Hannah, and Sam is in the wood-shed."

After a moment the key was turned and Hannah stepped inside, locking the door after her.

In the middle of the floor her father stood, with his long white hair falling around his corpse-like face and his eyes bright with the excitement of delirium. The bed was moved toward the center of the room and in the farthest corner a board of the floor had been partially removed.

"What are you doing?" Hannah asked, advancing quickly to her father.

"Oh, Hannah," the old man said, whimperingly; "I did so want to be sure that it was there. I dreamed it was gone, that it had never been there, and it was so real I wanted to see. I thought I'd get done before you came, but it was so hard. I cannot get the boards up. But you can do it; go down on your knees and take the floor up just this once. I'll never ask it again. It was thirty-one years ago to-night, and when it is thirty-two I shall be dead. Go down, Hannah, I want to know if it is there still, the horror I have slept over every night for thirty-one long years."

"No, father," Hannah answered, firmly. "Ask me anything but that. Be satisfied that it *is* there. Who should take it away, when no one knows but ourselves? Get into bed, father; you are shivering with cold."

Like a conquered child the old man obeyed her and crept into bed, while she drew the blankets around him, and then stooping down in the dark corner she drove the loosened board to its place, shuddering as she did so and experiencing a feeling of terror such as she had not felt before in years. Pushing the bed back to its usual position, she sat down by her father and tried to quiet him, for he was strangely restless, and talked of, things which made the blood curdle in her veins.

"Hark!" he exclaimed, as a gust of wind went shrieking past the window. "What was that, Hannah, that sound like a human cry?"

"It was only the wind. A wild storm is sweeping over the hills to-night," she said, as she drew a little nearer to him and took his hand in hers as if to give herself courage, for she, too, fancied there was in the wailing wind the echo of a cry she never could forget.

"Yes," the old man replied, "just such a storm as shook the house thirty-one years ago to-night, and above it all I hear Rover's howl and the awful word you shouted aloud and which the winds caught up and carried everywhere so that the world is full of it. Do you remember it, Hannah!"

Did she remember it. Ask rather could she ever forget the awful word which it seemed to her was written on the very walls and doors of the house, and on her forehead where all the world might see it!

Ask her if she remembered, when even now, after the lapse of thirty-one years, she could hear so distinctly the shriek of despair, which, as her father had said, the winds had caught up and carried over the hills and far away, where it was still repeating itself over and over again, and would go on forever until reparation were made, if that were possible now.

It was always ringing in her ears, just as the stains were on her hands, where she felt them as she clasped her long thin fingers convulsively and wondered if she were going mad.

Her father was very quiet now; he was falling asleep, and sinking on her knees beside the bed, the wretched woman moaned piteously:

"Oh, my Father in heaven, how long must I bear this burden which to-night presses so heavily? Help me, help me, for I am so weak and sad. Thou knowest I was innocent, and I have tried so hard to do right. If I have failed—if I ought to have spoken in spite of the vow, forgive me, for if my sin is great, great, too, has been my punishment.

"I cannot stay here," she thought, as she rose from her knees. "The room is full of phantoms which gibber at me from the dark corners, and shout the word in my ears as I shouted it that awful night when Rover kept me company. Poor old Rover, lying under the snow. If he were only here I should not be quite so desolate. I believe that for the first time in my life I am a coward," and shaking with cold, or fear, or both, Hannah left her father's room and went into the kitchen, where Sam was stuffing the stove with wood.

The moment she appeared, however, he withdrew the stick he was crowding in, and began to close some of the draughts. But she said to him:

"Don't do that, Sam. Let it burn; put on more. I am very cold. And light a candle, Sam; three candles! It is so dark here, and the wind howls so. Does it say anything to you, Sam? Any word, I mean?"

Sam had no idea what she meant, nor, indeed, did he think if she meant any thing, for his wits came slowly. People called him stupid, and this was his greatest recommendation to Hannah, who

could not have had a bright, quick-seeing boy in her household.

Sam suited her, and his answer to her question was characteristic of him.

"No, I don't hear nothin' it says, only it screams like a panther in a fit," and Sam deliberately lighted the three candles, and placed them on the table, while Hannah drew a hard wooden chair to the stove, and putting her feet upon the hearth, clasped her hands around her knees, and sat there till she was thoroughly warm, and her nerves were quieted.

She was not afraid now, and taking one of the candles she went to her father's room and found him sleeping, with a calm, peaceful expression on his face, and another look, too, which made her heart stand still a moment, for she felt intuitively that the black shadow of death had crept into the room.

Suddenly he awoke, and seeing her standing by him smiled lovingly upon her, and said:

"Is that you, Hannah? faithful always, but your work is almost done, I am going home very soon to the dear Saviour. I am sure of it. I know it. My sins are washed away in His blood; even the stains upon my hands, which are clean and white now as were Grey's the day he caught and held me so fast. May God bless the boy and make him a good man, and a comfort to you, my child, who have been so much to me, the best, most unselfish of daughters. And something tells me you will be happy when I am gone. I hope so, I pray so; and now, Hannah, send for Burton. I shall not be here in the morning, and I must see him once more, and send for Mr. Sanford, too. I must see him before I die. Burton and the minister, no one else; not even the boy Grey; he must not come, for, Hannah, I am going to tell!"

"What, father?" Hannah gasped, and he replied:

"I am going at last to confess the whole to my son and the clergyman. I must do it. I shall die easier."

"But, father," Hannah cried, in alarm, "reflect a moment. What possible good can it do to tell Mr. Sanford, or even Burton? It would only give him unnecessary pain. You have kept it so long, why not let the grave bury your secret?"

"Because I cannot," the old man answered, "I must tell Burton. I have always intended to do it at the last, so that he might know what you have borne. Perhaps he may be kinder, gentler with you. Burton stands well with men; high in the world, but he is not like you; he would never have done what you have, and I want him to know that there is a sacrifice which ennobles one more than all the honors of the world, and I want Mr. Sanford to know why I could not go forward and ratify my baptismal vows, as he has so often urged me to do, thinking me obstinate in my refusal; and I wish to hear him say that he believes I am forgiven; that Christ will receive me, even me, a—Oh, Hannah, I can not say that word. I cannot give myself that name. I never have, you know. It was so sudden, so without forethought, and, could I live my life over again, I think I should tell at once, and not bury the secret as I did. But hurry, Hannah. Send Sam. I have but a few hours to live. Tell them to come quickly, Burton and the minister, not Grey."

So Hannah wrote the note to her brother, and gave it to Sam, who, in a most unwilling frame of mind, harnessed the horse, and started in the storm for Grey's Park.

Meanwhile, in anticipation of the coming of the guests, Hannah put her father's room a little more to rights, lighted another candle, put more wood in the stove, and then sat down to wait the result, with a heart which it seemed to her had ceased to beat, so pulseless and dead it lay in her bosom. She had no fear of anything personally adverse to herself or her father arising from the telling of the secret kept so many years. It would be safe with Mr. Sanford, while her proud brother would die a thousand deaths sooner than reveal it; but, oh, how cruelly he would be hurt, and how he would shrink from the story, and blame her that she allowed it to be told, especially to the clergyman—and she might perhaps prevent that yet. So she made another effort, but her father was determined.

"I must, I must; I shall die easier, and he will never tell. We have known him so long. Twenty-five years he has been here, and he took to us from the first. Do you remember how often he used to come and read to you on the bench under the apple tree?"

"Yes, father," Hannah answered, with a gasp, and he went on:

"Seeing you two together so much, I used to think he had a liking for you, and you for him. Did you, Hannah? Were you and the minister ever engaged?"

"No, father, never," Hannah replied, as she pressed her hands tightly together, while two great burning tears rolled down her cheeks.

"And yet you were a comely enough lass then," her father rejoined, as if bent on tormenting her. "You had lost your bright color to be sure, but there was something very winsome in your face and eyes, and manner; and he might better have married you than the sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued, fussy Martha Craig, who, like the Martha of old, is troubled about many things, and leads the minister a stirred up kind of life."

"Mrs. Sanford is a model housekeeper, and takes good care of her husband," Hannah said, softly; and then, as she heard the sound of voices outside, she arose quickly, and went to meet her brother, and the man who, her father had said, would better have married her than the "sharp-

eyed, sharp-tongued Martha."

CHAPTER X.

THE INTERVIEW.

The rector was full of interest and concern as he stepped into the room, and when Hannah apologized for sending for him on such a night, he answered promptly:

"Not at all, not at all. If I can be of any comfort to you or your father, I should be very sorry not to come. How is he?"

Hannah did not answer him, so intent was she upon studying her brother's face, which was anything but sympathetic, as he shook the snow from his overcoat and warmed his hands by the stove. The Hon. Burton Jerrold liked his comfort and ease, and as he was far from easy or comfortable, he made his sister feel it by his manner, if not by his words.

"Is father so much worse that you must send for us in this storm?" he asked, and Hannah replied:

"Yes, he is very bad. He says he is going to die, and I believe it. He will not last the night out, and of course I must send for you, and he insisted that Mr. Sanford should come too."

"Yes, certainly; I am glad he did," the clergyman rejoined, thrusting his hands into his coat-pocket. "He wishes the communion, I dare say," and he placed reverently upon the table the little silver service.

Hannah's face flushed as she replied;

"He did not mention that, I do not suppose he thinks he can receive it. What he wishes is to see you, to talk to you, to—to—"

She hesitated, her brother's countenance was so forbidding, then added, quickly:

"'He wishes to tell you something which he has kept for years," and her voice sank to a whisper as she glanced again at her brother.

It was coming, then, the thing he had suspected so long, and which he never had wished to learn, and Burton Jerrold breathed hard as he said:

"But surely, Hannah, if there are family secrets to be told, I am the one to hear them, and not a stranger. Mr. Sanford can have no interest in our affairs."

"I could not help it, brother," Hannah said, mildly. "I tried to dissuade him, but he would not listen, and Mr. Sanford is not like a stranger to us."

She turned her dark eyes full of tears upon the clergyman, who gave her back an answering glance which her brother did not observe, and would not have comprehended if he had.

"Yes, Hannah," Mr. Sanford said, "you can trust me; be the secret one of life or death, it is safe with me as with you." And he gave her his hand by way of affirmation.

And Hannah took the offered hand and held fast to it as a drowning man holds to a straw, while the tears ran like rain down her pale face.

"Hannah! Burton! Are you there, and the minister? There is no time to lose," came feebly from the sick-room, and Hannah said:

"He is calling us; go to him, please. I will join you in a minute."

Then she hurried to the summer kitchen, where she found Sam, who thought his work done, and was removing his boots preparatory to going to bed.

"Wait, Sam," she said. "I am sorry, for I know you are tired and sleepy, but you must sit up a while longer, and take Mr. Sanford home. I will bring you an easy-chair in which you can sleep till I want you."

Thus speaking, she brought a large Boston rocker and a pillow for the tired boy, who, she knew, would soon be fast asleep, with no suspicion of what was about to transpire in the sick-room to which she next repaired, closing the door behind her. Her father had both Burton's hands in his, and was crying like a little child.

"Oh, my son, my son," he said, "if I could undo the past, I should not have to turn my eyes from my own child in shame, and that I have done ever since you were a boy, and came from Boston to see us. How old was he, Hannah? How old was Burton when the terrible thing happened?"

"'Twelve," Hannah answered, and her father went wandering on like one out of his mind, talking of Burton when he was a boy—of his dead wife—of Hannah, who had suffered so long, and of the storm, which he said was like the one which swept the New England hills thirty-one years ago that very night, when the snow fell so deep that no one came near the place till Monday.

"Three whole days," he said. "Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and I had time to hide the dark deed so securely that it has never been suspected."

Burton started quickly, and glanced at his sister with a look of amazed inquiry. He had thought of forgery, and theft, and embezzlement, but never of what his father's words might imply, and the cold sweat began to froze from the palms of his hands while a kind of nightmare crept over him, and kept him rooted to the spot as his father went on:

"But, oh! what agony of remorse I have endured! The tortures of the lost are not more intense than my sufferings have been! Think of my meeting people day after day with the mark of Cain upon my brow, burning there so hotly that it seemed as if you must all see it, and know my guilt. How could I join myself to God's people with this sin unconfessed? I could not, and yet, I feel in my heart that I am forgiven, washed in His blood as white as snow, so that there is rest for me in Paradise. Still, I must confess; I must tell you, my son, and you, my minister; but no one else—not Grey—no, no, not the boy Grey, who loves me so much. His life must not be shadowed with disgrace. He must not hate me in my coffin. Oh, Grey! Grey! May God bless the boy and give him every needful happiness, and make him so good and noble that his life will blot out the stain upon our name.

"Father!" Burton cried, in a choking voice; "for pity's sake, have done, and tell me what you mean! The suspense is terrible."

"I mean," and the old man spoke clearly and distinctly—"I mean that, thirty-one years ago to-night, in the heat of passion, I killed a man in the kitchen yonder, and buried him under this floor, under my bed, and I have slept over his grave ever since!"

"A murderer!" dropped from Burton Jerrold's pale lips; and "A murderer!" was echoed in the next room by lips far whiter than Burton Jerrold's, and which quivered with mortal pain as the boy Grey started from his stooping position over the stove and felt that he was dying.

For Grey was there, and had been for the last few minutes, and had heard the secret which he was not to know.

After his father left Grey's Park, he had sat a few minutes with his mother and aunt, and then, complaining of a headache, had asked to be excused, and gone to his room, which was at the head of some stairs leading down into a narrow hall and out into the side yard. When the boy entered his chamber, he had no intention of going to the farm-house, but as he thought of his grandfather dying, and that to-morrow might perhaps be too late to see him alive, the wish to go there grew stronger and stronger, until it became an impulse which he could not resist.

"Something tells me I must go," he said; "that it is needful for me to be there, and go I shall. I am not afraid of the snow. It cannot be more than a foot on the level. I have waded through more banks than that, and it is only a mile from here across the fields and through the woods. I shall not tell any one, but I am going."

And in a few moments Grey had descended the stairs, and unlocking the outer door, locked it again, and putting the key in his pocket, started for the farm-house, striking into a cross-road which led across the fields, and which in summer he used often to take in preference to the highway. It was a little nearer, and led through grassy lanes, and cool pinewoods, and pleasant pasture lands, across a stream where he had once built a dam, and had a little water-wheel which his grandfather made for him.

The way, however, was anything but pleasant now, with the cold, dark sky, the tall, leafless trees, and the drifting snow, which he found was more than a foot deep on the level, except in the woods, where it had not fallen so thickly. But Grey was young and fearless, and he went on rapidly, until he reached the knoll from which the house was visible not far away. It had ceased snowing by this time, and the moon, which was nearly at its full, was struggling to show itself through a rift in the gray clouds. The wind, however, was still blowing in wild gusts, and as it swept past him he, too, fancied it had in it a human sound.

"It is like Aunt Hannah's voice calling to me. I am glad I came, though I suppose father will scold," he said, as he paused a moment to rest, and then rapidly descended the knoll to the house.

Entering by the wood-shed door, which was first reached, he went into the summer kitchen, and passed on into the second kitchen, where a candle was burning dimly, and where he stopped a moment by the warm stove. No one heard him, no one knew he was there; but as he stood in the silence and darkness he heard distinctly his grandfather's voice, and this was what he heard:

"I must tell you, my son, and you, my minister; but no one else, not Grey—no, no, not, the boy Grey, who loves me so much. His life must not be shadowed with disgrace. He must not hate me in my coffin. Oh, Grey! Grey! May God bless him and give him every needful happiness, and make him so good and noble that his life will blot out the stain upon our name."

Here Grey, who stood motionless, heard his father say:

"For pity's sake tell me what you mean; the suspense is terrible."

And then came the awful response, which sounded through the silent room like the knell to all the boy's future happiness and peace of mind.

"Thirty-one years ago to-night, in the heat of passion I killed a man in the kitchen yonder, and buried him under this floor, under my bed, and I have slept on his grave ever since!"

No wonder Grey's face grew white as the face of a corpse, while his heart throbbed with unutterable pain as he whispered the word his father had said aloud.

His grandfather, whom he had thought so good, and loved so much, a murderer! He had killed a man in that very room, perhaps on the spot where the boy was standing, and Grey recoiled from the place, and looked down upon the floor, which gave no sign of the tragedy enacted there thirty-one years ago, and kept hidden ever since.

Like a flash of lightning Grey saw all the past, and understood now what had been singular in his grandfather's manner and in his Aunt Hannah's, too; for she had been privy to the deed, and had helped to keep it from the world, and to Grey this was the bitterest thought of all, the one which made him sick, and faint and dizzy, as he groped his way to the door, which he opened and closed cautiously, and then fell heavily upon his face in the snow, with all consciousness for the moment blotted out.

The chill, however, and the damp revived him almost immediately, and struggling to his feet he started on his route back to Grey's Park along the same road he had come, seeing nothing, bearing nothing but that one word, that name his father had given to his grandfather, and which he, too, had echoed. Over and over again the winds repeated it until the, woods seemed full of it, and he said to himself:

"Will it always be so? Shall I never hear anything but that again so long as I live, and I am so young, only fourteen, and I meant to be a great and honorable man, and a good one, too. And I can still be that. God knows I am not to blame. Would he hear me, I wonder, if I should ask him now to take some of this pain away which fills my heart to bursting!"

And there, on the pure white snow, in the shadow of the leafless woods, the heart-broken boy knelt down, and with clasped hands, and the great tears streaming over his upturned face, asked God to forgive him for his grandfather's sin, and take the pain away, and help him to be a good man, if he could never be great and distinguished. And God heard that prayer made to him in the wintry night, from the depths of the boyish heart, and a feeling of quiet came over Grey as he resumed his walk.

"I am not to blame," he said, "and people will not think so if they know, which they never will, for father will not tell, nor Mr. Sanford either; but I shall always know, and life will never be the same to me again."

It certainly looked forlorn and dreary enough to him by the time he reached Grey's Park, and letting himself quietly in, he crept noiselessly up to his bed, from which he did not rise until late the next morning, when his Aunt Lucy came herself to call him, and told him his grandfather was dead.

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE OLD MAN'S BEDSIDE.

When the word "murderer!" dropped from Burton Jerrold's lips, his father started as if a bullet had pierced his heart, and the hot blood surged up into his face, as he said:

"Oh, my son, my son, that you should be the first to call me by a name which even Hannah has never spoken, and she has known it all the time. She saw me do the deed; she helped me bury it. Poor Hannah!"

"You!" and Burton turned fiercely upon his sister, who stood like a block of marble and almost as colorless. "You helped. Then you were an accessory to the crime, and never spoke, never told! No wonder your hair turned white before its time!"

"Brother! brother!" Hannah cried, as she threw up her hands in an anguish of entreaty. "You do not know, you cannot guess, or you would never reproach me thus."

"But I do know that you kept silence, and that I, who thought myself so honorable and high, am branded with disgrace, am the son of a—"

"Stay!" and the dying man gathered all his remaining strength for the reproof. "You shall not call me by that name again. You shall not speak thus to your sister, the noblest woman and the most faithful daughter God ever gave to the world. I bound her by a solemn oath not to speak, even had she wished to, which she did not, for I was her father; your father, too, and I know that in some respects you are not worthy to touch the hem of her garment. Say, Mr. Sanford," and he turned to the rector, who had stood looking on, stupefied with what he heard, "did Hannah do wrong, not to bear witness against me?"

"Hannah never does wrong," the rector said, rousing himself, and going a step nearer to her he took her cold, clammy hand between his own, and held it there, while he continued: "Mr. Jerrold,

you reproach your sister for her silence, but consider what her speaking would have done for you! If you feel it so keenly when only you and I know of it, what would you have felt had the whole world been made cognizant of the fact? I do not know the circumstances of your father's crime. Probably there was great provocation, and that it was done in self-defense, and if so the gallows would not have been his punishment, though a prison might, and do you think that as the son of a felon you could have stood where you do now in the world's estimation? No; instead of reproaches, which I do not believe spring from a sense of justice, rather thank your sister who has given all the brightness of her life to shield her father from punishment and you from disgrace."

The rector spoke more severely than was his wont, for he felt a contempt for the man whose real character he now understood better than he had before; but his words had a good effect, for Burton saw the truth there was in them, and turning to his sister, who was sobbing piteously he said:

"Forgive me, Hannah, if I seemed unjust. I am so stunned and hurt that I am not myself, and do not know what I say. I am glad you kept silent; to have spoken would have been to ruin me; but why, having kept the secret so long, did you not keep it longer? Why did not father take it with him to his grave? Surely no good can come from wounding and humiliating me so cruelly."

"Perhaps not, my son," the old man answered, feebly. "For you it might have been better if I had never spoken. Possibly it is a morbid fancy, but I felt that I must confess to my minister. My conscience said so, and that I must tell you in order that you may be a comfort and help to Hannah in what she means to do."

"What does she mean to do?" Burton asked, in alarm, and his father replied:

"Make restitution in some way to the friends of the man I killed, if she can find them."

"Oh!" and Burton set his teeth firmly together as he thought what danger there might be in restitution, for that would involve confession, and that meant disgrace to the Jerrold name. "I shall prevent that if I can; it is well, after all, that I should know," he thought; then to his father he said; "Who was the man? Where are his friends? Tell me all now."

"Yes, I will; but, Hannah, look—I thought I heard some one moving in the next room, a few minutes ago," the old man said, and going to the door, Hannah glanced around the empty kitchen which bore no trace of the white-faced boy who not long before, had left it with an aching heart, and who at that moment was kneeling in the snow and asking God to forgive him for his grandfather's sin.

"There is no one there, and Sam is sleeping soundly in the room beyond," she said, as she returned to her father's side, and taking her place by him passed her arm around him and supported and reassured him, while he told the story of that awful night, a story which the author will tell in her own words rather than in those of the dying man, who introduced a great deal of matter irrelevant to the case.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORY.

Forty years or more before the night of which we write, there had come to Allington a peddler, whose home was across the sea, in Carnarvon, Wales. He was a little, cross eyed, red-haired, wiry man, with a blunt, sharp way of speaking, but was very popular with the citizens of Allington, to whom he sold such small articles as he could conveniently carry in a bundle upon his back; needles, pins, thread, pencils, matches, thimbles, cough lozengers, Brandreth's pills, handkerchiefs, ribbons, combs, and sometimes Irish laces and Balbriggans formed a part of his heterogeneous stock, which was varied from time to time to suit the season, or the wants of his customers.

Very close at a bargain, and very saving of his money, he seldom stopped at the hotel, but passed the night at the houses of his acquaintances, who frequently made no charge for his meals or his lodgings. Especially was this the case at the farm-house where the peddler, whose name was Joel Rogers, was always welcome, and where he usually staid when in Allington. Between Peter Jerrold and the peddler there was a strong friendship, and the two often sat into the small hours of the night, while the latter told marvelous tales of his wild Welsh country, which he held above all other lands, and to which, the last time he was seen in Allington, he said he was about to return.

For three days he remained in the town, selling off the most of his stock, and then bidding his friends good-by, started late on the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day for the adjoining town, where a few debts were owing him, and where he hoped to dispose of the rest of his merchandise.

As he left the village the snow began to fall heavily and this, perhaps, was why he decided to stop at the farm-house, which was not upon the highway, but nearly half a mile from it, upon a cross-road which led through Peter Jerrold's farm to the town line, and which was seldom traveled by

any one except by Peter Jerrold himself and those who came to visit him. Thus the house stood in a most lonely, secluded spot, with only the chimney and the top of the roof visible to the people of the neighborhood.

Here Peter Jerrold lived with his daughter Hannah, who was now nearly fifteen, and who had kept his house since her mother's death, which occurred when she was twelve years old.

Bright, unselfish, and very pretty, Hannah was a general favorite with the people of Allington and many were the merry-makings and frolics held at the old farm-house by her young friends. But these were suddenly brought to an end by a fearful sickness which came upon Hannah, and, which transformed her from the light-hearted, joyous girl of fifteen, into a quiet, reserved, white-faced woman, who might have passed for twenty-five, and whose hair at eighteen was beginning to turn gray. It was the fever, the people said, and Hannah permitted them to think so, though she knew that the cause lay behind the fever, and dated from the awful night when Joel Rogers came into their kitchen, and asked for shelter from the storm, which was readily granted him.

It was probably his last visit, he said, as it was doubtful if he ever returned to America, for he meant to settle down and die in Carnarvon, his old home, where his only sister, Elizabeth, was living. Then he talked of his money, which, he said, was considerable, and was mostly invested in some slate quarries in the vicinity of Carnarvon.

For a long time the two men sat before the wood fire, talking of England and Wales, eating the apples which Hannah brought them from the cellar, and drinking freely of some wine which Peter had made himself, and which he brought out in honor of his friend's last visit.

This at last began to take effect, making them loud and noisy, and inclined to contradict each other, and quarrel generally, and then, as the peddler was counting out his gold, of which he had several hundred dollars he turned suddenly to Mr. Jerrold, and said:

"By the way, you have never paid me the five dollars I loaned you when I was here last winter."

The latter affirmed that he had paid it in the spring, and that Hannah saw him do it, which was the fact. But the peddler persisted in his demand, and grew louder and more vociferous in his language, calling both Peter Jerrold and Hannah liars, and saying he would have his money if he went to law to get it.

A violent quarrel then ensued, and such epithets as liar, cheat, and swindler were freely interchanged, and then there was a simultaneous spring at each other, the chairs were overturned and they were rolling upon the floor, dealing each other fierce blows and tearing each other's hair like wild beasts. It was the peddler who struck first, but Peter, being the stronger of the two, got his antagonist under him, and with a stick of wood which was lying upon the hearth struck him upon the head, inflicting a fearful wound from which the blood flowed in torrents, staining Peter's hands and face as he pushed back his hair, and sobered him at once. But it was too late, for when Hannah, who, during the fight, had cowered in the corner with her hands over her eyes, withdrew them as the struggle ceased, and looked at the white, blood-stained face over which her father was bending, she knew the man was dead, and with a cry of horror, ran from the room out into the darkness, where shriek after shriek of "*Murder! Murder!*" rang out upon the air and was drowned by the louder scream of the terrible storm which was sweeping over the hills that Thanksgiving night.

Beside her in the snow crouched the house-dog, Rover, trembling with fear, and mingling his howling cry of terror with her more awful one of murder. The dog had been a witness of the fray, keeping close by his mistress' side, and occasionally uttering a low growl of disapproval as the blows fell thick and fast, and when at last it was over, and the dead man lay white and still, with his blood upon the floor, Rover sprang toward his master with a loud, angry bark and then fled with Hannah into the storm, where he mingled his cry with hers and added to the horror of the scene.

"Half-crazed with what he had done, and terrified lest be should be detected, Peter Jerrold's first idea was of self-preservation from the law, and the cries he had heard outside filled him with rage and fear. Staggering to his daughter's side he struck the dog a savage blow, then taking Hannah roughly by the arm and leading her into the house, he said to her, fiercely:

"Are you crazy, girl, that you yell out your father's guilt to the world? You and that brute of a dog, whom I will kill and so have him out of the way! Here, you Rover, come here!" he said to the dog, who was standing before Hannah, bristling with anger and growling at intervals, "Come here while I finish you," and he opened the door of the wood-shed where he always kept the gun he had carried in the war of 1812.

Divining his intention Hannah stepped between him and Rover, on whose head she laid her hand protectingly, while she said:

"Father, you will not touch the dog, if you value your own safety, for if you do, every man in Allington shall know what you have done, before to-morrow dawns. Isn't it enough that you have killed *him*!" and she pointed shudderingly to the inanimate form upon the floor.

For a moment Peter Jerrold regarded her with the face of a maniac; then his expression changed, and with a burst of tears and sobs he fell upon his knees at her feet, and clasping the hem of her dress abjectly in his hands, besought her to pity him, to have mercy, and save him from the gallows, for in the first frenzy of fear he felt it would be his life they would require if once his

guilt were known.

"I cannot die a felon's death. You do not want your poor father hung! Think of yourself; think of Burton; both so young, to carry such a disgrace all your lives. I did not mean to kill him; God knows I didn't. He provoked me so, he hit me first, and I struck harder than I thought, and he is dead. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do? I cannot be hung; you will not betray me. Promise me you will not!"

She had no thought of betraying him, except as she had threatened it in defense of Rover, who now stood up erect, looking first at her, and then at her father, as if curious to see how it would end.

"Father, I have no wish to see you hung," Hannah said, while her knees shook under her at the thought. "I shall not witness against you, if I can help it. But what will you do? How can you keep it a secret? People will know, when they see him, that he did not die by fair means."

To her the thought of hiding the crime had not occurred, and a shudder of horror ran through her frame when her father said:

"People need not know. He was going to Europe. Let them think he has gone, and we will bury him, you and I, where he will never be found."

"Bury him here? Where? and Hannah's teeth chattered with fright, as she thought of living all her life in a house which held a buried secret in the shape of a murdered man.

"Bury him under the floor of my room, over in the corner where the bed always stands," the father replied so calmly that Hannah looked at him wonderingly to see if he were utterly void of feeling, that he could speak so quietly of what filled her with unspeakable dread.

But he was neither callous nor unconcerned. He was merely stunned with the magnitude and suddenness of his crime, and the natural fear of its detection. The repentance, the remorse were to come afterward, and be meted out to him in such measure of bitterness as has seldom fallen to the lot of man. Regarding his daughter fixedly for a moment, he said in a hard, reckless kind of way:

"Hannah, there is no use in whimpering now. The deed is done, and cannot be undone; though, God is my witness, I would give my life in a moment for the one I have taken, if I could, and I swear to you solemnly that I wish I had been the one killed rather than the one to kill. But it was not to be so. I have slain my friend. The world would call it murder, as you did, and hang me. I cannot be hung. I must hide it, bury it, and you must help and swear on the Bible not to tell so long as I live. Will you do it? Answer, quick, and let us get to work, for I am a very coward, and hear voices in the storm as of people coming to take me. Will you help me, and will you swear?"

"Oh, father, father," Hannah cried, in an agony of entreaty; "do not ask me to help! Do not ask me to swear, though I promise not to tell, if I can avoid it. But if he is missed, if inquiry is made for him, if he is traced here, and I am questioned, am put upon my oath, I cannot tell a lie, and maybe they would not hang you when they knew the circumstances. He was very unreasonable and aggravating, and called us both liars. I can testify to that. Oh, father, consider a moment! Would it not be better to go at once, and confess the truth to some one who has influence. Captain Grey is our friend. Tell him, and ask his advice. Go, father; now, and leave him where he lies. I shall not be afraid to stay alone, knowing you are doing right. Go, father."

She was on her knees before him now, clasping his feet, and pleading piteously. But she might as well have talked to a stone.

"Give himself up to the hangman? Never!" he answered. And she was no daughter of his to desire his death, as she evidently did. She could stay there in the corner with her dog, as great a sneak as herself! He did not wish her services; he could manage alone, he said, angrily, as he turned from her and entered his room, where she heard him moving out his bed, and knew that he was taking up a portion of the floor.

Then there came over her a great blackness, and a buzzing in her head like the sound of many bees in the summer time, and she fell upon her face, unconscious of everything. How long she lay thus she did not know, but when she came to herself again there was no light in the room except that made by the dying fire upon the hearth and Rover was licking her cold face and hands, and now and then uttering a low whine as if in token of sympathy. The body was still upon the floor near her, but from her father's room there came a sound, the import of which she understood perfectly. Shivering as with a chill, she moaned:

"Oh! how can I bear it? My life will be one long, living death, and I shall always want to shriek out the dreadful thing which father says I must keep! Can I? Ought I? And could they hang my father? I do not think so. They would call it manslaughter, and pardon him, for my sake—for Burton's."

And here the poor girl groaned bitterly, as she thought of Burton, her young brother, whom she loved so much, and of whom she was so proud, and for whom she was so glad that he could live in Boston, amid all the fine sights of a city, which suited him better than the homely life at the farm-house. When, after her mother's funeral, her aunt, Mrs. Wetherby, had offered to take him home with her and bring him up as her own, Hannah had felt for a time as if she could not let him go and leave her there alone; but when she thought of all the benefit it would be to him, and saw

how much he wished it, she stifled every selfish feeling, for his sake, and saw him leave her without a sign of the pain at her heart, or the unutterable longing she had for his companionship. And now, as she thought of him, her bitterest pang came from the fact that if this deed were known, he would suffer all his life from the shame of it, and, to herself, she said:

"For Burton's sake, I must bear it always, and alone. He must never know what I know. No one must ever know, and may God forgive me if I am doing wrong!" And falling upon her knees, with her head upon Rover's neck, the wretched girl prayed earnestly for grace to know what was right, and strength to do it.

And He who hears every sincere cry for help, even though His ear may seem deaf, and the heavens brass, sending back the cry like an unmeaning sound, gave her the strength needful for the hour, and a feeling of calmness stole over her, making her quiet, and even fearless of the stiffened form lying so near her upon the floor.

But when, a few minutes later, her father appeared in the door, with a candle in his hand, and said to her, "I have done all I can do alone; you must help me now," the old terror came back, and staggering to her feet, she asked:

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Help carry him into the next room," her father replied, and then forgetting Burton, forgetting everything, she burst out again:

"Oh, father, will it not be better to tell the truth, at once? The fact that you do so will go a long way toward clearing you. The people all respect you so much, and they know he was quarrelsome and insulting at times. Think, father, think!"

"I have thought," he answered, "and I tell you I cannot be hanged!" then going swiftly to his bed-room he came back with a Bible in his hand, and standing before the white-faced girl, said to her: "I see I cannot trust you, unless you swear upon this book, never, while I live, to breathe to any living person what has been done here to-night. When I am dead do what you like, but swear now, as you hope for heaven, never to tell!"

And Hannah took the oath which he dictated to her, and kissed the sacred book which seemed to burn her lips as she did so. She had sworn. She would keep the vow to the end, and her father knew it, and with this fear lifted from his mind he became almost cheerful in his manner, as he explained to her what she was to do.

And Hannah obeyed him, and with limbs which trembled in every joint went with him to the attic and helped him bring down some boards which had lain there for years and on which she and Burton had played many an hour in days gone by. She knew what he was going to do with them, and without a word held the light while he fashioned the rude coffin in which he laid the dead man, but not until she had with her own hands reverently and tenderly washed the blood from the ghastly face and bound about the wound upon the temple a handkerchief which she found in his pack. Then, after the body was placed in the box, she took a pillow from her father's bed, and putting on it a clean covering and placing it under the peddler's head, folded his hands upon his breast, and kneeling beside the box bowed her head upon the boards and began the Lord's Prayer.

It was her burial service for the dead, all she could think of, and for a moment her father stood staring at her as if stupefied with what he saw; then his features relaxed, and falling on his knees beside her he cried out piteously:

"Oh, Father in heaven, forgive, forgive! Thou knowest I did not mean to do it. Have mercy, have mercy! Blot out my great sin, and if a prayer for the dead is not wrong, grant that this man, my friend, whom I sent into eternity with no time for repentance, may be among the saved; forbid that I should destroy him body and soul. Oh, help me! for the brand of Cain is upon me, and already my punishment seems greater than I can bear. If I could give my life for his I would do so gladly, but I cannot, and I must live on in torment forever and ever, with this blood-stain on my hands burning like coals of fire. Oh, my heavenly Father, have mercy! I did not mean to do it."

His head was on the rough coffin and he was sobbing in wild abandonment of despair, while Hannah, too, knelt beside him, with a face as white as the dead man's and eyes into which there had come a look of fright and horror, which would never entirely leave them until her dying day.

In a corner of the room Rover had been lying for the last fifteen or twenty minutes, eyeing the proceedings warily, and occasionally giving a growl of disapproval when his master came near him, and when the body was lifted into the coffin, he uttered a long, deep howl which echoed through the house like the wail of some troubled spirit, drifting on the wings of the wind still moaning around the windows and the doors.

"Oh, Rover, Rover, don't!" Hannah cried, going to him, and winding her arms around his neck, "Be quiet, Rover, or I shall die."

As if he comprehended her meaning the noble brute lay down again, and resting his head upon his paws, looked on until his master gave way to his paroxysm of grief. Then he arose, and going up to the prostrate man, licked his hair and face just as, earlier in the night, he had licked Hannah's when she lay beside him on the floor. He was only a dog, but his sympathy was reassuring to the wretched man, who looked up, and with a faint smile, said to his daughter:

"Rover forgives and pities me. I will take it as a token that God will do so, too; and now we must finish our work."

As if endued with superhuman strength, Hannah helped her father carry the body to the grave he had dug, and there they buried it, while her tears fell like rain, and her father's lips moved with the words:

"Forgive, forgive; I did not mean to kill him."

Everything belonging to the peddler was buried with him, except a leathern bag in which was the gold he had counted in the evening, and a small tin box fastened by a padlock, the key of which was found in his pocket, and his silver watch, which Hannah laid aside with a thought of the sister Elizabeth, whom he had mentioned with so much affection, and who, he said, was to be his heir. The money and the watch belonged to her and must be kept sacredly until the day when Hannah could safely give them to her, as she fully meant to do. For the rest there was nothing of any value, and they buried it with him, and filled the grave, or rather the father filled it, while Hannah held the light, and Rover looked on curiously.

Then, when all was done, when the floor was nailed down securely, the bed moved back to its place, the blood-stains washed from the kitchen floor, and there was nothing left to indicate the awful tragedy which had been enacted there, the father and daughter sat down with Rover lying between them, and talked as to how they would face it.

CHAPTER XIII.

FACING IT.

On the table beside them lay the watch, the leathern bag, and the box which had belonged to the deceased. In the bag there were several hundred dollars in twenty, ten, and five dollar gold pieces, and in the box, which Hannah unlocked, there were some papers, and tied together with a faded ribbon was a lock of dark brown hair, a bit of purple heather, a few English violets, and some leaves of ivy; while on the paper in which they were wrapped was the date of a summer day, many, many years ago, when the dead man was young. Whatever might have been the romance of which this souvenir was the sign, it was buried forever with the past, and Hannah put it back in the box as carefully and tenderly as if it were the hand of the woman on whose head that brown tress once grew.

The next thing which met the view was a picture painted on ivory of a young girl who might have been sixteen or eighteen years of age, and whose face was so beautiful that Hannah uttered an exclamation of surprise as she held it to the light and examined it closely.

The dress was old-fashioned, and such as would indicate that the wearer belonged to the middle, rather than the wealthy class, but Hannah did not think of that, so absorbed was she in the beauty of the fresh, young face, and the expression of the large blue eyes, which seemed to look at her so intently. The dark brown tress, so carefully wrapped in paper, and bearing the scent of English violets and heather blossoms could never have grown on this girl's head, for the wavy hair which fell in such masses upon her neck was of that peculiar shade of gold, dashed with red, seldom seen in America, and which latterly has become so fashionable, that where nature fails to produce it, art has been called into requisition, and achieved most wonderful success.

"Oh, how lovely she is," Hannah said, showing the picture to her father. "This must be his sister, the Elizabeth he was so fond of. He said once she was many year's younger than himself, and very beautiful. I do not wonder he loved her."

The bundle of papers was next examined, and found to contain a few receipts for moneys paid in England and America, and the will of the deceased, executed some months before, and in which he gave everything he possessed to his beloved and only sister, Elizabeth, her heirs and assigns forever.

"Father!" Hannah said, with a trembling voice, as she finished reading aloud this will, "I am sure that this is his sister's picture, and we have a duty to do. We must find Elizabeth Rogers, and put her in possession of her own, this gold in the box, and whatever else he may have owned in Wales. He spoke of shares in some mines or quarries. These all belong to his sister, and we must not defraud her; those blue eyes would haunt me forever. What shall we do?"

She was looking earnestly at her father, over whose face there came a sudden pallor, and a hard, bitter expression, as he answered her:

"Find her! Of course! Advertise! go to Wales, if necessary, in search of her, or get a lawyer to do it! Break your vow; tell the whole truth, as you would have to, in order to establish his death; and get me hanged! That would be the result of restitution."

"Oh, father," Hannah cried in terror. "Is there no other way? If I find this woman and give her her own, must I tell her the whole truth? Will it not be enough if I say he is dead, that I saw him die, that I helped to lay him in his coffin? I would not mention you, or that I had a father. Surely she

would be satisfied."

"Yes, *she* might, but not the law. I do not understand the ins and outs myself, there are so many questions necessary to make a thing legal, but this I am sure of; the whole thing would be ripped up, and I hanged, as I told you. No, Hannah, you cannot find this woman while I live, which, please God, may not be long. When I am gone, find her, if you like, but you must shield me. Remember your vow, and—and—swear again, not to move in the matter while I live."

He was growing so excited with this new fear that his daughter shrank from him in alarm, and at last yielding to his importunities took another oath of secrecy, which doomed the blue-eyed woman in Wales to a life of poverty, if such now were her portion.

"But what shall we do with this money?" Hannah asked.

And her father replied:

"Keep it until you can restore it to its rightful owner without harm to me. Elizabeth may never get it, but her heirs, some child yet unborn, may be made rich by you, one day, who knows?"

Yes, some child then unborn might one day be richer for this crime, but that did not comfort Hannah, now, and the future held no gleam of hope or happiness for her, as she put the papers, and the watch, and the gold, and the portrait, together in the tin box, and tried to think where she could hide them.

Owing to the storm, and the depth of the snow, no one visited the lonely farm-house until the Monday following the tragedy, when a neighbor came breaking through the drifts to see how it fared with Peter, who tried to appear natural as he talked of the depth of the snow, and inquired for the news, and mentally anathematized the dog Rover, who, the moment the stranger appeared, stretched himself before the bedroom door with a keen, watchful look in his eyes, as if he were on the alert and guarding the terrible secret.

And this habit, commenced that morning, was continued by the faithful creature up to the day of his death, which happened several years later. No matter where he was, whether chasing a rabbit through the woods or sleeping by the stable door, he seemed by some instinct to know when a visitor arrived, and hastened at once to his post, from which neither threats nor persuasions could dislodge him. For Hannah tried both, but when she coaxed he whined and whisked his big tail on the floor, and when she threatened he growled and showed his teeth, but staid there just the same.

The Monday night following the tragedy, Hannah was stricken down with a low, nervous fever, which lasted for weeks, and from which she arose the mere shadow of her former self. All life and vivacity had left her, and instead of a girl of fifteen she seemed like a woman of twenty-five, so quiet and reserved she became, with no color in her cheeks, no elasticity in her step, no joy in her voice, no brightness anywhere except in her large dark eyes, which shone with unusual brilliancy, and had in them always a look which puzzled and fascinated her friends, who little dreamed of what those strangely bright, beautiful eyes saw constantly before them.

Whether sleeping or waking the picture was always there, of the dead man on the floor with the blood-stains on his face, and she felt the touch of the clammy hands which she had folded upon his breast. She could not go to school again, for in her morbid state of mind to study was impossible, and so she staid at home, brooding over the past and shrinking from the future, with no companionship except that of Rover, who seemed so fully to understand and sympathize with her. Oftentimes when her work for the day was done, and she sat down listlessly upon a little seat beneath the apple tree which grew in the yard, the dog would go to her, and putting his head in her lap, gaze into her face with such a human look of pity in his eyes that her tears would fall like rain, as she wound her arms around his neck and sobbed:

"Oh, dear old Rover, you know, and you are sorry for me. What should I do without you! What shall I do when you are gone?" and the white lips would frame a prayer that Rover might be spared to her long, for without him life would be intolerable.

And yet Hannah had no foolish fancies, filled though the house was, with the image of the dead man. She did not believe in ghosts, and had no fear that the occupant of the hidden grave beneath the floor would come back to trouble her; it was rather the horror of the crime, the sin, which so oppressed her, filling her with the wildest fancies, and making her see always the dreadful word murder written everywhere upon the walls, and the blood-stains on the floor, where no trace was visible to other eyes than hers. Sometimes in the dark night, in her lonely bed beneath the roof, with the stars looking in upon her, she felt as if her brain were on fire and that she was going mad with the load of anguish and guilt, for she accused herself as equally guilty with her father, inasmuch as she had witnessed the deed and was helping him to conceal it.

"But God knows I cannot help it. I am bound with bonds I cannot break," she would cry, as she stretched her hands toward heaven in dumb supplication for pardon and peace, which came at last to the troubled spirit.

And though she never knew again the joy of youth which had left her forever, there came to her long intervals of rest and quiet and comparative peace, if not happiness; and when, three years after the tragedy which had blighted her young life, she, with others of her companions, ratified her baptismal vows and openly confessed Christ, He who sees and knows the secrets of all hearts, knew that among those who knelt to receive the rite of confirmation there was not one

purer or more sincere than she who thought herself the vilest of the vile.

Naturally, as time rolled on, and the peddler Rogers came no more to Allington, inquiries were made for him, the people wondering if he intended remaining in Wales the remainder of his life, or would he appear in their midst again some day, with his balbriggans and Irish linens. But as he had never been more to the citizens than a peddler of dry-goods, he was soon forgotten, and Peter Jerrold's secret was safe under the floor, and the tin box, with the gold and the will, was safe in the niche of the huge chimney, where Hannah had hidden it, until such time as it could be given into the hands of the rightful owner. For this Hannah fully intended doing. How, or when, or by what agency, she could not tell, but sometime in the future, restitution would be made, either to Elizabeth or her heirs. She had calculated the interest on the money, and resolved yearly to lay by that amount for the benefit of the Rogers heirs. Everything pertaining to Carnarvon she read up, knowing perfectly its history, where it was situated, how to reach it, and almost fancying that she knew the very house where the peddler had lived, and where possibly Elizabeth was still living. And some day she would find the place and give up the money and will, and tell as much of the past as was necessary to tell, but no more.

And with this end in view she lived her dreary, monotonous life, which knew no change, except on the rare intervals when her young brother Burton, came up from Boston to spend a few days with the father and sister from whom he was growing estranged so fast; for between them and himself there was nothing common, and he was always glad when his short visit was over, and he was free to return to the life more in accordance with his taste than that at the farm-house.

When Rover died, several years after the tragedy of which he was a witness, Hannah felt that she had lost all that made life endurable, and mourned for him as for a human friend. With all the faithful sagacity of his race the noble brute had clung to her, seldom quitting her side, and frequently, when her heart was saddest, and she was weeping by herself, licking her face and hair, and uttering a kind of low cry, as if he understood her perfectly; and when at last he died, it was with his head in her lap, and her tears falling upon his shaggy face. Even to the last he was faithful to the charge he had so long assumed. A neighbor had come into the kitchen, and dragging himself from the mat on which he was lying, Rover crawled to the door of the bedroom, and stretched himself in front of it, while in the dying eyes lifted to Hannah's face, there was an expression of unutterable love and regret for the mistress he was leaving forever. When the visitor left the house, Hannah tried to coax the dog back to his mat near the stove, but he was too weak to move, and so she placed a blanket under him and kneeling by his side, put his head in her lap, and held it there until he ceased to breathe.

After his death there was nothing to relieve the tedium of Hannah's life, and but for her trust in God her reason must have given way under the strain, for it was not only her own sorrow, but her father's as well, which she had to bear. With him there was no rest, day or night, and every breath was a prayer for mercy and forgiveness.

At first he was continually haunted with a fear of detection, and frequently in the night he would steal noiselessly to Hannah's room, and awakening her with a whisper, tell her there were men about the house, come to arrest him, and charge her with having broken her oath and betrayed him into the hands of the law. Every possible precaution against a surprise was taken. Iron bolts were put on the doors, the windows were nailed down, and the house was never for an hour left alone. The people said the man was deranged, and pitied the young girl who, from daily association with him, was becoming almost as peculiar as himself.

After a few years the aged pastor, who had so long officiated in the stone church on the common, died, and the Rev. Charles Sanford, fresh from the Theological Seminary, was called to take his place. Full of energy and zeal in his work, the young rector soon made himself acquainted with all his parishioners, and seemed to find a peculiar attraction in the inmates of the farm-house, where he spent a great deal of time, arguing with the father on the nature of the unpardonable sin, and answering the many questions his host propounded to him upon the subject of genuine repentance and its fruits, and how far confession to man was necessary that one might be saved.

To these discourses Hannah was always an attentive listener, and there came gradually a new light into her dark eyes, and a faint color to her white cheeks, when she saw the rector coming up the walk, and met his winning smile. But all this was ended at last; for, after a night in June, when she walked with the young clergyman through the pasture land under the row of chestnut trees which grew upon the hill-side, he came less frequently to the farm-house, and when he did come his discourse was mostly with her father, whom he was laboring to convince that it was his duty to be confirmed. But Peter always answered him:

"No, you don't know what you ask. I am too vile, too great a sinner for that. The very stones would cry out against me."

The clergyman thought him crazy, and after a time abandoned the effort, and went but seldom to the farm-house, where Hannah had again entered the dark cloud in which his coming had made a rift, and which now seemed darker than ever, because of the momentary brightness which had been thrown upon it. She, too, had labored with her father as Mr. Sanford had done, telling him of the peace which was sure to follow a duty performed, but he answered her:

"Never, child, never; for, don't you see, I must first confess, and that is to put the halter around my own neck. They would hang me now, sure, for the concealment, if for nothing more. It might have been better if I had told at first, as you advised. I believe now they would have been lenient

toward me. A few years in prison, perhaps, and then freedom the rest of my life. Oh, if I had done it. But now it is forever too late. God may forgive me. I think he will, but I can never join his church with this crime on my soul."

After this Hannah said no more to him upon the subject, but bent all her energies to soothe and rid him of the morbid, half-crazy fancies which had taken possession of him.

And so the wretched years went on, until Peter Jerrold had numbered more than three score years and ten, and suffered enough to atone many times for crimes far more heinous than his had been. But nature at last could endure no more, and on the Thanksgiving night, thirty-one years after the event which had blighted his life, he felt that he was dying, and insisted upon confessing his sin not only to his son, but also to his clergyman, who has been his friend and spiritual adviser for so many years.

"I shall die so much easier," he said to Hannah, who sent for them both, and then with her arm around her father, held him against her bosom, while he told in substance, and with frequent pauses for breath, the story we have narrated.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EFFECT OF THE STORY.

After the first great shock of surprise, when the word murderer dropped from his lips, and he reproached his sister so harshly and unreasonably, Burton Jerrold stood with folded arms, and a gloomy, unsympathetic face, as immovable at first as if he had been a stone, and listened to the tale as repeated by his father. But when the tragic part was reached, and he saw the dead man on the floor, his sister crouching in the corner of the room, with Rover at her side, the rude coffin, the open grave, and the secret midnight burial, his breath came in long, shuddering gasps, and the perspiration stood in great drops upon his forehead and about his pallid lips. And when his father said, "I buried him here in this room, under this bed, where I have slept ever since, and he is there now," he started backward as suddenly as if the ghost of the peddler had risen from the floor and confronted him. Then, staggering forward, he would have fallen if Mr. Sanford had not caught him by the arm and supported him a moment.

Bringing him a chair, the clergyman said to him, pityingly:

"Sit down, Mr. Jerrold, and try to compose yourself. You are not in fault: no one can blame you."

"No, no, I know it; but it hurts me just the same. The disgrace! I can never be happy again. Oh, Hannah, why did you let him tell me? I cannot bear it, I cannot!" the wretched Burton moaned, and his father replied:

"Your sister has borne it for thirty-one years. Are you less brave than she?"

"I don't know. Yes, I believe I am. I have more at stake than she. Our positions are not the same. There is Geraldine, and Grey, I can never look them in the face again, knowing what I know," Burton cried, impetuously, and covering his face with his hands, he sobbed as strong men never sob, save when some terrible storm, which they feel themselves inadequate to meet, is beating pitilessly upon them.

"Oh, brother," Hannah said, in her soft, entreating voice, "this is worse than all the rest. Don't take it so hard. It is not so bad as you think. You will not be disgraced. Geraldine will never know: the world will never know. Char—Mr. Sanford is just as safe as I. He will never tell," and the dark eyes looked for one moment at the man whom, in her excitement and forgetfulness, she had almost called by his Christian name, and who, in response to the call and the look, went to her side, and laying his hand upon her head, said, solemnly:

"As heaven is my witness, what I have heard here to-night shall never pass my lips."

Pressing his hand for an instant upon Hannah's bowed head, he withdrew it, but staid at her side until the recital was ended, and the old man, who was sinking fast, said to him, in a faint whisper:

"You know all now, and why I could not join the church. It was too late to tell the world of my guilt. God knew it. I believe he has baptized me with His Holy Spirit. Do you think that as His minister you can pray for my departing soul?"

"Yes, yes," the clergyman replied, and falling upon his knees, for he saw in the pinched face the look he could not mistake, he began the prayer for the dying one, who whispered, faintly:

"That is good, very good. And now, Hannah, the Lord's Prayer once more; it is the last. We have said it many times together, you and I, when the night was blackest and we could think of nothing else. Where are you, Hannah?" he added, in a tone of alarm, as if he had lost her. "It is growing dark and I cannot see. You must not leave me now. We have kept together so long."

"I am here, father; with my arm around your neck, and I am kissing your dear face," Hannah said, and then, bending over him, she commenced the prayer they had so often said together when no

other words would come.

Faintly the old man's voice joined hers and that of the clergyman, and only Burton was silent. He could not pray, but sat silent, while his father whispered at short intervals:

"Forgive; yes, that's the good word, and I am forgiven. I feel it. I know it. Salvation is sure, even for me, and in heaven I shall wait and watch for you, Hannah, the best and truest daughter a man ever had. Oh, God bless my Hannah, and grant that some joy, some happiness may come to her when I am gone; and Grey, the baby Grey, oh, bless him, too, with every needful blessing—the baby Grey, whose little hands took the stain, the smart from mine—my Grey, whom I love so much."

"And Burton, too!" Hannah suggested, as her father ceased speaking without mentioning his son.

"Yes," he replied, rousing a little. "And Burton, my son; God bless him. But he is not like you, Hannah, nor like Grey. He could not forgive as you have; he will never forgive me. And yet he is very just, very good, very respectable, and the Hon. Burton Jerrold, of Boston. Tell him good-by and God bless him from me, the murderer!"

Those were the last words he ever spoke, for though he lingered for some hours it was in a kind of stupor, from which they could not rouse him.

Seeing that he could be of no further service, and remembering the careful Martha, who, he knew, was sitting up for him, armed with reproaches for the lateness of the hour, and various medicines as preventives for the cold he was sure to have taken, Mr. Sanford signified his intention to return home, and insisted that the boy Sam should not be awakened to drive him there.

The storm had ceased, the moon had come out, and he greatly preferred the walk, he said, even if the snow were deep. There were curious thoughts crowding in the brain of the grave, quiet man, tumultuous thoughts, which spanned a score of years and brought with them keen joy as well as a bitter pain. He was standing before the kitchen fire, with Hannah near him, holding the warm muffler he was to tie around his neck. Regarding her fixedly for a moment, he said, addressing her by the old pet name which had once been so familiar to him:

"Hanny, that is why you said 'no' to me that summer night when we walked together under the chestnut trees, and I felt that you had broken my heart?"

Any one who saw Hannah Jerrold at that moment would have called her beautiful, with the sudden light which shone in her dark eyes, the bright color which, came to her cheeks, and the softness which spread itself all over her upturned face, as she answered, promptly, and still very modestly:

"Yes, Charlie, that was the reason."

For an instant these two, whom a cruel fate had separated, looked into each other's eyes with a look in which the love of twenty years was embodied; then involuntarily the hands clasped, and the man and the woman who had walked together under the chestnut trees twenty years ago, kissed each other for the first time in their lives, *she* feeling that on her part there was nothing unwomanly, nothing wrong in the act, and *he* feeling that on his part there was not the shadow of infidelity to the woman who bore his name and looked so carefully after his welfare. The one was his wife, whom he respected greatly, and to whose wishes he sacrificed every wish of his own, when he could conscientiously do so; the other was the woman he had loved in the long ago, and whose "no," spoken so decidedly, and with no explanation except that it must be, had sent him from her with a heart-ache from which he now knew he had never fully recovered.

Twelve years after that summer, the memory of which was still half joy, half pain, he had married Miss Martha Adams, of Cambridge, because a mutual friend had told him he ought to do so, that a bachelor clergyman was never as useful as a married one, and that Miss Martha, a maiden lady of thirty-five, was eminently fitted to fulfill the duties of a rector's wife, for she came from a long line of clergy and for years had run the Sunday-school, and the sewing society, and the church generally in the parish to which she belonged. Added to this she had some money and excellent health, two good things in a minister's wife as everybody knew.

Mr. Sanford promised his friend to think about it, and then, one afternoon, walked across the fields to the house among the rocks and looked again at Hannah, who was twelve years older and graver and quieter than when she won the love of his young manhood; but there was something inexpressibly sweet in the pale, sad face, and the large dark eyes thrilled him as they did of old, so that he found his longing for her greater, if possible, than ever. But when he said to her, "Hanny, have you ever regretted your answer to me?" and she replied, "No, never," he turned away, and, walking back across the fields to his own home, wrote to his friend in Walpole, signifying his readiness to be introduced to Miss Martha Adams. The result of this was that Martha had been his wife for nearly eight years, and ruled him with a rod of iron, which she, however, sometimes covered, so that he did not feel it quite so much as he might otherwise have done. But it pressed heavily now, as in the clear, cold night he walked slowly home through the deep, untrodden snow, which he scarcely minded, so intent were his thoughts upon the past and what might have been.

Alas! for the many hearts, aching in secret and sending backward vain regrets for what might have been, what should have been, but what can never be. And, if sometimes the heart thus

wrung cries out with a great cry for the happiness it has missed, is there disloyalty to him or her who stands where another should have stood? God only knows, and He is far more merciful and ready to forgive his erring children than are they to forgive each other. And he must have pitied the man who, with a thought of Hannah thrilling every fiber of his heart, went back to the home where Martha was waiting impatiently for him, with words of chiding upon her lips.

He knew it would be so, knew she would sit up for him until morning, if necessary, and knew, too, that in all probability bowls of herb tea and a hot foot-bath awaited him, for Martha was careful of his health, and sometimes oppressive with her attentions, and he sighed as he drew near his home and saw the light, and thought, "Oh, if she would only go to bed and leave me alone awhile, and not make me talk."

But she was up and waiting for him, in her purple flannel dressing-gown, which did not improve her ruddy complexion, and a frown on her face, which deepened into a scowl as he came in and she saw the condition of his boots and the lower part of his pants.

"Charles Sanford," she began, "do you mean to say you walked, and do you know what time it is?"

"Yes, Martha," he answered, meekly, "it is very late, but I could not help it, and I insisted upon walking rather than have the tired, sleeping boy come out in the cold. I needed the exercise. I am not cold."

"But you *have* taken cold. You needn't tell me, and I've got the water ready for a foot-bath, and some hot boneset tea. How did you leave Mr. Jerrold? and did he take the sacrament at last?" she said, and he replied:

"No, he did not; he—"

But before he could say more she burst out with growing irritability:

"Not take it! Why then did he send for you on such a night, and why did you stay so long?"

She was pouring the boiling water into the foot-tub, in which she had put a preparation of mustard and prickly ash and red pepper, which she kept on hand for extreme cases like this, and the odor of the steam made him sick and faint, as, grasping the mantel, he replied:

"He wished me to pray with him; he will not live till morning. Please don't talk to me any more. I am more tired than I thought, and something makes me very sick."

He was as white as ashes, and with all her better, softer nature roused, for Martha was at heart a very good woman, she helped him to a chair, and bathed his head in alcohol, and rubbed his hands, and did not question him again. But she made him swallow the herb tea, and she kept on talking herself, wondering what Hannah would do after her father was gone. Would she stay there alone, or live with her brother? Most likely the former, as Mrs. Jerrold would never have her in her family, and really, one could not blame her, Hannah was so peculiar and queer. Pity was that she had never married; an old maid was always in the way.

And then Mrs. Martha, as if bent on torturing her husband, to whom every word was a stab, wondered if any man ever had wanted Hannah Jerrold for his wife, and asked her husband if he had ever heard of any such thing.

"I should not be likely to know it," he replied, "for until you came, I never heard any gossip."

There was an implied rebuke in this answer, and it silenced Mrs. Martha, who said no more of Hannah, but as soon as possible got her lord to bed, with a soapstone at his feet and a blanket wrapped around him, in order to make him sweat and break up the cold she was certain he had taken.

Meanwhile at the farm-house Burton and his sister were standing together near the kitchen fire, where poor Grey had stood two hours before, and heard what changed the coloring of his whole life. They were speaking of him, and what they said was this:

"If it were only myself I might bear it," Burton said, "though life can never be to me again what it has been, and I shall think like Cain that the sin is branded on me; and I was so proud, and stood so high, and meant to make the name of Jerrold so honorable a name that Grey and his children would rejoice that they bore it. Of course Grey will never know, but I shall, and that will make a difference. Hannah," he added, quickly, struck by something in her face, "what did you mean, or rather what did father mean by your making restitution to the peddler's friends? What is there to restore?"

In his recital of his crime the old man had omitted to speak of the money and the will, or, at most, he had touched so lightly upon them that it had escaped the notice of his son, whose mind was wholly absorbed in one idea, and that of the body buried under the floor within a few feet of him. Hannah explained to him what her father meant, and told him of the box and the gold, to which she had every year added the interest—compound interest, too—so that the amount had more than quadrupled, and she had found it necessary to have another and larger box in which to keep the treasure.

"That is why I have so often asked you to change bills into gold for me," she said. "Paper might depreciate in value, or the banks go down, but gold is gold everywhere, and I have tried so hard to earn or save the interest, denying myself many things which I should have enjoyed as well as

most women, and getting for myself the reputation of closeness and even stinginess, which I did not deserve. I had to be economical with myself to meet my payments, which increased as the years went on, until they are so large that sometimes I have not been able to put the whole in the box at the end of the year, and I am behindhand now, but I keep an exact account, and shall make it up in time."

"But, Hannah, I used to give you money willingly, and would have given you more if you had asked for it. I had no idea of this," Burton said, and she replied:

"Yes, I know you would, but I did not like to do it, for fear you would think me extravagant and wonder what I did with so much. Not a penny you gave us ever went into the box. That was my matter, not yours; and I have worked so hard to do it, for father was not able to look after the farm, which of itself is poor and barren, and as he was only willing to hire a boy, I have done a man's work myself at times."

"You, Hannah—you?" Burton said, gazing at the pale-faced, frail-looking woman, who had done the work of a man rather than ask money of him who sometimes spent more on one large party than she did in a whole year, and who said to him, with a sad smile:

"Yes; I have spaded the garden, and planted the corn in the field back of the hill, where no one could see me, and have helped Sam get in the hay, though I never attempted to mow; but I did lay up a bit of stone wall which had tumbled down, I have done what I could."

Poor Hannah! No wonder that her hands, once so small and shapely, were broad, and hard, and rough, and not much like Mrs. Geraldine's, on which there were diamonds enough to more than liquidate the debt due to Elizabeth Rogers and her heirs; and no wonder that her dress, which so often offended her brother's artistic and critical eye, was coarse, and plain, and selected with a view to durability rather than comeliness. She had done what she could, and what few women would have done, and Burton knew it, and was conscious of a great feeling of respect and pity, if not affection, for her, as she stood before him in a stooping posture, with her toil-worn hands clasped together as if asking his pardon for having intruded her own joyless life upon his notice. But above every other feeling in his heart was the horrible fear of exposure if she attempted restitution, and he said to her at last:

"I am sorry for you, Hannah, and I can understand how, with your extreme conscientiousness, you believed it your duty to do as you have done. But this must go no further. To discover Elizabeth Rogers is to confess ourselves the children of a murderer, and this I cannot allow. You have no right to visit father's sin upon Grey, who would be sure to find it out if you stirred in the matter. He is sensitive, very, and proud of his name. It would kill him to know what we do."

"No, brother, it would hurt him, but not kill him." Hannah said, with energy; "and ever since he was a little child I have depended upon him to comfort me, to help me, as I knew he would when he was older; and something tells me he will find the heirs. I do not mean to tell him until he is a man, able to understand."

"Hannah!" and there was fierce anger in the voice. "You are not my sister if you ever dare tell Grey this thing, or hint it to him in any way. He must never know it, both for his own sake and mine. I could not even look at him without shame if he knew what my father was. You have kept it thirty-one years; keep it thirty-one longer, and, as you vowed secrecy to my father, so swear to me solemnly, as you hope for Heaven, never to tell Grey or any one."

He had seized her wrist, and held it so tightly that she winced with pain as she cried out:

"Oh, Burton, I cannot; I must restore the money and the will."

"Stuff and nonsense!" he repeated, growing more and more excited. "That woman is dead before this, and her heirs, if she had any, scattered to the winds. People never miss what they never had, and they will not miss this paltry sum. Promise me, that you will drop this insane idea of restitution and never reveal what you know, even after Geraldine and I are dead, should you outlive us both. Think of the disgrace to the Greys."

And so, worried, and worn, and half crazed with fatigue and excitement, Hannah bound herself again, and, had not Grey already known the secret, Elizabeth Rogers' heirs would never have heard of the tin box in the chimney, from which place Hannah brought it at last to show the contents to her brother, who, perfectly sure that she would keep her word, could calmly examine the will and scan the features of the young girl upon the ivory.

"She is very lovely," he said, "though evidently she belongs to the working class; her dress indicates as much. But whoever she is or was, she is not like this now; she is old or dead. Put it back in the box, Hannah, and if ever you accidentally find to a certainty where the original is, or her heirs, send the will and the money to her from Boston or New York, and she will thus get her own without knowing where it came from."

This was rather a lame way to make restitution, but Hannah seized upon it as something feasible, and felt in a measure comforted. She would herself go to Europe some time, and hunt up the Rogers heirs so cautiously that no suspicion could attach to her, and then, having found them, she would send them the will and the money she was hoarding for them. This was a ray of hope amid the darkness—the straw to which she clung; and the future did not seem quite so cheerless, even when, a few hours later, she stood with her brother by the side of her dead father, who had died without a struggle or sigh, just as the chill morning was breaking in the east and giving

promise of a fairer day than the previous one had been.

CHAPTER XV.

GREY AND THE SECRET.

Breakfast was waiting in the pleasant dining-room at Grey's Park, where Burton Jerrold sat before the fire, with his head bent down and his face so white and ghastly that his wife, when she came in and saw him, was moved with a great pity for him, though she wondered much that his sorrow should be so acute for the father he had never seemed very fond of in life. Stooping over him she kissed him softly, and said:

"I am sorry you feel so badly, Burton. Your father was old, and quite ready to die; surely that should comfort you a little."

"Yes, yes, I know; but please don't talk to me now," he replied, with a gesture of the hand as if to silence her.

He was not sorry for his father's death, but he was willing, nay glad, that she should think so, for he could not tell her of the load of shame from which he should never be free.

"What would she say if she knew?" he asked himself, as he remembered all her pride of blood, and birth, and family. And Grey, his only boy, of whom he was so proud, and who, he fully expected, would some day fill one of the highest posts in the land;—what would he say if he knew his father was the son of a murderer? Burton would not soften the crime even in thought, though he knew that had his father been arrested at the time, he could only have been convicted of manslaughter, and possibly not of that. But he called it by the hard name murder, and shuddered as he thought of Grey.

"But he never will know," he said to himself, "Hannah will keep her promise, and I do not fear Mr. Sanford, though I'd give half my fortune—yes, all—if he had not been told. Grey will never know. But *I* know, and must meet his innocent eyes, and hear him talk of his grandfather as of saint."

It was at this point in his soliloquy that Grey came slowly in, his face whiter than his father's, with dark rings around his eyes, which were heavy and swollen with the tears he had shed. Grey had not slept at all, for the dreadful words, "I killed a man, and buried him under my bed," were continually ringing in his ears, while the ghost of the murdered man seemed present with him, urging him to vengeance for the wrong, until at last, when he could bear it no longer, he stretched his hands out into the darkness, and cried:

"What is it you want with me? I am not to blame, but if there is any thing I can do to make it right, I'll do it, when I am man. Now, go away and do not torment me so."

Grey knew there was nothing there, knew that the spirits of the departed do not come back again, but he was not in a frame of mind to reason clearly upon anything. He only knew how wretched he was, and that after his promise to redress the dead man's wrongs he grew calmer and more quiet, though there was still the terrible pain and disappointment in his heart, especially when he thought of his Aunt Hannah, whom he had held so high, and whom he now felt he had loved and revered more than any other person.

Remembering all the past, which at times had puzzled him, and which he now understood, he was certain that she had known from the first, and so was an accomplice. Possibly the law would not touch her, he reasoned, as he tried to fancy what might have been had this thing been known to the public; but he remembered having heard of a case which happened in an adjoining town many years before, where, at the instigation of his wife, a man was killed and thrown into his own well. The wife was hung in Worcester with her three accomplices, but a woman who was in the house at the time went free, though she was ever after known as "Old 'Scape Gallows," and shunned accordingly. Was his Aunt Hannah like her? Would people thus call her, if they knew?

"No, no; oh, no," he cried in agony. "She is not like that! Please God, grant that my Aunt Hannah is a good woman still. I cannot lose faith in her, and I love her so much."

And thus the dreadful night wore to an end, and the morning found Grey burning with fever, while a sharp pain, like a knife, cut through his temples every time he moved. He was not surprised when Lucy came and told him his grandfather was dead. He expected it, but with a moan he buried his face in his pillow, and sobbed:

"Oh, grandpa, where are you now, I wonder; and I thought you so good, so sure of Heaven. Please, God, have mercy on him. Oh, I can not bear it. I cannot bear to think that he is lost! And he loved me so, and blessed me on his death-bed."

This was the burden of Grey's grief, for he did not stop to consider all the years of sincere repentance which had purified the soul just gone, and made it fit for heaven, and his heart was very sore as he slowly dressed himself and went down to the breakfast-room to meet his father, who knew what he did, and who must feel it just as keenly.

Grey's first impulse was to fall upon his neck and cry out:

"I know it. I heard it. I was there. We will bear it together," but when he remembered that his grandfather had said: "that he was not to know," he restrained himself, and said very quietly:

"Grandpa is dead. Aunt Lucy told me. When is the funeral?"

The voice was not like Grey's, and Mr. Jerrold looked up quickly to meet the eyes which fell at once as did his own. Neither could look in the other's face with that secret which each knew and was hiding from the other. But both were outwardly calm, and the breakfast passed quietly, with no reference to the recent event occupying the minds of all. Mrs. Jerrold and her sister had expected that Grey would feel his loss keenly and possibly be noisy in his boyish demonstrations of grief, but they were not prepared for the torpor which seemed to have settled upon him, and which kept him indoors all day sitting by the fire over which he shivered as if in a chill, though his cheeks were crimson, and he sometimes wiped the drops of sweat from his lips and forehead. His head was still aching terribly, and he was cold and faint, and this was a sufficient reason for his declining to accompany his Aunt Lucy, when, after breakfast was over, she went with his father to the farm-house, where she spent nearly the entire day, seeing to the many little things necessary for the funeral, and which Hannah could not attend to.

Geraldine did not go. Her nerves were not equal to it and she should only be in the way, she said. So she sent her love to Hannah and remained at home with Grey, who seldom spoke to her, and scarcely stirred, though occasionally his mother saw his lips move and great tears roll down his cheeks.

"I supposed he would care, but not so much as this," she thought, as she watched him anxiously, wondering at the strength of his love for an old man in whom she had never even felt interested.

Once, moved with pity for him, she put her hand on his head, just as in the morning she had put it on her husband's, and stooping, kissed him tenderly, saying:

"I am sorry for you, Grey. It is really making you sick. Try and not feel so badly. Your grandfather was old and ready to die. You would not have him back, he is so happy now."

Just as his father had done when she tried to comfort him, so Grey did. He made a gesture for her to stop, and said piteously:

"Please don't talk to me now, I cannot bear it;" so she sat down again beside him, while he continued to nurse the bitter thoughts crowding so fast upon him:

Was his grandfather happy now? Was it well with him in the world to which he had gone? he kept asking himself over and over again all that dreary day and the drearier night which followed, and which left him whiter, sadder, if possible, than ever.

The funeral was appointed for half past two on Saturday afternoon, and Burton, who went over in the morning, asked Grey to go with him.

"Your Aunt Hannah will expect you. She was disappointed in not seeing you yesterday," but Grey said promptly:

"No, I'll wait, and go with mother."

So Mr. Jerrold went alone with Lucy, leaving his wife and Grey to join him about half past one, just before the neighbors began to assemble. When Grey came in, Hannah, who was already draped in her mourning robe which Lucy had provided for her, went up to him, and putting her arms around him, said, very low and gently, but with no sadness in the tone:

"Oh, Grey, I am so glad you have come and sorry you are suffering so from headache, but I know just how you loved him and how he loved you—better than anything else in the world. Will you come with me and see him now? He looks so calm and peaceful and happy, just as you never saw him look."

"Oh, no, no!" Grey cried, wrenching himself from her. "I cannot see him; don't ask me, please."

"Not see your grandfather who loved you so much? Oh, Grey!" Hannah exclaimed, with both wonder and reproach in her voice. "I want you to remember him as he looks now, so different from what he was in life."

"But I cannot," Grey said, "I never saw any one dead; I cannot bear it," and going from her he took a seat in the kitchen as far as possible from the bedroom which held so much horror for him.

He knew his grandfather was not there, for he was lying in his coffin in the front room, where Lucy Grey had put the flowers brought from the conservatory at Grey's Park. But the *other one* was there, under the floor where he had lain for thirty-one years, and Grey was thinking of *him*, wondering who he was and if no inquiries had ever been made for him. The room was a haunted place for him, and he was glad the door was closed, and once, when Lucy went into it for something, he started us if to keep her back. Then remembering that he must never be supposed to know the secret of that room, he sank again into his chair in the corner, where he staid until the people began to assemble, when he went with his mother into the adjoining room, where the coffin was and where he sat immovable as a stone through the service, which, was not very long. The hymn, which had been selected by Hannah, was the one commencing with, "Asleep in Jesus, that blest sleep, from which none ever wake to weep," and as the mournful music filled the

rooms, and the words came distinctly to Grey's ears, he started as if struck a blow, while to himself he said:

"*Is* he asleep in Jesus? If I only knew! Can no one tell me? Poor grandpa!"

Then he was quiet again, and listened intently to what Mr. Sanford was saying of the deceased. Contrary to his usual custom, the rector spoke of the dead man, who had gone down to the grave like a sheaf of grain fully ripe and meet for the kingdom of Heaven.

"There can be no mistake," he said, "I was with him a few hours before he died. I heard his words of contrition for sins committed and his assurance that all was peace and joy and brightness beyond the tomb. His sins, of which he repented as few ever have, were all washed away in Jesus' blood, and while to-day we stand around his grave, he is safe with the Savior he loved and trusted to the end."

What else he said, Grey did not know, for the sudden reaction in his feelings. Mr. Sanford was with his grandfather at the last. He had heard the dreadful words, "I killed a man!" and yet he declared the sinner saved. He must know, he who had stood by so many death-beds.

"Yes, he is asleep in Jesus," Grey whispered, while over him there stole a feeling of deep joy, mingled with remorse that he had ever doubted the goodness of his grandfather, who had prayed for and blessed him on the Thanksgiving Day which seemed so long ago.

Grey could look upon him now, and when his Aunt Hannah and his father rose to take their leave of the corpse, he went with them, lingering by the coffin after they had returned to their seats, and bending over the white, still face, where death had left a smile, so peaceful, so inexpressibly sweet that it touched the boy keenly, and stooping down he kissed the stiffened lips, and murmured, through his tears:

"Dear grandpa, forgive me for doubting you, I know you were good. I know you are in heaven."

He spoke in a whisper and no one heard what he said, though all noted the pallor of his face and the heavy rings about his eyes, and when the next day it was rumored in town that he was very sick, no one was surprised. It was brain fever, induced by the strain upon his mental powers, and the cold he had taken that night when, unknown to any one, he had gone to the farm-house through the storm, and returned again.

For three weeks he lay at the very gates of death, watched and cared for as few boys have ever been cared for and watched, for he was the idol of hearts which would break if he were to die. The farm-house was shut up, and Hannah took her post as chief nurse to the boy she loved so much, and whose condition puzzled her a little. Once, in the first days of his illness, when, after an absence of an hour or so, she re-entered the room, where his father was keeping watch, he lifted his bright, fever-stricken eyes to her face, and asked:

"Who was the man?"

"What man?" Hannah and her brother asked, simultaneously, a great fear in the heart of each lest the other had betrayed what Grey was not to know.

"Have you told him?" Burton whispered to his sister, who answered:

"You know I have not." Then, turning to Grey, who was still looking at her, she said to him again: "What man?"

For a moment the wild, bright eyes regarded her fixedly; then there seemed to come over the boy a gleam of reason, and he replied:

"I don't know."

After that he never mentioned the man again, or in any way alluded to the secret weighing so heavily upon the two who watched him so constantly—Hannah and his father. Not a word ever passed between them either on the subject, so anxious were they for the life of the lad, who in his delirium talked constantly of the past, of Europe, and the ship, and the mountains he had climbed, and whose names were on his Alpenstock. Again he was at Carnarvon, going over the old castle, and again at Melrose, fighting on the fourth of July with Neil McPherson, who had said his mother was not a lady. Then there were quieter moods, when he talked of and to little Bessie McPherson, whom he had never seen, but who came to him in his delirium, and, with her sunny blue eyes and golden hair, hovered around his bed, while he questioned her of the little room high up in the hotel, where she went without her dinner so often, while her heartless mother dined luxuriantly.

"Send for her and bring her here, where she can have enough to eat. Why don't you send for Bessie?" he would say to them; and once he said it to Miss McPherson, who was standing by his bedside, and who replied:

"I have sent for her; she is coming."

"All right!" he answered. "Stuff her when she comes. Give her all the mince pie she can eat, and all the griddle cakes. She never saw any at home."

After that he was more quiet; but every morning and evening he asked, "Has Bessie come?" and when told, "Not yet," he would reply, "Send her to me when she comes; I want to see her."

And so the time went on until the fever spent itself, and there came a morning when Grey awoke to perfect consciousness of the present and a vague remembrance of the past. They told him how long he had been sick, and how anxious they had been.

"Did I talk much?" he asked his Aunt Lucy, when she was alone with him.

"Yes, most of the time," she replied, and over his face there flitted a shadow of fear lest he had talked of things he ought not.

"What did I say?" he asked; and she told him as nearly as she could remember.

"And Aunt Hannah was here all the time? Where is she now?" he inquired; and Lucy replied:

She went home last night, for the first time in two weeks. She had to go, as the snow had drifted under the eaves, and the house was leaking badly."

"Is she there alone?" Grey asked, with a shudder, as he thought of that hidden grave under the floor.

"No, Sam is there, and I sent Sarah with her," was Lucy's answer, and after a moment Grey continued:

"Wasn't Mr. Sanford here once; in the room, I mean?"

"Yes, many times," Lucy replied. "He prayed for you here two or three times, and in the church every Sunday."

"Send for him. I want to see him. Send now," Grey said, adding, as he saw the expression of joy on his aunt's face, and guessed what was in her mind. "Don't think I'm awful good, or going to join the church. It is not that, but I want to see the minister before Aunt Hannah comes back."

Fortunately Mr. Sanford was at that very moment below. He had stopped on his way to the post-office to inquire for Grey, at whose side he soon stood, holding the pale hand in his, and looking inquiringly into the eager face of the boy who had asked to see him alone, and who said to him as he had to his Aunt Lucy;

"Don't think I am good, or going to join the church, for I am not, I thank you for praying for me. I guess it helped me pull through, and I am going to pray myself by and by, but I don't want you to talk to me about that now. I want to ask you something. Grandpa never joined the church, and at the funeral you said he was good, that he was safe; did you mean it?"

Grey's eyes were fixed earnestly upon the rector, who answered, unhesitatingly:

"I wish I were as sure of heaven as he. I know he is safe."

"You *are* sure?" Grey rejoined, flushing a little, for now he was nearing the real object of his interview with the rector, "You are sure, and Aunt Hannah is sure. She ought to know. You believe her a good woman?"

Mr. Sanford could not understand the breathless eagerness with which Grey awaited his reply, which came quickly, decidedly:

"Your Aunt Hannah! Yes, she is the best, the truest, the purest woman who ever lived. She is a martyr, a saint, an angel. I never knew one like her."

"Thank you," Grey said, with a look of intense relief in his eyes. "You have made me very happy. I wanted to feel sure, about grandpa; and now, please go. I am very tired; some time I will see you again."

So the rector left him, feeling a little disappointed with the result of his interview. He had hoped that Grey wished to speak with him of himself, and of his new resolves for the future, when, in fact, it was only a wish to be reassured of his grandfather's safety, which the boy possibly doubted a little because he had never united himself with the church. That Hannah had anything to do with it the rector never suspected and did not dream of the great gladness in Grey's heart as he kept repeating to himself:

"She is good, even if she did know. She is a saint, a martyr, an angel; and I distrusted her; but all my life hereafter I will devote to her by way of atonement."

It was late in the afternoon when Hannah returned to Grey's Park, and went up to see her nephew, of whose improved condition she had heard.

"Oh, auntie," he cried, when he saw her. "I am so glad to have you back;" and Hannah did not guess that the boy had her back in more ways than one, but she kissed him, and cried over him, and told him how her heart had ached when she feared she might lose him, and how desolate the world would be without him, while he told her how much he loved her, and how he meant to care for her when he was a man, and take her to Europe, and everywhere.

"And you will grow young again," he said. "You have never had any youth, I guess. How old are you, auntie?"

She told him she was forty-six, and making a little mental subtraction he thought:

"Fifteen when it happened. No, she has had no youth, no girlhood;" but to her he said: "You do

not look so old, and you are very pretty still; not exactly like Aunt Lucy or mother. You are different from them both, though more like Aunt Lucy, whose face is the sweetest I ever saw except yours, which looks as if Christ had put His hand hard upon it and left His impress there."

There were great tears upon the face where Christ had laid His hands so hard, and Grey kissed them away, and then asked about the old house, and said he was coming to spend the day with her just as soon as possible, and the night, too, adding, in a sudden burst of bravery and enthusiasm:

"And I'll sleep in grandpa's room, if you wish it, I am not afraid because he died in there."

"No, no," Hannah said, and her cheek paled a little. "It is not necessary for you to sleep there. No one will ever do that again. I shall always keep it as he left it."

Grey knew what she meant, but made no comment, and as he seemed very tired Hannah soon left him to rest.

Naturally strong and full of vigor, Grey's recovery was rapid, and in ten days from the time the fever left him, his father drove him to the farm-house, where Hannah was expecting him, with the south room made as cheerful as possible, and a most tempting lunch spread for him upon a little round table before the fire. Mr. Jerrold was going to Boston that afternoon, and so Grey was left alone with his aunt, as he wished to be, for he meant to tell her that he, too, shared her secret, and after his father had gone and his lunch was over, he burst out suddenly:

"Auntie, there is something I must tell you. I can't keep it any longer. I was here the night grandpa died. I was in the kitchen, and heard about—about that under the floor!"

"Grey!" Hannah gasped, as her work dropped from her nerveless hands, which shook violently.

"Yes," Grey went on. "I wanted to come with father, but he said no, and so I went to my room but could not go to bed, for I knew grandpa was dying, and I wished to see him, and I stole out the back way, and came across the fields and into the kitchen, where I stood warming myself by the stove and heard you all talking in the next room. I did not mean to listen, but I could not help it, and I heard grandpa say: 'Thirty-one years ago, to-night, I killed a man in the kitchen yonder, and buried him under the floor, under my bed, and have slept over him ever since.' You see I remember his very words, they affected me so much, I thought the floor came up and struck me in the face, and that my throat would burst with the lump which almost strangled me. I did not hear any more, for I ran from the house into the open air where I could breathe, and went back to Grey's Park, and up to my room without being missed at all. I thought I should die, and that was what made me sick, and why I did not come here till the funeral and why I did not want to see grandpa. I was so disappointed, so shocked, and afraid he was not in heaven, till I heard what Mr. Sanford said, and, auntie, I must tell you all, I thought dreadful things of you, too, because you knew. I thought you were what they said '*Old 'Scape Gallows*' was, an accomplice."

"Oh, Grey, my boy, no, no," Hannah cried aghast. "This is worse than death, and from *you*. I cannot bear it."

In an instant Grey was kneeling at her side, imploring her forgiveness and telling her he did not think this of her now.

"I know you are good, a saint, a martyr, an angel, the best woman that ever lived. Mr. Sanford said so."

"Mr. Sanford!" Hannah, exclaimed. "What do you mean? You have not spoken to him?"

"Not of that," Grey said. "But I sent for him, you know, and Aunt Lucy thought I was going to be good and join the church, but I only wanted him to tell me sure that grandpa was safe, and that you were good, as I used to think you were. He never suspected I was inquiring about you, I brought it in so neat; but he said you were a martyr, a saint, an angel, and the best woman that ever lived, and I believed him, and love you so much, and pity you so much for all you must have suffered. And, now, tell me about it. Don't omit a single detail. I want to know it all."

So she told him everything, and when the story was ended, he took her white face between his two hands, and kissing it tenderly, said:

"Now, I am sure you are a saint, a martyr, an angel; but the martyrdom is over. I shall take care of you, I will help you find Elizabeth Rogers or her heirs, and father shall not know. I'll go to Europe when I am a man, and inquire at every house in Carnarvon for Joel Rogers or his sister; and when I find the heirs, I will send the money to them, and they shall never know where it came from; and if there are shares in quarries and mines, I'll manage that somehow. I am to be a lawyer, you know, and I can find some kink which will work."

How he comforted her with his cheery, hopeful words, and how fast the hours flew by until Tom came to take him back to Grey's Park. But Grey begged so hard to stay all night, that Hannah ventured to keep him, and Tom returned without him.

"I am not a bit afraid of the house now, and would as soon sleep in grandpa's room as anywhere," he said to Hannah, as they sat together in the evening, and then they talked of her future until Grey was old enough to take care of her, as he meant to do.

"Shall you stay here?" he asked, and Hannah replied:

"I don't know yet what I shall do, I shall let your father decide for me."

"You might live with us in Boston," Grey said. "That would be jolly for me; but I don't know how you and mother would hitch together, you are so unlike. I wish I was big, and married, and then I know just where you would go. But father will arrange it, I am sure."

And three weeks later, when Burton came up from Boston after his son, he did arrange it for her.

"It is of no use," he said to her. "I have tried meeting and mingling with my friends, and I feel as if they saw on my face what is always in my mind, and if I stay in Boston I shall some day scream out to the public that my father was a murderer. I could not help it, and I can understand now how Lucy was wrought upon to do what she did in church when they thought her crazy. I shall be crazy, too, if I stay here, and I am going away. Geraldine likes Europe, and so do I; and as I can leave my business as well as not, I shall shut up my house, and go abroad until I feel that I can look my fellowmen in the face."

"And Grey?" Hannah asked, sorrowfully, knowing how dreary her life would be with him so far away.

"I shall take him with me," her brother replied, "I shall put him in school somewhere in England or Germany, and send him eventually to Oxford. But you will stay here, won't you? I'd rather you would."

"Yes," she answered, still more sadly, for she fully understood the intense selfishness of the man, who went on:

"I shall be happier, knowing you are here, for I cannot have the house sold, or rented, or even left alone, lest by some chance the secret of our lives should be discovered. I am almost as morbid on the subject as father was: but with you here, I shall feel safe. You can have any one live with you whom you choose, and I will supply you with plenty of money. So I do not see why you should not in time be quite content."

"Yes, brother," Hannah said, very low; "but shall I not see Grey for years?"

"Perhaps not; I don't know," was her brother's reply, as he arose to go, without a single throb of pity for the woman who was to be left alone in the home so hateful to him.

But Grey, when he heard of the plan, which did not surprise him, comforted her with the assurance that he should spend all his long vacations with her, as he did not mind crossing the ocean at all.

"I may be with you oftener than if I were in America, and then some time I'll go to Carnarvon and begin the search. So, don't feel so badly," he said to her as he saw the great tears roll down her cheeks, and guessed in part her sorrow.

And so the necessary arrangements were made as rapidly as possible, and one Saturday about the middle of March, Hannah stood on the wharf in New York with a feeling like death in her heart, and saw Grey sail away and leave her there alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXPECTING BESSIE.

After Miss McPherson had sent her letter to her nephew, Archie, asking him to give his little daughter to her keeping, her whole nature seemed to change, and there was on her face a look of happy expectancy rarely seen there before. Even her cook, Sarah, and her maid, Flora, noticed and discussed it as they sat together by the kitchen fire; but as Miss McPherson never encouraged familiarities with her domestics, they asked her no questions, and only wondered and speculated when she bade them remove everything from the small bedroom at the end of the upper hall, which communicated with her own sleeping apartment. But when this room was papered and painted, and furnished with a pretty carpet of drab and blue, and a single iron bedstead with lace hangings, and a child's bureau and rocking-chair, and more than all when a large doll was bought, with a complete wardrobe for it, Flora could no longer restrain her curiosity, but asked if her mistress were expecting a child.

"Yes," was the reply, "my grandniece, Betsey, who was named for me. She lives at Stoneleigh, my old home in Wales, and I may get a letter any day saying she has sailed. I shall go to New York to meet her so have my things ready for me to start at a moment's notice."

So confident was Miss McPherson that her nephew would be glad to have his daughter removed from the influences around her to a home where she was sure of enough to eat, and that his frivolous wife would be glad to be rid of a child who must be in the way of her flirtations, that she was constantly expecting to hear that she was coming. She did not believe Archie would bring her himself, but she thought he would probably consign her to the care of some reliable person, or put her in charge of the captain or stewardess, and in her anxiety to have the little girl she had written a second letter three days after she sent the first. In this she had suggested the

stewardess of the Celtic, whom she knew, and with whom she assured Archie he could trust his child. But days and weeks went by, until it was past the middle of June, and still there were no tidings of Bessie; at last, however, there came a foreign letter, addressed in a woman's hand to:

"Miss Elizabeth McPherson, Allington, Worcester Co., Mass., U.S.A."

The Elizabeth was an affront to the good woman, who bristled all over with resentment, as she held the dainty envelope in her hand and studied the strange monogram, "D.A.M." (Daisy Allen McPherson).

"Swears even in her monogram! I knew she would," was Miss Betsey's comment, as she broke the seal and began to read, first muttering to herself, "She writes well enough."

The letter was as follows:

"STONELEIGH, BANGOR, June 3d.

"OUR DEAR AUNT."

"Umph! I'm not *her* aunt," was the mental comment, and then she read on:

"We have just come home from Paris, where we spent several delightful weeks with a party of friends, who would gladly have kept us longer, but Archie was homesick for the old place, though what he can see in it to admire I am sure I do not know. So here we are for an indefinite length of time, and here we found both your letters, which old Anthony, who grows more and more stupid every year, failed to forward to us in Paris. As Archie leaves everything to me, he said I must answer the letters, and thank you for your offer to remove our little girl from the poisonous atmosphere you think surrounds her, and bring her up morally and spiritually. I do not know what the atmosphere of Stoneleigh used to be when you lived here, but I assure you it is very healthy now; not at all poisonous, or malarious. We have had some of the oldest yews cut down and that lets in the sunshine and fresh air, too.

"But I am wandering from the object of my letter, which is to say that we cannot let you have our little Bessie, even with the prospect of her learning to scour knives and pare potatoes, and possibly having a few thousands, if she does well. Archie would as soon part with his eyes as with Bessie; while nothing short of an assured fortune, and that a large one, would induce me to give her up. She is in one sense my stock in trade—"

"Heartless wretch!" dropped from the indignant lady's lips. "Her stock in trade! What does she mean? Does she play out this child for her own base purposes?"

Then she read on:

"Strangers are always attracted by her, and through her we make so many pleasant acquaintances. Indeed, she quite throws me into the shade, but I am not at all jealous. I am satisfied to be known only as Bessie's mother. I am very proud of her, and hope some day to see her at least a countess."

"Countess! Fool!" muttered Miss Betsey, and read on:

"The inclosed photograph is like her in features, but fails, I think, in expression, but I send it, as it will give you some idea of her as she is now."

Here Miss Betsey stopped, and taking a card from the bit of tissue paper in which it was wrapped, gazed earnestly and with a feeling of intense yearning and bitter disappointment upon the beautiful face, whose great wide-open, blue eyes looked at her, just as they had looked at her on the sands at Aberystwyth. The photographer's art had succeeded admirably with Bessie, and made a most wonderful picture of childish innocence and beauty, besides bringing out about the mouth and into the eyes that patient, half sorry expression which spoke to Miss Betsey of loneliness and hunger far up in the fourth and fifth stories of fashionable hotels, where the little girl often ate her smuggled dinner of rolls and nuts and raisins, and whatever else her mother could convey into her pocket unobserved by those around her.

"Yes, she looks as if a big slice of plum pudding or mince pie would do her good! Poor little thing, and I am not to have her," Miss Betsey said, with a lump in her throat, as she continued reading:

"You saw her once, I know, three years ago, at Aberystwyth, though she had no idea then who the funny woman was who asked her so many questions. Why didn't you make yourself known to us? Archie would have been delighted to meet you. He never saw you, I believe. And why didn't you speak to me when I went by as Bessie says I did? Was Archie with me, I wonder? or, was it young Lord Hardy from Dublin, Archie's best friend? He was with us there, and sometimes walked with me when Archie was not inclined to go out. He is very nice, and Archie is very fond of him, while to Bessie and me he is like a brother."

Here Miss Betsey stopped again, and taking off her spectacles harangued the tortoise-shell cat, who was sitting on the rug and looking at her.

"Archie's friend! her brother! Humbug! It does make me so mad to see a married woman with a

young snipper-snapper of a fellow chasing after her, and using her husband as a cover. Mark my words, the woman who does that is not a pure, good woman at heart, or in thought, though outwardly she may be sweet as sugar; and her husband—

"Well, he is both weak and unmanly to allow it, and is looked upon with contempt."

To all this Mrs. Tortoise-shell purred an assent, and the lady went on with the letter.

> "Bessie is wailing for me to go for a walk, and so I must bring this letter to a close. Archie sends his love, and will, with me, be very glad to welcome you to your old home, should you care to visit it. When I was a child I thought it the grandest place in the world, but it is very much run down, for we have no money with which to keep it up, and have only the two servants, Anthony and Dorothy, both of whom are getting old. And yet I do not complain of Archie for not trying to do something. Once, however, before we were married I tried to rouse him to something like energy, and caring for himself, but since seeing the world, his world I mean, for you know of course I am not what would be considered his equal socially, I have changed my mind, and do not blame him at all. Brought up as he was with an idea that he must not work, it is very hard for him to overcome early prejudices of training and education, and I think his uncle, the Hon. John, would be intensely mortified to have his nephew in trade, though he is very careful not to give him any thing toward his support, and we are so poor that even a hundred pounds would be a fortune to us. Maybe some good angel will send it to us by and by.
>
> "Hoping it most devoutly, I have the honor to be,
>
> "Very sincerely, your niece,
>
> "DAISY ALLEN McPHERSON.
>
> "P.S.—Bessie thanks you again for the turquois ring you sent her."

"A hundred pounds! Five hundred dollars! and maybe she devoutly hopes I shall be the good angel who will send it to her, but she is mistaken. Do I look like an angel?" Miss Betsey said, fiercely, addressing herself again to the cat. "No, they may go to destruction their own way. I wash my hands of them. I should have been glad for the little girl, but I can't have her. She will grow up like her mother, marry some fool, have her friend and brother dangling after her, and smuggle dinners and lunches for her children up in the attic. Well, so be it. That ends it forever!"

The letter was an insult from beginning to end, and Miss McPherson felt it as such, and with a sigh of keen regret as for something lost, she put away the picture, and when Flora asked when little Miss Bessie was coming, she answered curtly:

"Never!"

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

STONELEIGH.

The season is June; the time fourteen years prior to the commencement of this story, and the place an old garden in Wales, about half way between Bangor and the suspension bridge across Menai Straits. The garden, which was very large, must have been beautiful, in the days when money was more plenty with the proprietor than at present; but now there were marks of neglect and decay everywhere, and in some parts of it the shrubs, and vines, and roses were mixed together in so hopeless a tangle that to separate them seemed impossible, while the yew trees, of which there were several, grew dark, and thick, and untrimmed, and cast heavy shadows upon the grass plats near them. The central part of the garden, however, showed signs of care. The broad gravel walk was clean and smooth, and the straight borders beside it were full of summer flowers, among which roses were conspicuous. Indeed, there were roses everywhere, for Anthony loved them as if they were his children, and so did the white-faced invalid indoors, whose room old Dorothy, Anthony's wife, kept filled with the freshest and choicest. It did not matter to her that the sick man had wandered very far from the path of duty, and was dying from excessive dissipation; he was her pride, her boy, whom she had tended from his babyhood, and whom she would watch over and care for to the last. She had defended and stood by him, when he brought home a pretty little brown-eyed, brown haired creature, whose only fault was her poverty and the fact that she was a chorus singer in the operas in London, where Hugh McPherson had seen and fallen in love with her. Two years she lived at Stoneleigh, happy as the singing birds which flew about the place and built their nests in the yews, and then one summer morning she died, and left to Dorothy's care a little boy of three weeks, who, without much attention from any one as regarded his moral and mental culture, had scrambled along somehow, and had reached the age

of sixteen without a single serious thought as to his future and without ever having made the least exertion for himself. Dorothy and Anthony, the two servants of the place, had taken care of him, and would continue to do so even after his father's death, or, if they did not, his uncle, the Hon. John McPherson, in London, would never see him want, he thought; so, with no bad habits except his extreme indolence, which amounted to absolute laziness, the boy's days passed on, until the hot summer morning in June, when he lay asleep on a broad bench under the shade of a yew tree, with his face upturned to the sunlight which penetrated through the overchanging boughs and fell in patches upon him. Occasionally a fly or honey-bee came and buzzed about him, but never alighted upon him, because of the watchful vigilance of the young girl who stood by his side, shielding him from the sun's rays with her person and her while cape bonnet, which she also used to scare away the insects, for Archie McPherson must not be troubled even in his sleep, if care of hers could prevent it.

The girl who was not more than twelve in reality, though, her training had made her much older in knowledge and experience, was singularly beautiful, with great blue eyes and wavy golden hair, which fell in long curls to her waist. Her dress, though scrupulously neat and clean, and becoming, indicated that she belonged to the middle or working class, far below the social position of the boy. But whatever inequality of rank there was between them, she had never felt it, for ever since she could remember anything, Archie McPherson had played with and petted and teased her, and she was almost as much at home at Stoneleigh as in the work-room of her mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Allen, who made dresses for the ladies of Bangor and vicinity.

"How handsome he is," she said to herself, as she gazed admiringly upon the sleeping boy, "and how white and slim his hands are. A great deal whiter than mine, but that, I suppose, is because he is a gentleman's son, and I have to wash dishes, and sweep and dust the rooms;" and the girl glanced regretfully at her own hands, which, though fat and well-shaped, were brown, and showed signs of the dusting and dish-washing required of her by her mother, whose means were very limited, and whose dressmaking did not warrant luxury of any kind.

"I wish my hands were white, and that I could wear diamond rings like the ladies at the George," she continued; "and sometime I will, if they are only shams. Half the world does not know the difference."

Just then a handsome carriage containing a gentleman and lady, child and nurse, and maid, turned in at the lodge gate, which Anthony opened very respectfully, with a pull at his forelock.

"That's the McPhersons from London! What an ugly, proud-looking thing Lady Jane is!" the girl thought, and in watching the carriage as it drove toward the house she relaxed her vigilance so far that a huge blue bottle-fly which had been skirting around the spot, for some time, alighted squarely upon Archie's nose, and roused him from his slumber.

Yawning lazily, and stretching his long arms, he looked up, and seeing his companion, called out, in a tone half familiar, half patronizing, as he would address an inferior:

"Halloo, Daze, what are you doing here?"

"Keeping the sun and the flies off from you; they bite awfully this morning," she answered, quietly, and Archie continued:

"Upon my word, Daze, you are a little trump, standing bareheaded in the sun to shield me! How long have you been here?"

"Half an hour, perhaps; and I was getting tired," was the girl's reply; but Archie did not ask her to sit down beside him, for he wanted all the bench to lounge upon, and leaning upon his elbow he went on talking to her, and answering her questions jestingly, until she said:

"How is your father?"

Then there came a shadow upon the face of the boy, who replied:

"He is worse, and they have sent for Uncle John and Lady Jane. We expect them to-day."

"Yes, I know; they came while you were asleep. Lady Jane looks very proud," Daisy said, and Archie rejoined:

"She looks as she is then. I hate her!"

If Archie hated her, Daisy did too, and she answered promptly, "So do I!" though she had never seen the lady in question until that morning when she rode by, arching her long neck and looking curiously around her.

"She thinks the world made only for her and the baby Neil," Archie said, "and Dorothy thinks so too. She is in a great way about her coming because we have no servants, I don't care! Let Uncle John give us some money if they want style when they come to Stoneleigh."

"That's so!" and Daisy nodded approvingly; then she went on: "Mother has made some lemon jelly for the dinner, because Dorothy says she makes it so nice, and I am going over this evening to wash the dishes and help Dorothy a little."

"You? I wouldn't!" Archie said, looking reflectingly at her.

"But she will give me a shilling toward a new sash," was the girl's answer, and Archie replied:

"I'll give you the shilling; don't go," and he put his hand in his pocket for the shilling, which Daisy knew was not there, for the poverty of the McPhersons of Stoneleigh was no secret in the neighborhood any more than was the pride which kept them so poor.

She had often heard both discussed by her mother's customers, and when Archie said, as he withdrew his hand empty, "Plague on it, what a bother it is never to have any money; I wish we were not so poor. I wonder how I can make a fortune; I've thought of forty ways," she asked saucily:

"Did you ever think of going to work?"

"To work! To work!" he repeated, slowly, as if not fully comprehending her, "I don't think I quite know what you mean."

"I mean," she replied, "that if you have no money, and want some, why don't you go to work and earn it like Giles, the tailor, or Jones, the baker? It would not hurt you one bit."

"That is rich!" Archie exclaimed, sitting upright for the first time and laughing immoderately. "The best thing I have heard. Ask Lady Jane, or Uncle John, or even Anthony, how they would like to have a McPherson turn baker, or tailor, or tinker."

"You know I did not mean you to be any of these," the girl answered, a little indignantly; "but you might do something. You can go to London and be a clerk in that big store, Marshall & Snellgrove's. That would not be hard, nor spoil your hands."

"I am afraid it would, little Daze," the boy replied. "You will have to try again. It would never do for a McPherson to be in trade. We were not born to it. How would *gambling* suit you? Piles of money are made that way."

"Gambling!" Daisy repeated, and could Miss Betsey McPherson have seen the scorn which flashed in the eyes of Daisy Allen, she would have forgiven the Daisy McPherson whom she saw years after upon the terrace at Aberystwyth flirting with Lord Hardy.

But the Daisy of the Marine Terrace was a very different person from the young girl who, with a hand upon each hip and her head on one side, gave Archie a piece of her mind in terms neither mild nor selected.

"Gambling! I'd never speak to you again if you stooped to such a thing as to play for money. You'd better a thousand times sell butcher's meat at the corner, or cry gooseberries in the street! Suppose you are a gentleman, a McPherson, without money, must you either gamble, or sit still and let some one else take care of you? It won't hurt *you* to work any more than any body else, and you'll have to do something. Every body says so. Suppose you do have Stoneleigh when your father dies; there are only a few acres besides the park, and they are all run down. What are you going to do?"

"Upon my word, I did not know you had so much vim. You are a regular little spit-fire," Archie said, regarding her intently; then after a pause, he added: "What am I going to do? I am sure I don't know, unless I marry you and let you take care of me! I believe you could do it."

The hands which had been pressed on Daisy's hips met suddenly together in a quick, nervous clasp, while there came over the girl's face a look of wonder and surprise, and evident perplexity. Although Daisy was much older than her years in some things, the idea of marrying Archibald McPherson, or any one else, had never entered her mind.

Now, however, she was conscious of a new feeling, which she could not define, and after regarding him fixedly for a moment, without any apparent consciousness, she answered in a very matter of fact way:

"I believe I could take care of you—somehow!"

"I know you could; so, suppose we call it a bargain," Archie said, but before Daisy could reply Lady Jane's maid appeared coming down the broad walk.

Stopping in front of the girl and boy, and merely noticing the former by a supercilious stare, she said to the latter interrogatively:

"Mr. Archibald McPherson?"

"Present!" he answered, with a comical look at Daisy, on whom it was lost, for she was admiring the smart cap and pink ribbons of the maid, who said:

"If you are Mr. Archibald, your father wishes to see you. He said I was to fetch you directly."

Rising slowly Archie shook himself together, and started for the house, while Daisy looked after him with a new and thoughtful expression on her face.

"Archie!" she called at last. "Tell Dorothy I shall not come to help her with the dishes. I have changed my mind. I do not want the shilling."

"All right," was Archie's response, as he walked on never dreaming that he had that morning sown the first germ of the ambition which was to overshadow all Daisy Allen's future life, and bear fruit a hundred-fold.

CHAPTER II.

THE McPHERSONS.

The room in which Hugh McPherson was lying was the largest, and coolest, and best furnished in the house, for since he had been confined to his bed Dorothy had brought into it everything she thought would make it more attractive and endurable to the fastidious invalid, who, on the June morning when his son was in the garden talking to Daisy Allen, was propped upon pillows scarcely whiter than his thin, worn face, and was speaking of Archie to his brother John, who was standing before him with folded arms, and a gloomy, troubled expression on his face. Just across the room, by an open window, sat Lady Jane, pretending to rearrange a bowl of roses on the table near her, but listening intently to the conversation between the two brothers.

"I don't know what will become of Archie," the sick man said, speaking very slowly. "I shall leave him nothing but Stoneleigh, with a mortgage on it for four hundred pounds, and a little annuity which came through his mother. Strange, that from dear little Dora, who, when I married her, had nothing but her sweet voice and sweeter face, the boy should inherit all the ready money he can ever have, unless you or our sister Betsey open your hearts to him. You used to fancy the boy, and talked once of adopting him, when I had that fever at Pau, and you came to see me."

Here Lady Jane's long neck arched itself more proudly, and John felt how intently she was awaiting his reply.

"Yes, Hugh," he said, "I like the boy. He is bright and intelligent; and I did think of adopting him once, but that was before Neil came. Now I have a son, which makes a difference. I cannot take Archie, or do very much for him either. You know I have very little money of my own, and I have no right to spend Lady Jane's."

Here the willowy figure near the window bent very low over the roses, as if satisfied with the turn matters were taking, as John went on:

"As his uncle and guardian, I will see to him, of course, and will write to our sister, asking her to do something for him. Perhaps she will invite him to come to her in America, and if so, what are your wishes? Shall I let him go?"

The invalid hesitated a moment, while his common sense fought with the old hereditary pride of blood and birth, which would keep one in the rank to which it had pleased God to call him, even if he starved there. The latter gained the victory, and Hugh replied:

I would rather Archie should not go to America if there is any other way. Betsey is very peculiar in her ideas, and would as soon apprentice him to a shoemaker as anything else. In the last letter I received from her, she advised me to put him to some trade, and to break stone myself on the highway, rather than do nothing. No, Archie must not go to America, he may marry well, if you and Lady Jane look after him; and you will, John. You will have a care for my boy when I am gone, and, oh, never, never let him go near the gaming-table. That has been my ruin. Keep him from that, whatever you do."

"Why not require a promise from him to that effect? He is a truthful boy; he will keep his word," John said, and Hugh replied:

"Yes, yes, that's it; strange I never thought of it before. I will send for him at once. Call Anthony to fetch him; and, oh, John, I owe Anthony fifty pounds; money borrowed at different times from his hard earnings. You will see that he is paid?"

"Yes," John answered, promptly; for Anthony, who had been at Stoneleigh since he was a boy, and had been so much to him, was his favorite, and should not suffer.

He would pay Anthony; but when his brother mentioned other debts owing to the trades-people in Bangor, and Beaumaris, and even Carnarvon, he objected, on the ground that he was not able, but said he would lay the matter before his sister Betsey, who was far richer than himself.

It was at this point that Archie appeared in the door, and after greeting his Uncle John and the Lady Jane with the grace and courtesy so natural to him, he went to his father's bedside, where he stopped suddenly, struck with an expression on the pinched, white face, which earlier in the morning had not been there.

"Father," he cried, while a great fear took possession of him, "what is it? Are you worse?"

"Yes, my son, weaker—that is all—and going from you very fast—before the day is over, perhaps—and I want to talk to you, Archie, and to tell you I have nothing to leave you but Stoneleigh, and that is mortgaged; nothing but the small annuity on your life from your mother's little fortune, which came too late to do her any good. Oh, Dora! who bore with me so patiently, and loved me through all—shall I find her, I wonder? She was so good, and I am so bad! And, Archie, my ruin has been the gaming-table, which you must avoid as you would the plague. Death and eternal ruin sit there side by side. Shun it, Archie, and promise me, as you hope for heaven, never to play for money—never!"

"But what shall I do?" Archie asked, remembering that he had intended to try his fortune at Monte Carlo, where he had heard such large sums were sometimes made. "What shall I do?"

"I don't know, my boy," the father replied. "There will be some way provided. Your Uncle John will look after you as your guardian, and your aunt in America will help. But promise, and I shall die happier."

And so, with no especial thought about it, except that his father wished it, Archie McPherson pledged himself never to play for money under any circumstances, and the father knew the boy would keep the pledge, and felt that his last hours of life ware easier; for those hours were his last, and when the sun went down the master of Stoneleigh lay dead in the room where he had blessed his son and commended him to the care of his brother and Anthony, feeling, certain that the latter would be truer to the trust than the former, in whom selfishness was the predominant trait.

It was a very quiet, unpretentious funeral; for John McPherson, who knew the expense of it would fall on himself, would have no unnecessary display, and the third day after his death Hugh McPherson was laid to rest by the side of the Dora he had often neglected, but always loved.

As soon as the funeral was over, John returned to London with Lady Jane, having first given Archie a great deal of good advice, to the effect, that he must do the best he could with what he had, and never spend a shilling unnecessarily, or forget that he was a McPherson.

On his arrival in London, John wrote to his sister in America, telling her of Hugh's death; of his poverty and his debts, and asking what she was willing to do for the boy who was left, as it were, upon the world. In due time the answer came, and was characteristic of the writer. She would pay the mortgage and the debts to the trades-people, rather than have the McPherson name disgraced, and she would take the boy and put him in a way to earn his own living at some honest and respectable occupation. If he did not choose to come, or her brother did not choose to send him on account of any foolish pride and prejudice against labor, then he might take care of him or the boy might starve for all of her. This letter John and Lady Jane read together, but did not consider for a moment. With a scornful toss of her head Lady Jane declared herself ready to give of her own means toward the maintenance of the boy, rather than to see a McPherson degraded to manual labor and thus disgrace her son Neil, the apple of her eye.

And so it was settled between them that Archie was to be kept in ignorance of his Aunt Betsey's offer, which the low taste he had inherited from his mother might possibly prompt him to accept. Meanwhile he was for the present to remain at Stoneleigh, where his living would cost a mere pittance, and where he would pursue his studies as heretofore, under the direction of a retired clergyman, who, for a nominal sum, took boys to educate. This sum, with other absolute necessaries, John undertook to pay, feeling when all the arrangements were made that he had done his duty to his brother's child, who was perfectly delighted to be left by himself at Stoneleigh, where he could do as he pleased with Anthony and Dorothy, and his teacher, too, for that matter, and where he was free to talk with and tease and at last make love to Daisy Allen, for his Uncle John paid but little attention to him beyond paying the sum he had pledged, and having him in his family at London and in Derbyshire, for a few weeks each year when it was most convenient.

Naturally he could not help falling in love with Daisy, who was the only girl he ever saw except the high-bred, milk-and-water misses whom he sometimes met in Lady Jane's drawing-room, and who, in point of beauty and grace and piquancy, could in no degree compare with the playmate of his childhood.

After the morning when Daisy kept the sun from him in the old yew-shaded garden, and he jestingly proposed to marry her, that she might take care of him, a change came over the girl, who began to develope the talent for intrigue in which she afterward became so successful. And as a preliminary step she made herself so necessary to Archie that his life without her would hardly have been endurable, and of his own accord he always shortened as much as possible, his visits to London, for he knew how bright was the face and how warm the welcome awaiting him at Stoneleigh.

And so it came about that when Daisy was sixteen and he was twenty, he offered himself to the girl, who pretended no surprise or reserve, but promptly answered yes, and then suggested that their engagement be kept a secret from every one until he came of age and could do as he pleased, for Daisy well knew the fierce opposition he would meet from his proud relatives, if once they knew that he had stooped to the daughter of a dressmaker. And so well did she manage the affair that not even Dorothy suspected the real state of affairs, until one morning, when Archie, who had been absent for two weeks on a tour through Scotland, astonished her by walking into the house with Daisy, whom he introduced as his wife and the mistress of Stoneleigh. She, too, had been to Scotland to visit some friends, and there the marriage was consummated, and Archie had some one to take care of him at last.

And when his uncle John wrote him a most angry letter denouncing him as his nephew, and cutting off his yearly allowance, which, though small, was still something to depend upon, Daisy rose to the situation and managed his annuity, and managed the household, and managed him, until enough was saved from their slender means to start on the campaign which she had planned for herself, and which she carried out so successfully.

The Continent was her chosen field of action, and Monte Carlo the point toward which she

steadily set her face; until, at last, one Lovely October day, five months after her marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Archibald McPherson, of Stoneleigh, Wales, were registered at the Hotel d'Angleterre, and look possession of one of the cheapest rooms, until they could afford a better.

"It does not matter where we sleep, or where we eat, so long as we make a good appearance outside," she said to Archie, who shrank a little at first from the close, dreary room on the fifth floor, so different from his large, airy apartment at home, which though very plainly furnished, had about it an air of refinement and respectability in striking contrast to this ten by twelve hole, where Daisy made the most ravishing toilets of the simplest materials, with which to attract and ensnare any silly moth ready to singe its wings at her flame. She had settled the point that if Archie could not earn his living because he was a McPherson, she must do it for him. Five months had sufficed to show her that there was in him no capability or disposition for work, or business, or exertion of any kind. He was a great, good-natured, easy-going, indolent fellow, popular with everybody, and very fond, and very proud of, and very dependent upon her, with no grain of jealousy in his nature. So, when the English swells, of which there were many at Monte Carlo, flocked around her, attracted by her fresh young beauty and the girlish simplicity of her manners, she readily encouraged them; not because she cared particularly for their admiration, but because she meant to use them for her own purpose, and make them subservient to her interests.

CHAPTER III.

AT MONTE CARLO.

Reader, have you ever been to Monte Carlo, that loveliest spot in all the world, where nature and art have done so much; where the summer rains fall so softly, and the winter sun shines so brightly, and where the blue of the autumnal sky is only equaled by the blue of the Mediterranean sea, whose waves kiss the beautiful shore and cool the perfumed air? If you have been there you do not need a description of the place, or of the mass of human beings, who daily press up the hill from the station, or, swarming from those grand hotels, hurry toward one common center, the tall Casino, whose gilded domes can he seen from afar, and whose interior, though, so beautiful to look upon, is, as Miss Betsey McPherson would express it, the very gate of hell. Perhaps, like the writer of this story, you have stood by the long tables, and watched the people seated there; the white-haired, watery-eyed old men, whose trembling hands can scarcely hold the gold they put down with such feverish eagerness; the men of middle age, whom experience has taught to play cautiously, and stop just before the tide of success turns against them; the young men, who, with the perspiration standing thickly about their pale lips, and a strange glitter in their feverish eyes as they see hundreds swept away, still play recklessly, desperately, until all is lost, and they leave the accursed spot, hopelessly ruined, sometimes seeking forgetfulness in death, with only the silent stars looking down upon them and the restless sea moaning in their ears, lost, lost! There are women too, at Monte Carlo, more, I verily believe than men; old women, who sit from the hour of noon to the hour of midnight; women, with their life's history written on their wrinkled, wicked faces; women, who laugh hysterically when all they have is lost, and then borrow of their friends to try their luck again; women, who go from table to table with their long bags upon their arms, and who only risk five or ten francs at a time, and stop when their unlucky star is in the ascendant, or they feel that curious eyes are watching them. For these habitual players at Monte Carlo are very superstitious, and it takes but little to unnerve them. There are young women there too, who play first, to see if they can win, and when by the fall of the little ball their gold piece is doubled, they try again and again, until the habit is fixed, and their faces are as well known in the saloons as those of the old men with the blear eyes, which find time between the plays to scan these young girls curiously, and calculate their price.

And among these young women, Daisy McPherson sat the morning after her arrival at Monte Carlo, with a look of sweet innocence on her face, and apparent unconsciousness of the attention she was attracting. She had been among the first who entered the *salon* at the hour of its opening, for she was eager for the contest. She did not expect Archie to play, for she knew he would not break the promise made to his dying father. But she was bound by no such vow, and she meant to make her fortune on the spot where gold was won so easily, and alas, so easily lost.

Rarely, if ever, had a more beautiful face been seen in that gilded den than Daisy's, as she entered the room, leaning upon the arm of her husband, and walking slowly from table to table to see how it was done before making her first venture. Not a man but turned to look at her, and when at last, with a trembling hand, she put down her five franc piece, not one but was glad when she took up two, and with a smile of triumph tried her luck again. It is said that success always attends the new beginner at Monte Carlo, and it surely attended Daisy, who played on and on, seldom losing, until, grown bold by repeated success, she staked her all, one hundred and fifty francs, and doubled it at once.

"That will do. Twelve pounds are enough for one day," she said, and depositing her gains in her leather bag, she took Archie's arm and left the room, followed by scores of admiring eyes, while many an eager question was asked as to who the lovely English girl could be.

In the ante-room outside there was a crowd of people moving in opposite directions, and the train

of Daisy's blue muslin, for those were not the days of short dresses, was stepped upon and held until the gathers at the waist gave way and there was a long, ugly rent in one of the bottom flounces.

"I beg your pardon, miss, for my awkwardness, but really I could not help myself, I was so pushed by the crowd," was said in Daisy's ear in a rich Irish brogue, and turning partly round she saw a fair-haired young man, scarcely two years older than herself, with a look of genuine distress upon his aristocratic but boyish face, as he continued: "I hope I have not ruined the dress, and it is such a pretty one!"

"I am sure you could not help it, but I am awful sorry, for it is my very best gown; but then I can afford another now, for I gained twelve pounds to-day," Daisy said, gathering up her torn skirt, and thus showing to good advantage her pretty feet, and the fluted ruffles on her white petticoat.

"Daisy!" Archie said, reproachfully, for he did not like her speaking thus freely to a stranger, "Let's get out of this;" and he made his way to the open air, followed by the young man who still kept apologizing for his awkwardness, until Archie lost all patience, and said a little hotly, "I tell you, it is of no consequence. My wife can afford another."

"Your wife!" the young Irishman repented with a gasp. "Is it possible? I thought she was your sister. She looks so young. Your wife?"

"Yes, my wife! and I am Archibald McPherson, of Stoneleigh, Bangor, in Wales," Archie answered, fiercely, and with a look which he meant should annihilate the enemy, who, not in the least abashed, because he really meant no harm, lifted his soft hat very respectfully, as he replied:

"Mr. McPherson, I am glad to make your acquaintance. I was in Bangor last year, at the George Hotel, and heard your name mentioned. I am Lord Frederic Hardy, of Dublin, better known there as Ted Hardy, of Hardy Manor, and I am out on a spree, running myself, independent of tutors and guardians, and all that sort of thing; bores I consider the whole lot of them, though my guardian, fortunately, is the best-natured and most liberal old cove in the world, and gives me mostly all I want. I think it a streak of luck to have met you here, where I know nobody and nobody knows me, I hope we may be friends."

His manner, so friendly and so familiar, mollified Archie, who had heard of the young Irish lord, whose income was £10,000 a year, and who spent his money lavishly during the few days he was at the George, while Daisy, who held a title in great veneration, was enraptured with this young peer who treated her I like an equal. And so it came that in half an hour's time the three were the best of friends, and had made several plans with regard to what they would do during their stay at Monte Carlo.

The next day Daisy did not see her new acquaintance, but as she was dressing for the *table d'hote* dinner, which she could afford with her twelve pounds gain, a box was brought to her room, with a note addressed to her by Lord Hardy, who wrote as follows:

> "DEAR MRS. McPHERSON: I send you a new dress in place of the one I had the misfortune to spoil yesterday Please accept it without a protest, just as if I were your brother, or your husband's best friend, as I hope to be. Yours sincerely,
>
> "TED HARDY."

"Oh, Archie!" Daisy exclaimed, as she opened the box and held to view a soft, rich, lustrous silk of dark navy-blue, which Lord Hardy had found in Nice, whither he had been that day, and which, in quality and style, did justice to his taste and generosity. "Oh, Archie, isn't it a beauty, and it almost stands alone?"

"Ye-es," Archie answered, meditatively, for he rather doubted the propriety of receiving so costly a present for his wife from a stranger, and he said so to Daisy, adding that it was of course very kind in Lord Hardy, but wholly uncalled for, and she'd better return it at once, as he would not quite like to see her wear it.

But Daisy began to cry, and said she had never had a silk dress in her life, and this was just what she wanted, and she could make it herself, and she presumed the amount Lord Hardy paid for it was no more to him than a few pence were to them. And so she kept it and thanked Lord Hardy very sweetly for it with tears swimming in her great blue eyes, when she met him in the evening at dinner, for he had given up his luxurious quarters at the more fashionable hotel, and had come to the same house with the McPhersons, whose shadow he became. The navy-blue silk was quickly made in the privacy of Daisy's apartment, and she was very charming in it, and attracted a great deal of attention, and drove the young Irishman nearly crazy with her smiles and coquetries. Lord Hardy took her and her husband to drive, every day, in the most stylish turn-out the place afforded, and took them to Nice and Mentone, and introduced them to some friends of his who were staying at the latter place, and of whose acquaintance, slight as it was, Daisy made capital ever after. The adventuress was developing fast in her, and Lord Hardy was her willing tool, always at her beck and nod, and going everywhere with her except into the play-room itself. From that place he was debarred, for at Monte Carlo they have decreed that no male under age shall enter the charmed spot, and Teddy was not twenty-one, and had said so to the man in the office, and after that neither persuasions nor bribes were of any avail.

"Better have lied straight out," more than one hard old man said to him, but Ted Hardy could not

lie *straight out*, and so he staid out and waited around disconsolately for Daisy, whom fortune sometimes favored and sometimes deserted.

One day she lost everything, and came out greatly perturbed, to report her ill-luck to "Teddy," as she called him now.

"It's a shame that I can't go in. I could loan you some, you know," Lord Hardy said; and Daisy replied:

"Yes; 'tis an awful shame!" Then after a moment she added; "Teddy, I've been thinking. I expect my Cousin Sue from Bangor every day."

"Ye-es," Teddy replied, slowly, and thinking at once that a cousin Sue might be *de trop*. "Is she nice? How does she look?—any like you?"

"No; more like you, Ted. She is about your height—you are not tall, you know; her hair is just the color of yours, and curls just like it, while her eyes are the same. Dress you in her clothes, and you might pass for her."

"By Jove! I see. When will she be here?" Teddy asked, and Daisy replied:

"Just as soon as you can buy me some soft woollen goods to make her a suit, and a pair of woman's gloves and boots which will fit you, and a switch of hair to match yours. *Comprenez vous?*"

"You bet I do!" was the delighted answer; and within twenty-four hours the soft woolen goods, and the boots, and gloves, and switch of hair, and sundry other articles pertaining to a woman's toilet, were in Daisy's room, from which, during the next day, issued shrieks of laughter, almost too loud to be strictly lady-like, as Daisy fitted the active little Irishman, and instructed him how to demean himself as cousin Sue from Bangor.

Two days later, and there sat, side by side, at the roulette table, two fair-haired English girls, as they seemed to be, and nobody suspected the truth, or dreamed of the ruse which had succeeded admirably and admitted to forbidden ground young Lord Hardy, who, in the new dress which fitted him perfectly, and with Daisy's linen collar, and cuffs, and neck-tie, and one of Daisy's hats perched on his head and drawn over the forehead, where his own curly hair was kept in its place as a *bang* by numerous hair-pins, would have passed for a girl anywhere. Nobody had challenged him or his age as he passed in with Daisy, who was well known by this time, and around whom and her companion, a crowd of curious ones gathered and watched them as they played, cautiously at first, for that was Daisy's style; then as Ted's Irish blood began to tingle with excitement, more recklessly, until he whispered to her:

"Play high. There's no such thing as *second hand low* here. Double your stakes and I'll be your backer."

And Daisy played high and won nearly every time, while the lookers-on marveled at her luck and wondered by what strange intuition she knew just where to place her gold. For days the pair known to the crowd as "*Les cousines Anglaises*," played side by side, while Lord Hardy maintained his incognito perfectly, though some of the spectators commented on the size of his hands and wondered why he always kept them gloved. And Ted enjoyed it immensely, and thought it the jolliest lark he ever had, and did not care a *sous* how much he lost if Daisy only won. But at last her star began to wane, and her gold-pieces were swept off rapidly by the remorseless *croupier*, until fifty pounds went at one stroke, and then Daisy turned pale, and said to her companion:

"Don't you think we'd better stop? I believe Satan himself is standing behind me with his evil eye! Do look and see who is there!"

"Nobody but your husband, upon my soul," Ted whispered, after glancing back at Archie, who, with folded arms and a cloud on his brow, stood watching the game and longing to take his wife away. "Nobody but your husband, who looks black as his Satanic majesty. But never you mind, my darlint," he continued, adopting the dialect of his country. "Play high, and it's meself'll make good all you lose. Faith and be jabers they can't break Ted Hardy."

Thus reassured, Daisy played high, and her luck returned, and when she left the hall that night she was richer by a thousand pounds than when she entered it.

The next day the McPhersons left Monte Carlo, accompanied by Lord Hardy, who went with them to Genoa, and Turin, and Milan, and the Italian lakes, and Venice, where he said good-by, for he was going to Rome, while they were to turn their faces homeward, stopping for a few weeks at Paris, which Daisy said she must see before shutting herself up at stupid old Stoneleigh, which looked very uninviting to her since she had seen the world and found how much there was to enjoy and how much influence she could exert in it. Others than Ted Hardy had been attracted by the airy little beauty, who always managed to make them serviceable in some way, notwithstanding Archie's oft-repeated protest that she made too free with strangers, and accepted civilities where she ought to have given rebukes. Archie had not been altogether pleased with the campaign, and was glad when at last he drove into the old park at Stoneleigh and was warmly welcomed by Dorothy and Anthony, who had made the place as comfortable as possible with the small means at their command.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE BESSIE.

"Oh, Archie, isn't it a poky old place, and doesn't it smell of rats and must?" Daisy said, as with her husband she went through the great rooms, whose only ornament consisted in the warm fires on the hearth and the pots of chrysanthemums and late roses which Dorothy had put here and there by way of brightening the house up a bit and making the home-coming more cheerful for the young people.

But it needed more than roses, and chrysanthemums, and fires to satisfy Daisy, who, forgetting the little back room in the dressmaker's shop whence she came, and remembering only the delights of the Continent and the excitement of Monte Carlo, and the honor, as she thought it, of having a real live earl in her party, tossed her head a little and said she wished she was back in Paris.

But Archie did not share her feelings. It had not been pleasant for him to see Daisy ogled and admired by men he wanted to knock down, nor had he quite liked the escapade at Monte Carlo, for, aside from the fear lest the fraud should be discovered, there was always before him a dread of what his Uncle John and the Lady Jane would say, should the affair ever reach their ears, as it might, for Lord Hardy was not very discreet, and was sure to tell of it sometime.

As to the playing, could he have had his choice he would far rather have played himself than to stand by and see Daisy do it. But his vow to his father could not be broken, and so he was tolerably content, especially as the result was so far beyond his expectations. Fifteen hundred pounds was the sum total of the gains, and Daisy, who held the purse and managed everything, played the lady of Stoneleigh to perfection, and made enemies of all her former friends, her mother included, and was only stopped in her career of folly by the birth of her baby, who was not at all welcome to the childish mother.

It was the latter part of March, and the crocuses and hyacinths were just beginning to blossom in the garden at Stoneleigh, when the baby Bessie first lay in the cradle which had rocked Archie in his infancy. They did not call her Bessie at first; for there were many discussions with regard to the name, Archie wishing her called Dora for his mother, and Daisy inclining to Blanche, or Beatrice.

"I'll tell you what, Archie," she said one day. "There's that old maid aunt of yours in America, with piles of money, they say. Let's name the baby for her, and so get some of her filthy lucre."

"Call our baby Betsey? Are you crazy?" Archie asked. But Daisy was in earnest, and carried her point, as she always did; and when at Easter Lord Hardy stopped at Stoneleigh, on his way to his home in Ireland, he was one of the sponsors for the child, who was christened *Betsey*.

"If I dared, I would add *Jane* to it, for her Ladyship, which would make her *Betsey Jane*; but that would be too much," Daisy said to Lord Hardy, adding: "We shall call her Bessie, of course, and never Betsey. We only give her that abominable cognomen for the sake of wheedling something out of that old woman in America. Archie is to write and tell her."

So Archie wrote the best letter he could concoct, and said he had named his little daughter Betsey, which he hoped would please his aunt. This he took for approval to Daisy, who said it was very well, but insisted that he should add a P.S. that if his aunt had fifty pounds or so of ready money, he would like to borrow it for a time, as his expenses were heavy, and Stoneleigh needed so much repairing. At first Archie refused utterly; it looked so much like begging, he said, but he was overruled and added the P.S., which made Miss McPherson furious and steeled her heart against the innocent baby who bore her name.

The request for money overmastered every gentler feeling, and the letter was consigned to the flames and never answered.

"Never mind, Archie," Daisy said, as weeks went by and there came no message from America. "The old miser means to cut us off. Well, let her, I can manage without her, and our fifteen hundred pounds will last awhile. After that is gone, trust me for more."

And Archie, who was too indolent to exert himself, did trust her, and, parting with every vestige of manhood and manliness, did what she bade him do and went where she bade him go; sometimes to the most expensive hotels, where, while the money lasted they lived like princes, and when it was gone, like rats in a hole; sometimes to Monte Carlo, where Daisy was generally successful; sometimes to Hamburg and Baden Baden, sometimes to Epsom, where she bet with Lord Hardy on the races, and got her money, whether she lost or won, for the kind-hearted Ted could never withstand her tears; and sometimes into the houses to which she managed to get invited, and where she staid as long as possible, or until some other house was open to her.

Meanwhile little Bessie grew into a child of wonderful loveliness. Possessing her mother's beauty of feature and complexion and her father's refinement of feeling, she added to them a truthful simplicity and frank ingenuousness of manner which won all hearts to her. Much as they might despise her mother, everybody loved and pitied Bessie, whose life was a kind of scramble, and

who early learned to think and act for herself, and to know there was a difference between her father and her mother. She learned, too, that large hotels, where prices were high, meant two rolls and a cup of milk for breakfast, a biscuit or apple for lunch, and nothing for dinner except what her mother could surreptitiously convey into her pocket at *table d'hote*. And still, there was no merrier, happier child playing upon the sands at Aberystwyth than Bessie McPherson on the summer morning when Miss Betsey McPherson first saw her and called out:

"Betsey McPherson, is that you?"

Leaving her companions she went to the tall, peculiar looking woman sitting so straight and stiff upon the bench, and laying her soft white hands on her knee, looked curiously and fearlessly into her face, with the remark:

"I am *Bessie*, not *Betsey*. I think that is a horrid name."

And so the conversation commenced between the strange pair, and Bessie told of the stingy aunt in America for whom she was named, and who had never sent her a thing, and whom her mamma called "Old Sauerkraut." Bessie was very communicative, and Miss McPherson learned in a few minutes more of the Bohemian life and habits of her nephew and his wife than she had learned at her brother's house in London, where she had been staying for a few weeks, and where Mistress Daisy was not held in very high esteem. And all the time she talked, Bessie's little hands were busy with the folds of the black dress on the woman's knee, rubbing and smoothing it with the restlessness of an active, nervous child. But Miss McPherson would hardly have minded if the hands had worn holes in her dress, so interested was she in the little creature talking to her so freely.

"Would you like to go and live with me?" she asked at last. "You shall go to school with children of your own age, and have all you want to eat, good bread and milk, and muffins and sirup, and—"

"*Cheux fleur au gratin?* Can I have that? I liked that best of all the day I went to *table d'hote* in Paris with mamma," Bessie interrupted, and Miss McPherson replied:

"No, but you can have huckleberry pie in summer, and a sled in winter, to ride down hill."

At the mention of the sled Bessie opened her eyes wide, and after a moment's reflection, asked:

"Can papa go, too?"

"Yes, if he will," came hesitatingly from Miss McPherson, and the child continued:

"And mamma?"

"No, Heaven forbid!" was the response, spoken so decidedly that the restless hands were motionless, and into the blue eyes and about the sweet mouth there stole the troubled, half-grieved expression, which in after years became habitual to them.

"Don't you like my mamma?" the child said. "She is very nice and pretty, and Lord Hardy likes her, and so does papa, for he kisses her sometimes. Papa would not go without mamma, and I must not leave papa, so you see I cannot go, though I'd awfully like the sled and the pie. Where do you live?"

Miss McPherson did not reply directly to this, but said instead:

"I am going to America in a few days and shall see your Aunt Betsey. What shall I tell her for you?"

"Tell her to send me something," was the prompt reply, which made Miss Betsey's shoulders jerk a little.

"Send you what?" she asked, rather sharply, and Bessie, who had commenced the rubbing process again and was looking at her hands, replied:

"I want a turquois ring—five stones, with a pearl in the center; real, too. I don't like shams, neither does papa; but mamma don't care, if she gets the effect. If you'll never tell as long as you live and breathe, those solitaires in mamma's ears are nothing but paste, and were bought in the Palais Royal," and Bessie pursed up her lips so disdainfully that Miss McPherson burst into a laugh, and stooping down, kissed the little face as she said:

"That's right, child; never tolerate a sham; better the naked truth always."

In the distance Daisy, who had passed them ten minutes or so ago, was seen returning with young Hardy and rising to her feet, Miss Betsey said:

"I must go now, child; good-by. Try and be good and truthful and real, and stick to your father, and sometime, maybe, you'll see me again."

Then she walked swiftly away, and Bessie saw her no more, but for days she talked of the queer old woman on the terrace, who had called her Betsey and who had bade her be good and truthful and real and stick to her father.

Numerous were the questions put to her by her father and mother, relative to the stranger whose identity with the American aunt they scarcely doubted; and Archie was conscious of a bitter pang as he reflected that she had been so near to him and yet had not tried to find him. He had heard

that she was expected in London, and he knew now how strong had been the hope that he should meet her, and that she would do something for him. He was so tired and so ashamed of the life he led—now here, now there, now on the first floor, now on the fifth floor back, now plenty now penury and absolute want, according to Daisy's luck. For Daisy managed everything and bade him take things easy and trust to her; but he would so much rather have staid quietly at Stoneleigh with but one meal a day and know how that meal was paid for, than to live what to his sense of propriety seemed a not very respectable life. But he had lost his chance. The one who might have made living at Stoneleigh possible had ignored him. She had been where he was, and had not sought him, and his face was very gloomy that evening as he sat in front of the hotel with Bessie in his lap, while Daisy walked on the terrace with Lord Hardy and told him of the old woman on the sands who must have been the American aunt.

One week later, there came a letter from old Anthony, saying he had received a small package by express from London, directed to Miss Betsey McPherson, care of Archibald McPherson. Should he keep it till his master returned, or should he forward it to Aberystwyth? Archie replied that he was to forward it, and two days after there came to him a small box, containing a lovely turquois ring, of five stones, unmistakably real, with a good sized pearl in the center, and on the gold band was inscribed, "Little Betsey, 18—"

That settled the question, of the donor, and Daisy laughed till she cried over what she called the old woman's spite.

"Nasty old cat," she said, "why didn't she send some money instead of this bauble, which is a deal too large for the child? She can't wear it in years. I must say, though, that it is very beautiful, and the old thing did herself justice when she bought it. Look, Archie, it fits me perfectly!" and she slipped it onto her finger, where it remained; for, as she said, Bessie could not wear it then, and it might as well do somebody some good.

Archie wrote at once to his aunt, inclosing a card on which Bessie had printed with infinite pains, "I got the ring; thank you ever so much."

By some fatality this letter, which was directed to Allington, Mass., U.S.A., went astray, and was never received by Miss McPherson, who half expected it, and who, with the memory of the blue-eyed child upon the sands fresh in her mind, was prepared to answer it. But no letter came to her, or went to Archie either, and so two people were disappointed, and the chasm widened between them, Archie imputing it to his aunt's peculiar nature, and she charging it all to that Jezebel, as she stigmatized Daisy, of whom she had heard most exaggerated accounts from her brother's wife, the Lady Jane.

CHAPTER V.

AT PENRHYN PARK.

When, three years after that summer, Mrs. Captain Smithers, of Penrhyn Park, Middlesex, invited Mr. and Mrs. Archibald McPherson to spend a few weeks at her handsome country house, and meet the Hon. John McPherson and his wife, the lady Jane, she did it in perfect faith and with entire confidence in Daisy as a matron of immaculate principles and spotless reputation. She had met her the previous winter at a pension in Florence, where Daisy, who was suffering from a severe cold on her lungs, played the role of the interesting invalid, and seldom went out except for a short walk in the warmest part of the day, and only appeared in the parlor in the evening, where she made a lovely picture, seated in a large easy-chair, with her pretty blue wrapper and her shawl of soft white wool wrapped around her.

The guests of the house were mostly Americans, who had never heard of Daisy, and knew nothing of Monte Carlo, or Lord Hardy, and only saw her a devoted wife and mother, and wondered vaguely how she could ever have married that long, lank, lazy Englishman, who had neither life nor spirit in him, and whom they thought a monster, because he never seemed the least concerned when his lovely little wife coughed the hardest, and could scarcely speak aloud. That was the English of him, they said, and they set upon poor Archie behind his back, and tore his reputation as a husband into shreds, and said be neglected his sick wife shamefully, and in consequence, they were kinder and more attentive to her, and her room was full of flowers, and fruit and bottle of port wine and sherry; and Mrs. Captain Smithers, who fully shared the opinions of her American cousins, took the beautiful invalid to drive with her, and made much of her, and thought her the most charming person she had ever met, and ended, as Daisy meant she should, by inviting her to spend the month of August at Penrhyn Park.

"You will meet some very pleasant people," she said, "and I shall be glad to introduce you to them. I shall ask Lady Jane McPherson and her husband. It is a shame you have never met them. Lady Jane is rather peculiar, but a very good woman, and you ought to know her."

This the kind-hearted and not very far-seeing Mrs. Smithers said, because she had received the impression that the McPhersons of London slighted the McPhersons of Stoneleigh, not so much for their poverty, as for the fact that Daisy's family was not equal to their own.

"And this I think very absurd," she said to Daisy. "I belong to the mercantile world, for my father is a Liverpool merchant, and at first Smithers' mother and sisters were inclined to treat me coolly, though they are very friendly now; so, you see, my dear, I know how it feels not to be in perfect accord with one's family, and I mean to do my best for you. I shall bring you and Lady Jane together. She is sure to like you."

"Thank you." Daisy said. "I hope she may, for Bessie's sake. She could be of use to her in the future; but, if you please, do not tell her she is to meet me, or she may decline your invitation."

"Very well," was Mrs. Smithers' reply. "I will say nothing about you."

And so, without mentioning all her expected guests, Mrs. Smithers asked Lady Jane to visit her in August, and that lady, who had twice before enjoyed the hospitalities of Penrhyn Park, accepted readily, with no suspicion that the woman whom she detested more than any creature in the world was to be there also.

The house at Penrhyn Park was very large and commodious, with a wing on either side of the main building, and in these wings were situated the sleeping rooms for guests. A wide hall divided the main part, and on the second floor were two large, airy chambers, opposite each other, with dressing-room, and bath-room, and alcove for bed attached, and the whole fitted up elegantly. These rooms were usually given to the most honored guests, those who rejoiced in titles, and on the occasions of her former visits at Penrhyn, Lady Jane had occupied one, and her bosom friend, old Lady Oakley, the other. But this time there was a change, and when Lady Oakley arrived with her maid, and her poodle dog, and her ear trumpet, for she was very deaf, she was assigned a room in one of the wings, her hostess telling her apologetically that she had thought it well to put the McPhersons together as they would thus get on better, and she was so anxious for Lady Jane to like Mrs. Archie, the sweetest, most amiable of women. Lady Oakley, who knew that every apartment at Penrhyn was like a palace, cared little where she was put, and settled herself in her quarters the evening before the London McPhersons were expected, Daisy had been there a week or more, for she was prompt to the day. Their funds were very low; they were owing seven pounds for lodgings in London, besides various bills to the green-grocer, the dry-grocer, the milkman, and the baker, and had barely enough to pay for their second-class tickets from London..

"I don't know what we are going to do," Archie said, when alone with his wife in the beautiful room over which Daisy had gone into ecstasies, exclaiming, as she seated herself in a luxurious easy-chair:

"Why, Archie, we are housed like princes! We have never been in a place like this. I wish we were to stay longer than a month. I mean to manage somehow for an extension."

A low growl was the only sound from Archie, who was busy brushing off the dust gathered on the journey.

"Say, isn't it nice?" she continued, and then coming into the room and wiping his face with the towel as he came, Archie replied:

"Nice enough, yes; but I don't know what we are going to do when we have to leave here, I tell you, it makes a chap feel mighty mean not to have a shilling in his pocket, and that's just my case. How much have you?"

"Twenty shillings," was Daisy's reply. "But never mind; trust me to fill the purse somehow. I have an idea; so, don't look so glum, and let us enjoy the present."

"But I can't," Archie replied; "I cannot enjoy myself, feeling all the time that we are living upon other people, and accepting invitations we never can return. In short, we are nothing but impostors, both of us."

He spoke savagely, and turned to re-enter his dressing-room, in the door of which Bessie stood, with her great blue eyes fixed wonderingly and sadly upon him. She had heard all the conversation, and there was a troubled look on her face, as she said:

"What is an impostor, papa? What does it mean?"

"It means," he answered, "that we impose upon people every hour of our lives, passing ourselves off for what we are not. People suppose we have money, when we haven't a shilling to spare, and owe everybody besides."

"I see; it means we are shams, and not real," Bessie said, and her bright face was overclouded with an expression pitiful to see in one so young.

This was the McPhersons' first day at Penrhyn Park, but the little passage at arms did not at all dim Daisy's sky. Something would turn up, she knew; and at dinner something did turn up, for Mrs. Smithers mentioned to Archie that her husband had fallen in with the young Irish lord who had been for a day or two at the pension in Florence, and, remembering how intimate he was with Mr. McPherson he had invited him to spend a week at Penrhyn Park, and the young man had accepted, and would arrive the 10th. There was a gleam of triumph in Daisy's eyes as they met her husband's. The presence of Lord Hardy meant money, for she had only to lament her poverty and talk of burying herself at Stoneleigh, and instantly the generous Irishman would insist upon relieving her present needs.

"It is only a loan. You can pay me some time when your ship comes in, and really I have more than I know what to do with."

This was always Lord Hardy's argument, to which Daisy yielded, and went on piling up the debt which she insisted would be paid in some way, and her thoughts always turned to the old aunt in America, through whom relief must some day come. But Archie knew better, and their indebtedness to Lord Hardy filled him with shame, just as Daisy's intimacy with the young man filled him with disgust, though he had perfect faith in the Irishman, whose worst fault was an open and hearty admiration for a married woman; and, to a certain extent, he had faith in Daisy, who, much as she might compromise her good name by flirtation, would never break her marriage vow in the letter, even if she did in spirit. In a way she would be true to him always, but the world did not know her as he did, and he knew perfectly well how she was talked about and her frivolous conduct commented upon by such people as Lady Jane and her set. But he could not help himself. Daisy was master, and he submitted, with a feeling of humiliation which showed itself upon his face and made him very quiet and ill at ease, except when Bessie was with him. There was something about Bessie which restored his self-respect and made a man of him, Bessie was his all, and to himself he had made a vow that she should not follow in the footsteps of her mother.

"I will kill her first," he said, with clenched fists and flashing eyes, and Daisy would never have known him could she have seen him when, as was often the case, he went over by himself what he would say to her if he ever got his courage up.

Taking a chair for his auditor, he would gesticulate fiercely, and declare that he would not stand it any longer. "Daisy McPherson," he would say, addressing himself to the chair, "I tell you what it is. I am ashamed of myself, and of you, too, and I am going to stop it, and take you home, and be master of my own house, and if we cannot live on our small income, you can take up your dead mother's trade and make dresses, and, by Jove, I'll help you, too! I'll keep the books, and—and—"

Here he would stop, not knowing exactly what else he would do, for work was something to which he did not take kindly.

As the chair never offered any remonstrance, no matter how savage he was, he usually felt better, and respected himself more after an attack upon it, and there the battle ended, for he had not the courage to deal thus with his wife, who had ruled him too long to yield her scepter now.

Such was the condition of things between this ill-assorted pair when we find them at Penrhyn Park, which so fully accorded with Daisy's tastes that she at once determined to stay longer than a month, even if she were not invited to extend her visit. She had been at the park a week or more, enjoying all the *eclat* of the favored guest, for Mrs. Smithers' infatuation was complete, when it was announced at the breakfast table that the Hon. John McPherson, with Lady Jane and Neil, would arrive that evening in time for dinner.

Instantly Archie's face flushed crimson, for he had not seen his uncle since his marriage, which had called forth a letter so angry in its tone that he had never answered it, or sought for any further intercourse with his indignant relative.

Daisy, on the contrary, was wholly unmoved.

"*Veni, vidi, vici*," was her motto, which had proved true in so many instances that she fancied she had only to meet the haughty Lady Jane face to face and conquer her also. And yet she did feel a little nervous when, as the hour for the train drew near, she went to her room and commenced her toilet for dinner.

"Let me see," she murmured: "they have undoubtedly heard that I am a brazen face and a minx, and awfully extravagant and flashy in style; so simplicity in dress and modesty of demeanor will best suit me now. I must not wear my paste diamonds, for though I've no idea Lady Jane can tell them from the real, she would think them far too expensive for people in our circumstances, and wonder how I got them."

So the false diamonds were put aside, as was everything else which could awaken an inquiry as to its cost, and a simple blue muslin was chosen, with ruching at the neck and nothing on the sleeves, which were rather wide and showed to good advantage the beautifully rounded arms and hands, of which Daisy was so proud. Her golden curls were gathered in a shining mass at the back of her head and fastened with a comb of pink coral, Lord Hardy's gift, when he was in Naples with her. At her throat she wore a blush rose and another in her belt, with no jewelry of any kind, except her wedding ring, and Bessie's turquois, which she still appropriated. Nothing could be simpler than her whole dress, and nothing more becoming, for it gave her a sweet girlish look, which she knew always produced an effect.

Meanwhile the expected guests had arrived, and Daisy heard them in the hall as they took possession of the room opposite hers. Lady Jane was very tired, and hot, and dusty, for she had come from Edinburgh that day, and she glanced around her luxurious apartment with a feeling of comfort and relief, as she issued her orders to her maid, Lydia, and talked to her husband.

"Open the little trunk, Lydia, and take out my pearl-colored grenadine; I cannot wear a heavy silk to-night; and find my Valenciennes fichu and my small diamonds, I don't suppose there is any one in particular here, unless it is Lady Oakley, and she, I presume has the room opposite this. She did, the last time we were here. John, we are really very comfortable. Mrs. Smithers knows how

to keep up an attractive house, and is a charming woman, though, of course, not quite to the manner born. Was her father an iron monger, or what?"

"He was a wholesale merchant, and worth a mint of money. Why, he could buy out every McPherson and Trevellian in the United Kingdom," was John's reply; and then, with a little toss of her head, Lady Jane began her toilet, for it wanted but an hour of dinner.

"There, that will do for me; I can finish the rest myself. And now go to Blanche's room and see to her and send Neil to me," she said to Lydia, when she was nearly dressed.

Lydia obeyed, and after she had gone, Lady Jane said to her husband:

"I hope Mrs. Smithers will not object to Blanche, even if she was not invited. I really could not leave her behind."

There was no reply from John, who was busy in the dressing-room, but a fresh young voice from the doorway answered her:

"I think it was downright cheeky to bring her without an invitation. With her giggling, and her *reelys*, and her *yis-es*—all she can say—and her white eyebrows and tow hair, she is not very ornamental, even if she has ten thousand a year."

The speaker was Neil McPherson, the boy who on the Fourth of July had been thrashed by Grey Jerrold for his sneer at the American flag, find his comments on American ladies. He was a year older than Grey, with a dark, handsome face, a pleasant smile, and winsome ways when he chose to be agreeable. As a rule, he was very good-natured, and his manners were perfect for a boy of fifteen; but there was in all he did or said an air of superiority, as if he felt himself quite above the majority of his companions, which, indeed, was the fact. Trained by his mother from infancy to consider the Trevellian blood the best in England outside the pale of royalty, and the McPherson blood the best outside the peerage, it was not strange that his good qualities—and he had many—should be warped, and dwarfed, and overshadowed by an indomitable pride and supreme selfishness, which would prompt him at any time to sacrifice his best friend in behalf of his own interest. And yet Neil was generally a favorite, for he was frank, and obliging, and good-humored, and very gentlemanly in his manner, and quick to render the little attentions so gratifying to the ladies, by whom he was held in high esteem as a pattern boy. He was the idol of his mother, who saw no fault in him whatever, and who had commenced already to plan for him a brilliant marriage, or at least a marriage of money, for her own income was not large, and that of her husband smaller still.

Blanche Trevellian, whom Neil had designated as tow-haired, and white-browed, was her grand-niece, and Neil's second cousin, and as heiress to ten thousand a year, she might develop into a desirable *parti*, notwithstanding her ordinary appearance now. And so, when the girl became an orphan, Lady Jane offered to take charge of her, and took her into the family as the daughter of the house, though she never encouraged Neil to think of her as a sister. She was his cousin Blanche, and entitled to a great deal of forbearance and respect, because of her money, and because her mother had been the granddaughter of a duke. Neil called her cousin Blanche, and quarreled with and teased her, and made fun of her white eyebrows, and said her feet were too big, and her ankles too small, and that on standing she always bent her knees to make herself look short; for she was very tall and angular, and awkward every way.

"Wait till my cousin Bessie grows up; there's a beauty for you," he had said to his mother on his return from Stoneleigh, where he had spent a few days the winter previous, and greatly to the annoyance of his mother, he talked constantly of the lovely child who had made so strong an impression upon him.

Lady Jane had heard much of Daisy's exploits, and as the stories concerning her were greatly exaggerated, she looked upon her, if not actually an abandoned woman, as one whose good name was hopelessly tarnished, and she never wished to see either her face or that of her child. Nor did she dream how near the enemy was to her; only just across the hall, in the room which she fully believed to be occupied by her friend, old Lady Oakley, from Grosvenor Square. When her husband and Neil went out, as they did soon after the latter had expressed himself with regard to Blanche and been sharply reproved, they left the door ajar, and she could hear the sound of footsteps in the room opposite, where Lady Oakley was supposed to be making her toilet, just as Lady Jane was making hers.

"I believe I will go and see her," she said to herself, when her dressing was completed and she found she had a good fifteen minutes before the dinner hour, and stepping across the hall she knocked at Daisy's door.

Daisy's first impulse was to call out, "*Entrez!*" as she did on the Continent; her second, to open the door herself, which she did, disclosing to the view of her astonished visitor, not a fat, red-faced dowager of seventy, but a wonderful vision of girlish loveliness, clad in simple muslin, with a mischievous twinkle in the blue eyes which met hers so fearlessly.

"I beg your pardon, miss," Lady Jane began, stammeringly: "I thought this was Lady Oakley's room. She is my friend. I hope you will excuse me," she continued, as she detected the smothered mirth in Daisy's eyes.

"There is nothing to excuse," Daisy began, in perfectly well-bred tones, "the mistake was natural. Lady Oakley did occupy this room, I believe, but she is now in the north wing, as Mrs. Smithers

kindly gave this room to me so that I might be near you; that is, if, as I suppose, you are Lady Jane McPherson?" and she looked steadily at her visitor, who with a slight bridling of her long neck, bowed in the affirmative, never doubting that the young person before her was fully her equal, notwithstanding the plainness of her dress, every detail of which she took in at a glance and mentally pronounced perfect.

"Some poor earl's daughter whom Mrs. Smithers has found. She has a peculiar talent for making good acquaintances," she thought, just as Daisy offered her hand, which she involuntarily took, but dropped as if it had been a viper when the latter said:

"Then you are my aunt, or rather my husband's aunt, for I am Mrs. Archibald McPherson, and I am so glad to meet you."

Had a bomb-shell exploded at Lady Jane's feet and struck her in the face she could not have been more astonished. Stepping quickly back from this claimant to her notice, her face grew pale for an instant, and then flushed with anger, as she gasped:

"*You*, Mrs. Archibald McPherson! that—that—" she did not say what, but added, "What are you doing here?"

"Visiting Mrs. Smithers like yourself," Daisy replied, with imperturbable gravity. "We were together in Florence, where I was sick, and she was kind enough to like me, and she invited me to spend this month with her, so that I might meet Archie's relatives, whom she thought I ought to know, and Lady Oakley thinks so too. She came yesterday."

"Yes," Lady Jane kept repeating, as she retreated step by step till she stood in her own door, with her eyes still fixed upon Daisy, who fascinated her in spite of her deeply rooted prejudice, amounting almost to hatred.

The creature, as she designated her, was far prettier than she had supposed, and might pass for a lady with those who knew nothing of her antecedents—but then her reputation as a bold, fast woman! Would it be safe or right to allow Blanche, whom she designed for Neil, to remain under the same roof with such a person? was her first query. Still, if Mrs. Smithers, who was a power in the social world, notwithstanding her connection with trade, had taken her up, and Lady Oakley, too, perhaps it would be better not to make a scene and show her animosity too much. She could be barely civil to the woman and cut her visit short on one pretext or another. Thus deciding, she said:

"Meeting you so suddenly has surprised me very much, Mrs. McPherson. I hope your husband is well. I knew him when a boy. Perhaps he is in the drawing-room. I think I will go down, as it is nearly dinnertime," and bowing stiffly, she went down the stairs, every nerve quivering with insulted dignity, and not quite certain whether she heard a smothered laugh or not from the room, where Daisy was shaking with laughter at what she termed the old cat's discomfiture.

"Nasty thing!" she said "how she hates me, and how little I care! I hope I sha'n't let her spoil my fun. I have the inside track, and I mean to keep it!"

Thus deciding, she, too, started for the drawing-room, where the guests were assembling for dinner, and where Mrs. Smithers, who was by nature rather officious and anxious to right everything, was explaining to Lady Jane that she had invited Mr. and Mrs. Archibald McPherson to meet her, and was descanting upon the beauty and amiability of the latter, whom her ladyship was sure to like.

"A little too much of a coquette, perhaps," she said, "but so very pretty and piquant that she cannot help attracting admiration."

"Yes, I know—I have seen her. I made her acquaintance in the upper hall," Lady Jane answered, coldly, and this saved the embarrassment of an introduction when Daisy at last appeared, perfectly self-possessed and graceful, and looking, as Lady Jane unwillingly confessed to herself, as innocent as a Madonna.

Meanwhile Archie had sought his uncle, resolved to have the awkwardness of their first meeting over before any prying eyes were upon them. He found him alone, and, mustering all his courage, went up to him and offered his hand, as if nothing had ever occured to separate them.

John McPherson had heard from his host that his nephew was there, and was in a most perturbed state of mind, on his wife's account, rather than on his own. She would be very indignant, and perhaps do something rash, he feared, while, for himself he wanted to see the boy, whom he had always liked. It was while he was thinking thus that Archie came suddenly upon him. In his surprise, Mr. McPherson forgot everything except the young man standing so humbly before him, with a look on his face, and in his eyes, like the brother dead years ago, and who, when dying, had said, "Be kind to Archie."

Extending both hands to his nephew, he said:

"Archie, by Jove, I am glad to see you. I hope you are well, though upon my word, you don't look so," and he glanced curiously, and with a sensation of pity, at the young man, who, though scarcely thirty-one, might have passed for forty, he was so pale and care worn, while his clothes were threadbare and shining in places, and hung upon him loosely. But at this cordial greeting, there was a wonderful transformation, and Archie's face grew almost boyish in its expression,

and there was a moisture in his eyes as he took his uncle's hands and held them, while he answered the questions put to him so rapidly. Remembering at last that it was his duty to reprove his nephew a little, the Hon. John said to him:

"I have been very angry with you, for your hasty marriage was not what I could have wished. It has severed you from—us—from Lady Jane completely."

"Yes, I know," Archie replied. "I supposed you would not like it; but my marriage was for myself, and not for any one else."

"And it has proved all you could wish?" his uncle asked, regarding him steadily.

Archie's face was very red, and his lips were white, as he replied:

"Daisy was very young. We ought to have waited; but she is beautiful, and greatly admired."

"Umph! More's the pity!" John said. Then, after a moment's silence, he continued: "I say, Archie, how have you managed to live all these years? I hear of you everywhere I hope you have not resorted to the gaming-table?"

"Never!" came decidedly from Archie, "Do you think I would break my promise to my father? I have never touched a card, even for amusement, though I have wanted to so much, when I needed money sadly and saw how easily it was won at Monte Carlo."

"Your wife plays, though!" John said sharply; and Archie replied:

"I have nothing to say on that score, except that Daisy takes care of me. I should starve without her; for you know I was not brought up to work, and it is too late now to begin, though I believe I'd be willing to break stone on the highway, if I had the strength."

"Yes, yes, I see," the uncle interposed, a horrible dread seizing him lest his nephew might do something beneath a McPherson unless he was prevented.

"How much have you now?—how much money, I mean?"

"Just one shilling; and Daisy has, ten. If Mrs. Smithers had not invited us here, Heaven only knows what we should have done, for Daisy will not stay at Stoneleigh; so we travel from place to place, and she manages somehow," Archie said: and his uncle rejoined:

"And makes her name a by-word and a reproach, as I suppose you know."

"Daisy is my wife!" Archie replied, with a dignity for which his uncle menially respected him.

Just then the last dinner-bell rang, and rising from his seat, John put his hand first in his vest pocket and then into Archie's hand, where he left a twenty-pound note, saying rapidly:

"You needn't tell *her*—your wife I mean, or mine, either. A man may do as he likes occasionally."

They were walking toward the house, arm-in-arm, and Archie's step was lighter, and his face brighter and handsomer than it had been in many a day. Indeed, he was quite his old self as he entered the drawing room and greeted his august aunt, who received him more graciously than, she had his wife.

Just then Neil came in with Bessie, whom he took to his mother, saying:

"Look, mother, here is Bessie. Didn't I tell you she was a beauty?"

Then, as his mother merely inclined her head, he lifted the child in his arms and held her close to the proud lips which touched the white forehead coldly, while a frown darkened the lady's face, for notwithstanding that Bessie was so young and Neil a mere boy, she disapproved of the liking between them lest it should interfere with Blanche. But Neil did not fancy Blanche, and he did like Bessie, and took her in to dinner, holding her little hand while she skipped and jumped at his side and looked up in his face with those great blue eyes which moved him strangely now, and which in the after time were to bewilder and intoxicate and awaken in him all the better impulses of his nature and then become the sweetest and the saddest memory of his life.

"It is so nice to go to dinner with big people and have all you want to eat, isn't it?" she said to him, as she settled herself in her chair and adjusted her napkin with all the precision of a grown person.

"Of course it's nice," Neil replied, never dreaming what a real dinner was to this child who had so often dined on a bit of bread, a few shriveled grapes, a fig or two and some raisins, trying hard to keep her tears back when the bread was dry and scanty and she was very hungry.

She was very happy with Neil at her side, and she laughed and chatted with him and told him of Stoneleigh and the white rabbit old Anthony was rearing for him when he came at Christmas as he had promised to do.

Dinner being over, Archie, who did not smoke, excused himself from the gentlemen who did, and taking Bessie with him, sauntered off into the grounds till he reached the seat where he had found his uncle. Sitting down upon it and taking Bessie in his lap he told her of his good fortune and showed her the bank-note.

"Oh, I am so glad!" the child exclaimed; "for now we are real, and not impostors, are we?"

"Not in the sense of not having any money," he replied, but there was a sad, anxious expression on his face, as he looked down upon the little girl beside him, and thought of the future and what it might bring to her.

"Bessie," he said, at last, "how would you like to live at Stoneleigh altogether, and not be traveling about?"

"Oh, I'd like it so much," Bessie said, "but I am afraid mamma would not. She hates Stoneleigh, it's so dull."

"But you and I might live there. You would be my little housekeeper and I could teach you your lessons," Archie said, conjuring up in his mind a vision of a quiet home with Bessie as his companion.

If Daisy did not choose to stay with him she could go and come as she liked, he thought, and then and there he decided that *his* wandering life was at an end.

The next day the party at Penrhyn Park was increased by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Jerrold from Boston: "very nice Americans, especially the lady, who might pass for an Englishwoman," Mrs. Smithers informed her guests.

"Yes, I know them, or rather I know their son Grey, the young cub who thrashed me so last Fourth of July when we were at Melrose," Neil exclaimed; "but he's not a bad fellow after all, and we grew to be good friends, I hope he is coming, too."

But Grey did not come, as the reader will remember, for his mother made it a kind of punishment for his quarrel with Neil, that he should remain in London while she visited at Penrhyn Park, where she met with Lady Jane McPherson, whom she admired greatly, and with Daisy, whom she detested for the bold coquetry, which manifested itself so plainly after the arrival of Lord Hardy, that even Mrs. Smithers' sense of propriety was shocked, and she began to look forward with pleasure to the day when her house would be freed from the presence of this lady.

The month of August was the limit of the visit, and Daisy would have gone then had there been any place to go to except Stoneleigh. But there was not; no friendly door was open to her. She could not return to London, and she would not go to Stoneleigh: so, she resolved to remain where she was until Lord Hardy returned to his country seat in Ireland, and then she would go there and take Archie and Bessie with her.

To carry out this purpose she began suddenly to droop and affect a languor and weakness she was far from feeling, for she had really never been better in her life, and Archie knew it, and watched her with dismay as she enacted the role of the interesting invalid to perfection. A little hacking cough came on, with a pain in her side, and finally, to Mrs. Smithers' horror, she took to her bed the last week in August, unable to sit up, but overwhelmed with grief at her inability to travel, and fear lest she should be a burden upon her hostess, and outstay her welcome.

Never dreaming that it was a farce to gain time, Mrs. Smithers made the best of it, and saw guest after guest depart, until only the Welsh McPhersons remained, and she was longing to get away herself to the north of Scotland, where she was due the middle of September. Fortunately Lord Hardy went home sooner than he had intended, and wrote to Daisy and her husband that his house was ready for them, and then the invalid recovered her strength rapidly, and was able in three days to leave Penrhyn Park, and travel to Ireland with Archie, who had fought hard to return to Stoneleigh and begin the new life he had resolved upon. But Daisy knew better than to go to Hardy Manor without him, and she persuaded him to go with her and then to Paris, from which place she made a flying visit to Monte Carlo, where she met with such success that she did not greatly object to spending the holidays at Stoneleigh, whither they went just before Christmas.

It was at this time that Archie received his aunt's letter offering to take little Bessie and bring her up as a sensible, useful woman. For a moment Archie's heart leaped into his throat as he thought of emancipating his child from the baneful influence around her, but when he remembered how desolate he should be without her, he said:

"I cannot let her go."

Upon one point, however, he was still resolved; he would remain at Stoneleigh and keep Bessie with him. Nothing could change that decision. Daisy would of course go where she pleased. He could not restrain her, and as many Englishwomen did travel alone on the Continent, she might escape remark in that respect, and be no more talked about than if he were with her. At first Daisy objected to this plan. It was necessary for her to earn their living, she said, and the least Archie could do was to give the support of his presence. But Archie was firm, and when in February Daisy started again on her trip, which had for its destination Monte Carlo and Genoa, Archie was left behind with his twenty-pound note, which he had not yet touched, and with Bessie as his only companion.

CHAPTER VI.

SEVEN YEARS LATER.

Seven years, and from a lovely child of eight years old Bessie McPherson had grown to a wonderfully beautiful girl of fifteen, whose face once seen could never be forgotten, it was so sweet, and pure, and refined, and yet so sad in its expression at times, as if she carried some burden heavier than the care of her father, who was fast sinking into a state of confirmed invalidism, and to whom she devoted all the freshness of her young life, with no thought for herself or her own comfort. And there was a shadow on the girl's life; a burden of shame and regret for the silly, frivolous mother, who spent so little time at home, but who flitted from place to place on the Continent, not always in the best of company but managing generally to hang on to some old dowager either English, French, or German, and so cover herself with an appearance of respectability. Sometimes Lord Hardy was with her, and sometimes he was not, for as he grew older and knew her better, he began to weary of her a very little. Just now he was in Egypt, and before he started he sent her a receipt in full for all her indebtedness to him for borrowed money which he knew she could never pay. And Daisy had written to her husband that the debt was paid, and had given him to understand that a stroke of unparalleled success had enabled her to do it. When her mother died two years before, and left a few hundreds to her daughter, Archie had urged the necessity of sending the whole to young Hardy, but Daisy had refused and spent it for herself. Now, however, it was paid, and he was glad, and quite content with his uneventful life, even though, it was a life of the closest economy and self-denial for himself and Bessie.

When Daisy had plenty she divided with the household at Stoneleigh, and when she had little she kept it for herself, and Archie and Bessie shifted for themselves—or rather the latter did, and was sometimes almost as hungry as she had been when she ate the dry bread and shriveled grapes on the fifth floor back of some large hotel.

Bessie understood perfectly her mother's mode of life, and knew that though she was not degraded in the worst sense of the word, she was an adventuress and a gambler, whom good, pure women shunned, and over whom she mourned as a mother mourns for the child which has gone astray. And yet Bessie's life was a comparatively happy one, for she had her father, and she had Neil, her cousin, the handsome and spirited boy from Eton, and later the dashing student from Oxford, who came sometimes to Stoneleigh and made the place like heaven to the young girl blooming there unseen and unknown to the great world outside, and Bessie hoped to see him soon, for she was going with her father to London, where she had never been since she was a child, and of which she did not remember much. This journey had cost Bessie a great deal of anxiety and planning as to how they could afford it; but by saving a little here and there, and by extra self-denials on her part, sufficient money for the journey, and for a week in town, was raised at last, and the trip decided upon. Bessie would have liked a new dress and hat for herself, and a new coat for her father, but these were out of the question, so she brushed and cleaned her father's three-year-old coat, and washed and ironed her two-year-old Holland linen, freshened up a blue ribbon for her last year's hat, mended her gloves, put plenty of clean collars, and cuffs, and handkerchiefs, in her bag, borrowed Dorothy's umbrella, and was ready to start on her journey without a thought that she might look a little old-fashioned and countrified in the gay city. They found some cheap lodgings in the vicinity of High street, Kensington, and then she sent her card to Neil, who came at once, and tried to be gay, and appear as usual, but she felt that he was ill at ease, and the old hair cloth sofa and chairs looked shabbier than ever to her, when she saw his critical eyes upon them, and felt how out of place he was in that humble room, with his fashionable dress and town-bred air of elegance and luxury.

"I say, Dot, why in the name of wonder did you stumble into such a hole as this? Could you find no better lodgings than these in all London?" he said to her at last.

"Yes, Neil," she replied, "we could find lodgings fit for the queen, but then we have not the queen's income, and these rooms are so cheap—only a pound a week, and the kitchen fire included, I know they are not pretty, but they are very clean and quiet, and Mrs. Buncher is so kind."

Bessie tried to speak naturally, but there was a tremor in her voice, and the tears came to her great blue eyes as she looked up at her cousin. Neil saw the tears, and stooping over her he kissed the quivering lips, and stroking the glossy hair, said to her:

"Never mind, Bess, your face makes everything lovely, and this dingy parlor with you in it is pleasanter to me than the finest drawing-room in Grosvenor Square. But you ought not to be here, you and your father. You should be at Trevellian House, as our guests, and if I owned it you should; but there's a lot of old pokes staying there now, friends of Blanche—Lord and Lady Somebody, Mother is great on the titles, you know."

"Yes, I know," Bessie said, slowly; then, after a moment, she added: "I should like to see your mother and Miss Trevellian. I was too young at Penrhyn Park to remember much about them. Do you think they will call?"

Neil knew they would not, and he could scarcely repress a smile as he fancied the McPherson carriage, with his mother and Blanche, driving up before that shabby house, but he said:

"Perhaps so, though they are always so busy during the season; but I'll tell you how you can see them. Go to the park to-morrow afternoon about five o'clock. They are sure to be there in their gorgeous attire, and Blanche will have her poodle-dog."

"Shall you be there?" Bessie asked, and Neil replied:

"Yes, possibly," while to himself he thought that he should not, for how could he ride by with the gay throng and know that Bessie was sitting in a hired chair watching for him, and most likely making some demonstration which would draw attention to her?

"I may, and I may not," he continued: "but it will make no difference; you will see Blanche with her poodle and her red parasol, and you will see the princess, if you are there about half past five or six, but for Heaven's sake don't rush forward like an idiot, as so many do, especially Americans and people from the country: it stamps you at once as a greenhorn."

"No, I won't," Bessie said, humbly, for something in Neil's tone hurt her; then, as she saw him consulting his watch, she said: "Oh, Neil, can't I walk with you just a little way? Father never goes out after tea, and I do so long for some fresh air."

Neil looked at his watch again. It was almost six, and at seven there was a grand dinner at Trevellian house, at which he was expected to be present. But Bessie's blue eyes and eager face drove everything else from his mind, and he was soon walking with her in the lovely Kensington gardens, and her hand was on his arm, and his hand was on hers, and in watching her bright face and listening to her quaint remarks, he forgot how fast the minutes were going by, and the grand dinner at home waited for him a quarter of an hour, and then the guests sat down without him and Lady Jane's face wore a dark, stormy look, when the son of the house appeared smiling, handsome, and gracious, and apologizing for his tardiness by saying frankly that he was in the garden, and forgot the lapse of time.

"You must have been greatly interested. You could not have been alone," Blanche said to him in an undertone.

"No, I was not alone," he replied, with great frankness. "I was with the prettiest girl in London, or out of it, either."

"And pray who may she be?" Blanche asked.

"My cousin Bessie. She arrived yesterday," was Neil's reply.

"Oh!" and Blanche's face flushed with annoyance.

She remembered the beautiful child at Penrhyn Park, and had heard her name so often since, that the mere mention of it was obnoxious to her, and she was silent and sulky all through the long dinner, which lasted until nine o'clock. When it was over, and the guests were gone. Lady Jane turned fiercely upon her son and asked what had kept him so late.

"Cousin Bessie," he answered, "She is in the city with her father, at No. —— Abingdon road, and I wish you would call upon them. They really ought to be staying here, our own blood relations as they are."

"Staying here? Not if I know myself. Is that detestable gambling woman with them?" Lady Jane replied, with ineffable scorn.

"No," Neil answered her. "She is never with them, and Bessie is no more like her than you are. She is the purest, and sweetest and best girl I ever knew, and I do not think it would hurt you or Blanche either to pay her some attention;" and having said so much, the young man left the room in time to escape Blanche's tears and his mother's anger and reproaches.

The next day Neil was in a penitent frame of mind, for, however much he might laugh at Blanche and her light eyebrows, and ridicule his mother's plans for him in that quarter, he was not at all indifferent to the ten thousand a year, and might perhaps wish to have it. Consequently he must not drive Blanche too far, for she had a temper and a will, and there was another cousin one degree further removed than himself, a good-natured, good-looking and highly-aristocratic Jack Trevellian, who was thirty years old, and a great favorite in the best society which London afforded, and who, if a great-uncle and two cousins were to die without heirs, would become Sir Jack, and who, it was thought, had an eye on the ten thousand a year. So Neil was very gracious, and sugared Blanche's strawberries for her at breakfast, and read to her after breakfast, and staid at home to lunch, and never mentioned Bessie, or hinted that he would much rather be sitting with her on the old hair-cloth sofa in Mrs. Buncher's parlor than in that elegantly furnished boudoir, and when the hour for driving came, and his mother complained of a headache, and asked him to go with Blanche, he consented readily, but suggested that she leave her poodle at home, as one puppy was enough for her, he said.

And so about five o'clock the McPherson carriage drove into the park near Apsley House, and in it sat Miss Blanche, gorgeous in light-blue silk and white lace hat, with large solitaires in her ears, her red parasol held airily over her head and her insipid face wreathed in smiles, as she talked to her companion, the handsome Neil, whose dark face was such a contrast to her own, and who reclined indolently at her side, answering her questions mechanically, but thinking always of Bessie, and wondering if she were there in the hired chair, and if she would see him, or, what was more to the purpose, if he should see her among the multitude which thronged the park that afternoon.

Bessie was there, and had been for more than an hour, sitting with her father near one of the entrances from Piccadilly, and wholly unconscious of the attention she was attracting with her

beautiful, fresh young face, her animated gestures and eager remarks to her father as she watched the passers-by, and wondered who was who, and wished Neil was there to tell her.

"I'd like to see a real duchess, and not mistake a barmaid for one," she said; and then a pleasant-looking man, who was standing near, and had heard her remarks, came up to her, and lifting his hat politely said to Archie;

"If you will permit me, sir, I will tell the young lady who the people are. I know most of them."

"Oh, thank you; I shall be so glad if you will," Bessie replied. "You see, father and I are right from Wales, and it is all quite new to us."

"Then you were never here before?" the stranger asked, looking down upon her with an undisguised admiration, which yet had nothing impertinent in it.

"Yes, years ago, when I was a mere child, and did not care for things. Now I want to see everybody—lords, and earls, and dukes, and deans, and prime ministers, and everybody. Do you know them?"

"Yes, most of them, by sight," the stranger said slowly, and taking his stand where he could see her as well as the passers-by, he told her this was a lord, and this was Disraeli, and this a grand lady of fashion, and this a famous beauty, and this a duchess, and that Prince Leopold.

It was a fortunate afternoon Bessie had chosen, for everybody was one in the early June sunshine, and she enjoyed it immensely, and said out what she thought; that titled ladies and grand dames were very ordinary looking people after all, and that the fat old dowager who rode in a coach and four, with powdered footman behind, and a face as red as a beet, was coarse as any fish-woman and that old Dorothy would have looked better on the satin cushions than this representative of English aristocracy.

"I wonder what you would think of the queen," the stranger said; but before Bessie could reply, there was a sudden murmur among the crowd, and a buzz of expectancy, and then the princess appeared in view, riding slowly, and bowing graciously to the right and to the left.

Instantly there was a rush to the front, and Bessie half rose to go, too; but remembering what Neil had said about not making herself an idiot, as the Americans and country people did, she resumed her seat, and the country people and the Americans stood in her way and all she saw of the princess was her sloping shoulders and long, slender neck, with the lace scarf tied high about it. It was too bad, and Bessie could scarcely keep back her tears of disappointment, and was wishing she had disregarded Neil's orders and been an idiot, when a handsome open carriage came in sight, drawn by two splendid bays, and in it sat Blanche Trevellian, with her red parasol over her head, and beside her Neil McPherson, eagerly scanning the crowd in quest of the little girl, the very thought of whom made his heart beat as Blanche had never made it beat in all her life.

"There they come! That's he! that's Neil, my cousin," Bessie exclaimed, and forgetting all the proprieties in her excitement, she rose so quickly that her hat fell from her head and hung down her back, as she went forward three or four steps and waved her handkerchief.

Neil saw her, as did Blanche and many others, and a frown darkened his face at this unlooked-for demonstration. Still he was struck with the wonderful picture she made, with her strikingly beautiful face lit up with excitement, and her bright, wavy hair gleaming in the sunlight, us she stood with uncovered head waving to him, the fashionable Neil McPherson, whom so many knew. His first impulse, naturally, was to lift his hat in token of recognition, but something in his meaner nature prompted him to take no notice, until Blanche said, in her most supercilious tone:

"Who was that brazen-faced girl? Your cousin Bessie?"

"Yes, my cousin Bessie," Neil replied, and turned to make the bow he should have made before.

But Bessie had disappeared, and was sitting again by her father, adjusting her hat and hating herself for having been so foolish.

"Neil was angry, I know. I saw it in his face, and I was an idiot," she thought, just as the stranger, who had watched the proceeding with a highly amused expression around the corners of his mouth, said to her:

"You know Neil McPherson, then? You called him your cousin."

"Yes," Bessie answered, a little proud of the relationship, "Neil is my cousin, or rather the cousin of my father, who is Mr. Archibald McPherson, from Bangor, Wales."

She meant to show her companion how respectable she was, even if her dress, which she was sure he had inspected critically, was poor and out of date, and she was not prepared for his sudden start, as he repeated:

"Mr. Archibald McPherson, of Bangor! Then you are the daughter of that—" he checked himself, and added, "I have met your mother at Monte Carlo," and he drew back a step or two, as if he feared that something of the mother's character might have communicated itself to the daughter. And Bessie saw the movement, and the change of expression on his face, and her cheeks were scarlet with shame, but she lifted her clear blue eyes fearlessly to his, and said:

"Yes, mother is a monomaniac on the subject of play. It is a species of insanity, I think."

Her voice shook a little, and about her mouth there settled the grieved, sorry look which touched the stranger at once, and coming close to her again, he said:

"Your mother is a very beautiful woman. I think she has the loveliest face I ever saw, with one exception," and he looked straight at the young girl whom he had wounded, hoping this implied compliment might atone.

But if Bessie heard or understood him she made no sign, and sat with her hands locked tightly together and her eyes looking far away across the sea of heads and the rapidly moving line of carriages.

This man knew her mother at her worst—not sweet, loving and kind as she was sometimes at Stoneleigh, but as a gambler, an adventuress, a woman of whom men jested and made sport—a woman who had probably ensured and fleeced him, as Neil would have expressed it. Bessie knew all the miserable catalogue of expedients resorted to by her mother to extort money from her victims; cards, chess, bets, philopenas, loans she never intended to pay, and which she accepted as gifts the instant the offer was made, and when these failed, pitiful tales of scanty means and pressing needs, an invalid husband at home, and a daughter who must be supported.

She knew the whole, for she had seen a letter to her father written by Lady Jane, who stated the case in plain language, and, denouncing Daisy as a disgrace to the McPherson family, asked that Archie should exercise his marital authority and keep his wife at home.

This letter had hurt Bessie cruelly, and when next her mother came to Stoneleigh she had begged of her to give up the life she was leading, and stay in her own home.

"And so all starve together," Daisy had answered her. "Do you know, child, that you would not have enough to eat or wear, if it were not for me? Your father has never earned a shilling in his life, and never will. It is not in him. We are owing everybody, and somebody must work. If I am that somebody, I choose to do it in my own way, and I am not the highly demoralized female Lady Jane thinks me to be. Her bosom friend, old Lady Oakley, plays at Monte Carlo, and so do many high-bred English dames, and Americans, too, for that matter. I am no worse than scores of women, except that I am poor and play from necessity, while they do it for pastime. I have never been false to your father; no man has ever insulted me that way, or ever will. If he did, I would shoot him as I would a dog. I cannot help being pretty any more than you; I cannot sew myself up in a bag, and shall not try to catch the small-pox, so do not worry me again with this sickly sentiment about respectability, and the duties of a wife. I know my own business, and can protect my own reputation."

After this there was nothing more to be said. Daisy went back to her profession, and Bessie took up the old life again with an added burden of care and anxiety, and with a resolve that she would use for herself personally just as little as possible of the money her mother sent them. Often and often had she speculated upon and tried to fancy the class of men her mother associated with, and whom Lady Jane called her victims, and now here was one beside her, speaking and acting like a gentleman, and she felt her blood tingle with bitter shame and humiliation. Had her mother fleeced *him*, she wondered, and at last, lifting her sad eyes to his face, she said:

"Do you know my mother well? Did you ever—play with her?"

"Yes, often," he replied; "side by side at *rouge et noir*, and at cards and chess where she is sure to beat. She bears a charmed hand, I think, or she would not be so successful."

He had lost money by her then, and Bessie at once found herself thinking that if she only knew how much, and who he was, she would pay it back pound for pound when she made a fortune.

In a vague kind of way she entertained a belief that somewhere in the world there was a fortune awaiting her; that little girl of fifteen summers, who sat there in Hyde Park, in her old washed linen dress and faded ribbons, with such a keen sense of pain in her heart for the mother who bore her, and pity for herself and her father. The latter had paid but little intention to what she was saying to her companion, for when he was not engrossed in the passers-by he had been half asleep, but when he caught the names *rouge et noir* and cards, he roused up and said:

"Sir, my daughter has never played for money in her life, and never will."

"I am sure she will not," the stranger rejoined, "though many highly respectable ladies do;" then, as if he wished to chance the subject, he turned to Bessie and said: "If Neil McPherson is your cousin there ought to be some relationship between you and me, for he is my cousin, too."

"Yours?" Bessie asked, in some surprise, and he replied:

"Yes, my father and his mother were cousins. I am Jack Trevellian. You have probably heard him speak of me."

"No," Bessie replied, with a decided shake of her head, which told plainly that neither from Neil nor any one else had she ever heard of Jack Trevellian, who felt a little chagrined that he, the man of fashion, whose name was so familiar in all the higher circles of London, should be wholly unknown to this girl from Wales.

Truly, she had much to learn. But she did not seem at all impressed now, or embarrassed either,

though she looked at him more closely and decided that he resembled Neil, but was not nearly so good-looking, and that he was awfully old.

"You know my cousin Blanche, of course," he said to her next. "You must have seen her when you visited at Neil's father's."

"I saw her at Penrhyn Park when I was a child, but not since then until this afternoon. I was never at Trevellian House," Bessie said, and with the mental decision: "Poor relations who are outside the ring," Jack Trevellian continued:

"She is not a beauty, though a great heiress. Rumor says Neil is engaged to her."

"Neil engaged! No, he isn't. He would have told me; he tells me everything; he is not engaged," Bessie said, quickly, while a keen sense of pain thrilled every nerve as she thought what it would be to lose Neil as he would be lost if he married the proud Blanche.

He was so much to her; something more than a brother, something less than a lover, for she was too young to think of such an ending to her friendship for him, and her heart beat rapidly and her lips quivered as she arose on the instant to go.

"Come, father, I think we have staid long enough. You must be tired," she said to her father; then turning to Jack, who was thinking: "Is the child in love with Neil? What a pity!" she said to him: "Thank you, Mr. Trevellian, for telling me who the people were. It was very kind in you. I will tell Neil I met you. Good-by," and she gave him her ungloved hand, which, though small and plump and well formed, showed that it was not a stranger to work.

Dishwashing, sweeping, dusting, bed making, and many other more menial things it had done at intervals to save old Dorothy, the only female domestic at Stoneleigh. But it was a very pretty hand for all that, and Jack Trevellian felt a great desire to squeeze it as it lay in his broad palm. But he did not, for something in Bessie's eyes forbade anything like liberty with her, and he merely said:

"I was very glad to tell you. I wish I could do something more for you while you stay in London. Perhaps you will let me call upon you—with Neil," he added, as he saw a flush in Bessie's face.

She was thinking of the old hair cloth furniture, and the room which Neil designated a hole, and which Jack Trevellian might wonder at and despise. Such men as he had nothing in common with Mrs. Buncher's lodgings, and she said to him, as she withdrew her hand and put on her mended gloves:

"You had better not; father and I are out so much that we might not be home, and you would have your trouble for nothing. Good-by again."

She took her father's arm and walked away, while Jack Trevellian stood looking after her and thinking to himself:

"That girl has the loveliest face I ever saw. It is so full of sweetness, and patience, and pathos, that you want to take her in your arms and pity her, and make much of her, as a child who has been hurt and wants soothing. She is even prettier than Flossie. By Jove, if the coronet were mine, and the money, I'd make that girl my lady as sure as my name is Jack. Lady Bessie Trevellian! It sounds well, and what a sensation she would make in society. But what a mother-in-law for a man to be saddled with. Welsh Daisy! Bah!" and with thoughts not very complimentary to Daisy, he left the park and walked rapidly along Piccadilly toward Grosvenor Square and Trevellian House.

CHAPTER VII.

NEIL'S DISCOMFORTURE.

Meanwhile Neil was driving on in no very enviable frame of mind. Bessie's startling demonstration had annoyed him more than he liked to confess. Why had she made such a spectacle of herself? and how oddly she had looked standing there in that old linen gown with her hat hanging down her back—and such a hat! He had noticed it in the gardens and thought it quite out of style, and had even detected that the ribbons had been ironed! But he did not think as much about it, or her gown either, when he was alone with her, as he did now when there was all his world to see and Blanche to criticise, as she did unsparingly.

"I thought you once told me she was very pretty," she said: "but I think her a fright in that dowdy dress, and bare-headed, too! Did it to show her hair, no doubt! There is probably some of her mother's nature in her."

Neil could have sworn, he was so angry with Blanche and with all the world, especially Bessie, who had got him into this mess. He tried to make himself believe that he had intended to take Bessie and her father for a drive in the park, but he should not do it now. Probably the linen gown was the only one Bessie had brought with her, and the elegant Neil McPherson, who thought so much of one's personal appearance and what Mrs. Grundy would say, could not face

the crowd with that gown at his side, even if Bessie were in it. She would never know it, perhaps, but she had lost her chances with Neil, who nevertheless, hated himself for his foolish pride, and when the drive, which he shortened as much as possible, was over, he left Blanche to go home alone, and taking a cab drove straight to Oxford street and bought a lovely navy-blue silk and a pretty chip hat, with a wreath of eglantines around it. These he ordered sent to Bessie, at No. —— Abingdon road, and then, feeling that he was a pretty good fellow after all, he started for home, where to his surprise, he found his cousin Jack.

"Why, Jack!" he exclaimed; "I thought you were in Ireland! When did you return?"

"This morning; and, as you see, have lost no time in paying my respects to you all," Jack answered, as he rose from his seat by Blanche and went forward, with his easy, patronizing manner, which always exasperated Neil; it had in it such an air of superiority over him, as if he were a mere boy, to be noticed and made much of.

There was always a show of friendship between these two, but no genuine liking. Still, they were now very gracious to each other, and talked together until dinner was announced, when Jack offered his arm to Blanche, to whom he devoted himself so assiduously that Neil was jealous at once, even though for Blanche herself he did not care a penny. And he knew Jack did not either, except as she was surrounded by the golden halo of ten thousand a year. Neil had not made up his mind whether he wanted that ten thousand with the incumbrance, or not; but he certainly did not want Jack to get it, and his brow grew cloudy, and he became very silent, until Jack startled him by saying:

"By the way, Neil, why have you never told me of that pretty little wild blossom hidden away in Wales?"

"Whom do you mean?" Neil asked savagely; and Jack replied:

"I mean your cousin Bessie. I stumbled upon her and her father in the park this afternoon, and told them who some of the people were. I was standing by Miss McPherson's chair when you drove by—"

"And she made that rush at Neil as if she had been a mad thing; it was too absurd!" Blanche chimed in, and turning to Lady Jane, she described the scene with great minuteness of detail. "It was really too ridiculous, to see her standing there waving her handkerchief with her head bare to show her abundant hair, and that old linen gown, which must have seen some years' service. I was intensely mortified to have our friends see her, and so was Neil."

"I beg your pardon, I was not mortified at all; I liked it, and I do not care who saw her," Neil said, rousing up in defense of Bessie, and lying easily and fluently, for Blanche's cruel remarks made him very angry.

"Oh, you did like it, then? Your face told a different story," Blanche retorted; while Lady Jane, forgetting her dignity, commenced a tirade against both Bessie and her mother, the latter of whom she cordially despised. Of the girl she knew nothing, she said, but it was fair to suppose she was like her mother, and she did not blame Blanche for feeling shocked at such unmaidenly advances in public to a young man.

Had Neil been a few years younger he would have called his mother a fool, as he had done more than once in his boyhood; but he could not do that now, and turning to Jack, who had been quietly eating his dinner, he said:

"Jack, what did you think of Bessie? Is she a bold hussy, and ought Blanche to smash her red parasol because Bessie's eyes have rested upon it?"

Thus appealed to, Jack looked up, with an amused smile on his face, and said:

"I don't quite believe Bessie's eyes did rest on Blanche's parasol. I thought they were on you, and envied you as a lucky dog. Seriously, though," he continued, as he saw the thunderous gleam in Neil's eyes, and the look of triumph in Blanche's, "it did not occur to me that there was anything bold or unmaidenly in what the young lady did, and I never saw a more beautiful tableau than she made, standing there in the sunshine, with her bright, wavy hair, and her lovely, eager face. She is very beautiful, and I am so glad I have seen her. They are stopping at—" He hesitated, and looked at Neil, who, grateful for his defense of Bessie, unhesitatingly replied:

"No. —— Abingdon road, near High street"

"Thank you," Jack said, making a mental memorandum of the place, with a view to call, even if Bessie had said he better not.

After this little skirmish the dinner proceeded in peace, so far as Bessie was concerned, for Jack Trevellian was a kind of oracle, whose verdict could raise one to the pinnacle of public opinion, or cast him down to the depths, and if he said Bessie was not bold, nor brazen-faced, then she was not, though Lady Jane and Blanche disliked her just the same.

Neil, on the contrary, forgave her fully for the annoyance he had felt, and immediately after breakfast the next morning he started for Mrs. Buncher's. Bessie was trying on the hat when he entered. She had received the box only a few moments before, and had readily guessed that Neil was the donor, and had in part divined his motive.

"He was ashamed of my old gown and hat; and they are rather the worse for the wear, and looked very shabby among the fine dresses in the park. But they are the best I have, unless I make over those mother sent me—and that I cannot do," she thought, as she remembered, with a pang, the trunkful of half-worn garments of various kinds, which her mother had sent her from time to time, and which she could never bring herself to wear, because of the association. They had been worn in the moral mire of Monte Carlo and other places equally disreputable, and Bessie could no more have put them on than she could have adopted her mother's habits. In her linen dress, which she bought with money paid her for roses by the ladies who frequented the "George," she felt pure and respectable. But this gift from Neil, her cousin, she surely might keep, for her father said so, and, young-girl-like, she was admiring herself, or rather the hat, before the glass, when Neil himself came in.

"Hallo, Dot," he said, coming quickly to her side. "At it, I see, like the rest of your kind; but don't it become you, though! Why, you are sweet and fresh this morning as a rose from the old Stoneleigh garden," and the tall young man stooped and kissed the blushing girl two or three times before she could withdraw herself from him. "Why, Bess," he continued, "what a lump of dignity you are this morning! You did not used to wriggle so when I kissed you. What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened," Bessie replied, though she knew very well there had, for what Jack Trevellian had told her that rumor said of Neil and Blanche had opened a new channel of thought, and made her older far than she was before; too old for Neil to be kissing her as if she were a child.

And then, if what Jack said was true, he had no right to kiss her, even if she were his cousin. But was it true? She wished she knew, and after she had thanked Neil for the dress, and asked if he were very angry with her the day before for trying to attract his attention, and he had assured her that he was not, she burst out:

"Oh, Neil, is it true you are to marry Miss Blanche? Mr. Jack Trevellian stood by us yesterday and told me who the people were, and he said—"

"Jack be hanged!" Neil interrupted her. "What business has he to talk such nonsense to you? Marry Blanche? Never! What do I want of those light eyebrows and that pointed chin—I, who know you?"

Here he stopped, struck by something in Bessie's face which seemed to brighten and beautify it until it shone like the face of some pure saint to whom the gate of Paradise has just been opened. Then it occurred to Neil suddenly that Bessie was not a child. She was a girl of fifteen and more, with an experience which made her older than her years; and, selfish as he was, and much as he would like to have her look at him always as she was looking now, he felt that he must not encourage it. He had told her he should never marry Blanche, but in his heart he thought it possible, for, as there was no money in his own family, and he could not exist without it, he must marry money and forget the sweet face and soft blue eyes which moved him with a strange power and made him long to fold Bessie in his arms, and, young as she was, claim her as something more than a cousin. But, always politic and cautious, he restrained himself, and said to her instead:

"I do not believe I shall ever marry anybody, certainly not for many years, and you and I will be the best of friends always, brother and sister, which is better than cousins. Do you consent?"

"Yes," Bessie answered, falteringly, not quite understanding him, or knowing whether she should like the brother and sister arrangement as well as the cousin.

Then they talked together of what Bessie had seen in the park, and she told him all Jack Trevellian had said, and how kind he was, and how much she liked him, until Neil felt horribly jealous of his cousin, and wished he had staid in Ireland while Bessie was in London.

"Oh, it must be so fine to drive in a handsome carriage with the crowd. I wish I could try it. Does it cost so very much?" she asked, and Neil detested himself because he did not at once offer to take her and her father for the coveted drive.

"Could he do it?" he asked himself many times, deciding finally that he could not face his fashionable friends, and, more than all, his mother and Blanche, with these country cousins—Archie, in his threadbare coat, and Bessie, in her linen gown, with the big puffs at the top of the sleeves.

Had she been less beautiful he might venture it, but everybody would look at that face and turn to look again, and wonder who she was, and question him about her.

No, he couldn't do it, and so he went away at last, deciding to take the underground road to St. James Park, and meeting, as he was entering the station, Jack Trevellian coming out.

"Hallo, Hallo!" was said by each to the other, while both looked a little conscious, and Neil burst out, impulsively, "I say, Jack, what brings you over here?"

"The same which brought you, I dare say," Jack replied. "I am going to call upon your cousin."

"The deuce you are! I thought so," Neil answered, in a tone of voice indicative of anything but pleasure.

"Have you any objections?" Jack asked, and Neil replied:

"No—yes. Jack. You are as good—yes, better than most of the fellows in our set, but—" He hesitated, and Jack rejoined:

"But what? Go on."

"By Jove, I will speak out!" Neil continued, going close to his cousin. "You are a man of the world, accustomed to all sorts of girls—girls who laugh and flirt and let you make soft speeches to them and never think of you again because they know you mean nothing. But Bessie is not that kind; she is innocent and pure as a baby, and believes all you say, and—and—by George, Jack, if you harm a hair of her head I'll beat you into a pomace! You understand?"

"Yes, I rather think I do," Jack answered, with a smile; "and, Neil, you are more of a man than I supposed; upon my soul you are; but never fear, I will not flirt with Bessie, I will not make love to her, unless—I fall in love myself, in which case I cannot promise; but don't distress yourself. The Welsh rose is as safe with me as with you. Good-morning!" and so saying, he walked off in the direction of Abingdon road, while Neil rather unwillingly bought his ticket and went through the narrow way and down the stairs to wait for the incoming train.

CHAPTER VIII.

JACK AND BESSIE.

Mrs. Buncher had made an effort to brighten up her dingy parlor since her new lodgers took possession of it. She had washed the windows and put up clean muslin curtains, and a white towel on the small table, which was further ornamented by a bowl of lovely roses, which filled the room with perfume and seemed to harmonize so perfectly with the fair young girl sitting near the table and darning what would soon have been a hole in the elbow of her father's coat. She had discovered it that morning, and as soon as Neil left her sat down to her task, with her pretty white apron partially covering her linen dress and greatly improving her appearance. Bessie always wore aprons in the morning at home, though Neil had more than once objected to it, as he said such things belonged to housemaids and not to ladies.

"And I am the housemaid; I wash the dishes and lay the cloth and sweep and dust, and an apron keeps my dress clean," Bessie had answered him, laughingly, and when she came to London she brought her best apron with her, and after Neil was gone put it on and commenced her task of darning.

"Oh, if you could have a new coat; this is so worn and threadbare," she said to her father, who was sitting near her in his dressing-gown. "I wish Neil had sent you a coat instead of that dress to me. I do wish we were rich! I would buy a lot of things, but first of all I would have a drive in the park. Wasn't it grand! I wish Neil would take us, though perhaps he has not the money of his own to pay for the carriage."

"Bessie," her father said, rousing up from the half dozing condition in which he was most of the time when in the house, "you are hugging a delusion with regard to Neil. He is very kind in a way, when it costs him nothing, but he would never sacrifice his comfort or his feelings for you or me. We are his poor relations, from the country; we are not like his world, or that powdered piece of vanity who was with him yesterday. It would cost him nothing to take us for a drive, for the carriage is his mother's, but you couldn't hire him to go round that park with us; he has that false pride, more common in women than in men, which would keep him from it. He likes you very much—at Stoneleigh, where there are none of his set to look on; but here in London it is different. He might take us to many places, if he would; but he dares not, lest he should be seen. He can send you a blue silk dress, which I half wish you had returned; and he can come here and make your pulse beat faster with his soft words and manner, which mean so little; but other attentions we must not expect from him. I tell you this, my child, because you are getting to be a woman. You were fifteen last March. You are very beautiful, and Neil McPherson knows it, and if you had a fortune he might seek to be more than your cousin; but as it is, don't attach much importance to what he says and does, or be disappointed at what he does not do."

Bessie did not reply for the great lump which had risen in her throat as her father put into words what in part she had suspected, but tried to fight down. She did not like to believe that Neil had a fault, and still she felt that her father might be right, and that Neil *was* ashamed of them. Something in his manner since they came to London, would indicate as much, and her heart was very sore with a sense of something lost, and there were tears on her long eyelashes as she bent over the darn, too much absorbed in her own thoughts to hear the step on the stairs or know that any one was coming until there was a tap at the open door, and looking up she saw Jack Trevellian standing before her. Mrs. Buncher, who was her own waitress, had bidden him "go right up," and as the door was ajar he stood for an instant on the upper landing and heard Archie say:

"You were fifteen last March. You are very beautiful, and Neil McPherson knows it, and if you had a fortune he might seek to be more than your cousin, but as it is don't attach much importance to

what he says and does or be disappointed at what he does not do."

"The old cove has hit it," Jack thought; "he understands Neil to a dot. If Bessie had a fortune he would go down before her in dead earnest; and, perhaps, I would too, for, 'pon my soul, she has the sweetest face I ever saw. What a lovely woman she will make."

And then, there arose before him a vision of a stately old house in the north country, the home of the Trevellians, and in the family vault the present owner, a white haired man of seventy-five was lying, and by his side his puny eldest son, and also stalwart Harry, who looked as if a broad-ax could not kill him, and he, Jack Trevellian now the bachelor with only 500 pounds a year, and most extravagant tastes, was there as Sir Jack, and with him this little Welsh maiden, who was bending over the threadbare coat, and trying to force back the tears her father's words had caused her.

"I am a knave and a murderer," Jack thought. "Uncle Paul, and Dick, and Hal would have to die, and little Flossie, whom I like so much, be left alone, before all this could be;" then, with a premonitory cough, he knocked lightly at the open door.

"Oh, Mr. Trevellian!" Bessie exclaimed, springing to her feet and blushing scarlet. "How you frightened me! Pray walk in. I did not expect you. I—I—am mending father's coat."

"Yes, I see," he answered, offering her his hand after he had greeted her father with his most graceful, courtly manner. "I see you are. I wonder now if you are doing it well. I used to have some experience in such matters when I was roughing it in Australia. I am a beautiful darner; let me try my hand, please;" and taking the coat from her before she had time to recover from her astonishment, he seated himself upon a chair and began industriously to ply the needle, while Bessie looked on amazed.

"You see I am quite a tailor," he said, pushing his thick brown hair back from his white forehead, and flashing upon her one of those rare smiles with which he always obtained the mastery and made friends even of his enemies.

How charming he was, and he never seemed to see the humble room, the faded carpet, the dingy oil-cloth, or the coarse hair-cloth furniture which had offended Neil and made him call the place a hole. Of course, Jack did see them all; he could not help that, but he acted as if he had all his life been accustomed to just such surroundings, and was so familiar and affable that both Bessie and her father were more charmed with him than on the previous day.

"By the way," he said at last, when the coat was mended and approved, "I met Neil at the station; he had been here, I suppose?"

"Yes," Bessie replied, a painful flush suffusing her cheeks as she recalled what her father had said of Neil.

"I am half afraid he has forestalled me, then," Jack continued. "I came to ask you and your father to drive with me in the park this afternoon; that is, if Neil is not ahead of me."

"Oh, Mr. Trevellian," Bessie cried, turning her bright face to him, while the glad tears sprang to her eyes, and she forgot that until yesterday she did not know there was such a person as this elegant man making himself so much at home with them; forgot everything except the pleasure it would be to drive with her father in Hyde Park, and "be one of them," as she expressed it to herself.

"Then Neil has not asked you, and you will go with me?" Jack said, addressing himself to Archie, who replied:

"If Bessie likes—yes; and I thank you so much. You are giving my little girl a greater pleasure than you can ever guess."

Meanwhile the color had all faded from Bessie's face, leaving it very pale, as she stood with clasped hands and wide-open eyes, looking first at herself in the glass and then at Jack. She was thinking of her old linen dress and hat, and of her father's clothes. Neil was ashamed of them, her father had said, and she believed him, though it hurt her cruelly to do so. Would not Mr. Trevellian be ashamed of them too, when he came to realize the contrast there was between them and the people of his set who daily frequented the park?

"What do you say, Miss McPherson? Will you go?" Jack asked, and she answered quickly:

"I'd like it, so much; but I thought—I'm quite sure we had better not;" and as she thus gave up the happiness she had so coveted, she burst into tears—tears for her poverty, and tears for Neil, who had not been so kind to them as this stranger was.

"Why, Bessie," her father said, "what is the matter? I thought you wanted to drive."

"I do, I do," she sobbed; then, with a quick, impatient movement she dashed the tears from her eyes which shone like stars as she lifted them bravely to Jack Trevellian and said, with a tinge of pride in her lone: "I should enjoy the drive more than anything else in the world, and it was kind in you to ask us; but, Mr. Trevellian, you don't know what it would be to you to be seen there with father and me—he in his darned coat and I in this gown, the best I have here, or anywhere, for summer; and then, my hat; the ribbons are all faded and poor, just as we are, dear father and I;" and as she talked she stepped to her father's side and wound her arms around his neck.

There was a world of pathos in the low, sweet voice which said so sadly, "dear father and I," and it moved Jack with a strange power, bringing a moisture to his eyes where tears had not been in years.

Mastering his weakness Jack burst into a merry laugh which was good to hear, as he said:

"Is it the gown, and the hat, and the old darned coat? And do you think I care for trifles like these? I tell you honestly, I would rather take your linen gown, to drive this afternoon, with you in it, than the most elegant dress in London and you out of it."

And so it was arranged that they should go, and Jack staid on and on, and read aloud to Bessie, and told her of his travels in the East, and in Australia, and then, he scarcely knew how or why, he spoke of the old Trevellian home in the north of England, near the border. Trevellian Castle it was called, he said, and it had been in the family for years.

"I have two cousins there," he said, "or rather second cousins, Dick and Harry, and I like them both so much, especially Hal, who is six feet three inches high, and well proportioned. Quite a giant, in fact. Then there is a young girl, Florence Meredith, Flossie we call her, she is so like a playful kitten. She is not a cousin, at least to me, though she calls me that. She is a distant relative of Sir Paul's wife, the mother of Dick and Hal, and was adopted by her when a baby, Flossie is lovely, and you remind me of her, except that she is much younger. She will make a lovely woman, and somebody's heart will ache on her account one of these days."

Jack hardly knew why he was taking to Bessie of little frolicsome Flossie Meredith, the Irish lassie, who was not in the least like Bessie McPherson, except that she was sweet, and loving, and true, and said what she thought, and would have darned a coat or scrubbed the floor, if necessary. He only knew that he liked sitting by Bessie and that if he sat he must talk, and so he kept on and only arose to go when he heard the rattling of tea-cups outside and guessed that Mrs. Buncher might be preparing to bring up luncheon.

About half-past four that afternoon Mrs. Buncher was amazed to see a smart carriage, with handsome horses and servants in livery, drive up before her door and still more amazed to see her lodgers take their seats in it, Bessie and her father, side by side, and Jack Trevellian opposite them, with his back to the driver. It was a glorious June afternoon, and the park was, if possible, gayer and more crowed than on the previous day. The excitement incident upon the passing of the princess had subsided, when the carriage turned in at the Marble Arch and joined the moving throng, which Jack scarcely noticed, so absorbed was he in watching Bessie's face as it sparkled and shone with eager joy and excitement. How beautiful she was in spite of the brown linen and the sleeve puffs which had so annoyed Neil, and while watching her Jack felt his heart thrill with a strange feeling he had never experienced before in all his intercourse with women, and found himself mentally subtracting fifteen from thirty, and feeling rather appalled at the result.

After they had been in the park ten minutes or more and were nearing a curve, he saw a sudden flush in Bessie's face and a gleam of triumph in her blue eyes as she looked ahead of her. Neil was coming from the opposite direction, he was sure, and in a moment the McPherson turn-out appeared, with Neil sitting as Jack sat, his back to the horses and his mother and Blanche opposite. The latter saw Bessie first, and giving her a haughty stare, spoke quickly to Lady Jane, whose stare was even more haughty and supercilious. Neither bowed even to Jack, but Neil lifted his hat with such a look of undisguised astonishment and disapproval on his face that Jack laughed merrily, for he understood perfectly how chagrined Neil was to see him there with Bessie. And Neil was chagrined and out of sorts, and called himself a sneak, and a coward, while to Jack he gave the name fool with an adjective prefixed. He did not even hear what his mother and Blanche were saying of Bessie until he caught the words from the former, "She has rather a pretty face;" then he roused up and rejoined:

"Rather a pretty face! I should think she had. It is the loveliest face I ever saw, and I'd rather have it beside me in the park than all the faces in London!"

"Reely!" Blanche replied, with an upward turn of her nose. "Suppose you get out and join them; there is room for you by Jack."

"I wish I could," Neil growled, and then he relapsed into silence and scarcely spoke again until they returned to Grosvenor Square.

As soon as dinner was over he started for Abingdon road, and was told by Mrs. Buncher, who received him with a slight increase of dignity in her manner, as became one before whose door carriages and servants in livery had stood twice in one day, that Mr. McPherson and the young lady had gone to see "Pinafore" with the gentleman who took them to drive.

"The deuce they have!" Neil muttered and hailing a cab he too drove to the theater, and securing the best seat he could at that late hour, looked over the house till he found the party he was searching for, Archie, in his threadbare coat, and high, standing collar, looking a little bored for himself, but pleased for Bessie, whose face was radiant as she watched the progress of the play.

For once Neil forgot the puffs and the linen gown, and thought only of the exquisitely beautiful face and rippling golden hair, for Bessie's head was uncovered, and Neil saw that she received quite as much admiration from the fashionable crowd as did Little Buttercup or the Captain's daughter, and that Jack looked supremely happy and nodded to his friends here and there as if to call their attention to the girl beside him.

"Confound him!" Neil thought. "What business has he to take charge of Bessie in this way? I'll not allow it!"

But Jack had the inside track and kept it, in spite of Neil; and during the ten days Bessie remained in London he took her everywhere, and when she left he knew much more of some parts of the city than he did before. Never in his life had he visited the Tower, which he looked upon as a place frequented only by Americans or country people; but as, after the park, this was the spot of all others which Bessie wished to see, he went there with her, and joining the party waiting for their ranks to be full, followed the pompous beefeater up stairs and down stairs, and into the lady's chamber, and saw the steps by the water-gate where Elizabeth sat down when she landed there a prisoner to her sister, and saw the thumb-screws and other instruments of torture, and more fire-arms and bayonets grouped in the shape of sunflowers and roses than he had supposed were in the world, and climbed to the little room where Guilford Dudley was imprisoned, and stared stupidly at the name of Jane cut upon the wall, and looked down the staircase under which it was said the murdered princes were thrown, and horrified Bessie by asking who all these people were he had been hearing about.

"Of course I knew once," he said. "Such things were thrashed into me at school, but hanged if I have them and their history at my tongue's end, as you have. Are you not tired to death?" he asked, pantingly, and fanning himself with his soft hat as they left the gloomy building, and, after looking at the spot where Ann Boleyn and Lady Jane Grey were beheaded, went back to the office where they dismissed their guide.

It was a scorchingly hot day, and Jack was perspiring at every pore, but Bessie was fresh and bright as ever, and eager to go to the Abbey and the Parliament House, and possibly *somewhere else*, and Jack obeyed her with an inward groan, and went where she wished to go, and marveled at her knowledge of and interest in everything pertaining to Westminster and its surroundings. Never in his life had Jack Trevellian been as tired as he was that night, with a back which ached so hard that he actually bought a plaster for it next morning, and, thus strengthened and fortified, started again on his mission. Kensington Museum, the British Museum, the National Gallery, Crystal Palace, Hampton Court, and the Queen's Stables were all visited by turn, and then they went for a day to Alexandra Palace, and saw an opera, a play, a ballot, two circuses, and rope-walking, all for a shilling, which to Bessie's frugal mind was best of all.

That night Jack was more worn out than ever, and his back ached worse than after the Tower, and though Bessie was to leave the next day for home, he did not go to Abingdon Road in the evening, but went to bed instead, and deferred his good-by until the morrow. So Neil had the field to himself, and made good use of his opportunity. Together he and Bessie walked in the Kensington gardens until they were tired, and then they sat side by side on one of the many seats in a retired part of the grounds, and Neil told her how sorry he was that she was going home, and how lonely he should be without her.

"Ye-es," Bessie said, doubtfully. "I think you will survive;" and then he burst out, impulsively; "I say, Bessie, I don't want you to think me a cad and a sneak, when you go back to Stoneleigh. Don't you suppose I'd like to have taken you round just as well—yes, better than Jack, confound him?"

"Why didn't you then? I would rather have gone with you," Bessie said, beginning to relent at once toward the handsome, good-for-nothing Neil, who had his arm around her, and was looking into her face with his dark, expressive eyes.

"Why didn't I?" he answered. "I am going to tell you why I didn't, and why Jack did. He is his own master, with money to do as he likes, and no one to question or nag him at home; while I am *not* my own master at all, and have no money except what mother chooses to give me, and that is not much. Father, you know, is poor, and mother holds the purse, which is not a large one, and keeps me awful short at times, especially after paying my Oxford bills and a few debts I contracted the last year. There would have been no end of a row if I had asked her for money to spend on you and your father."

"Does she then hate us so much?" Bessie asked, and Neil replied:

"She cannot hate you, as she does not know you; but, you see, she is prejudiced against your mother and visits her anger upon your innocent head. I wanted her to call upon you and invite you to our house, and I wanted to take you to drive in the park, but I could not; my hands were tied. Do you suppose it was pleasant for me to see Jack Trevellian doing what I ought to have done?"

"No," Bessie replied, beginning to feel a great pity for Neil, who had suffered so much. "No, and I am glad you have told me, for I thought—I feared you were ashamed of us, and it hurt me a little."

There was a tremor in her voice which made Neil tighten the clasp of his arm around her, while he bent his head so low that his hair touched her forehead, as he exclaimed:

"Ashamed of you, Bessie! Never! How could I be ashamed of the dearest, sweetest little cousin a man ever had? I tell you I am the victim of circumstances!"

And bending his head still lower, "the victim of circumstances" kissed the girlish lips, which kissed him back again in token of reconciliation, and restored faith in him.

Poor, tired Jack, dreaming that night that he was a circus-rider and jumping through a hoop for Bessie's pleasure, would have felt that all his fatigue and back ache, and the plaster which caused him so much discomfort, might have been spared, or at least were wasted on the girl with whom the kiss given in the deepening twilight was more powerful than all he had done for her, could he have known of that scene in the gardens. But he did not know of it, and at a comparatively early hour next morning he was at Mrs. Buncher's, where Bessie greeted him with her sweetest smile and thanked him again for all he had done for them.

"Don't speak of it, I beg; it is so very little, I only wish there was really something I could do to prove my willingness to serve you," he said.

They were standing alone by the window looking into the street, and as Jack said this there came a troubled look on Bessie's face, find after waiting a moment, she said:

"There is something you can do, if you will: something which will please me very much, and prove you the good man I believe you to be."

"Command me, and it is done," Jack said; and Bessie continued:

"If you ever meet mother again at Monte Carlo, or anywhere, don't play with her for money; promise me this."

"I promise," Jack answered, unhesitatingly; and, emboldened by his promptness, Bessie went on:

"And, oh, Mr. Trevellian, if you would never again play with any one for money, even the smallest sum. It is gambling just the same; it is wicked; it leads to so much that is bad. It was my grandfather's ruin, and he knew it and repented bitterly, for it left his son nothing but poverty, and that is why we are so poor, father and I; gambling did it all."

There were tears in Bessie's eyes, and they went straight to Jack's heart. He was not an inveterate gambler, though he had lost and won large sums at Monte Carlo and Baden Baden, when the tables were open there, and, like most Englishmen, he never played whist that something was not staked; it gave zest to the game, which to him would be very insipid without it: but Bessie's eyes could have made him face the cannon's mouth, if need be, and he said to her at once:

"I promise that, too. I will never play again for money with anyone, but for my reward you must let me visit you at Stoneleigh sometime."

"Oh, yes, you may," she answered, "but I warn you it is a poor place to come to, with only old Anthony and Dorothy to do anything. I have to work, and you may have to work, too, and do other things than mending father's coat."

She spoke playfully, and Jack declared his readiness to sift cinders, or scour knives, or do anything, if she would let him come. Just then Neil arrived, not altogether pleased to find Jack there before him, standing close to Bessie, who was looking very happy. The two young men went with her to the station, where they vied with each other in showing her attention. Jack held her traveling-bag, and her parasol and fan, and band-box containing the white chip hat, and Neil held her shawl, and umbrella, and paper bag of biscuits and seed cakes which Mrs. Buncher had given her to eat upon the road, and when at last she was gone, and they walked out of the station into the noisy street, each felt that the brightness of the summer day had changed, and that something inexpressibly sweet had been taken from them.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS AT STONELEIGH.

Two years and a half after that visit to London, Bessie McPherson, now a young lady of nearly eighteen, stood by the western window of the old house at Stoneleigh reading a letter from Neil. He had been at Stoneleigh several times since that summer in London, and these visits, with his letters always so affectionate and bright, were the only breaks in Bessie's monotonous life. Once Jack had been there for a few days, or rather to the "George," where he slept and took his meals, spending the rest of the time with Bessie, who interested him more and more, and from whom he at last fled as from a positive danger. With his limited income and his habits, he could not hope to marry, even if Bessie would have joined her young life with his matured one, which he doubted, and, with a great pang of regret he left her in the old Stoneleigh garden and did not dare look back at her, sitting there with the troubled look on her face, because he was leaving, lest he should turn back and, taking her in his arms, say the words he must not say.

And so he went his way to busy London, and heard from Blanche that the white-haired old earl in the north of England was dead, and the puny Dick master in his place.

"Only two between you and a fortune," seemed whispered in his ear, and with it came a thought of Bessie sitting under the old yew tree in the summer sunshine and looking after him.

"Murderer!" he said to himself again, "do you wish Dick dead and Hal, too, the finest fellow that

ever lived, for the sake of a young girl whose mind is full of a prig like Neil McPherson?"

And so he put all thoughts of Bessie aside, and wore mourning for his great-uncle, and wrote a letter to the new heir, Sir Dick, and sent his love to Flossie, and went no more to Stoneleigh. But Neil was coming again, and his letter to Bessie was as follows:

> "LONDON, Dec, 20th, 18—,
>
> "MY SWEETEST COUSIN: and when I say that I mean it, for though Blanche is just as much my cousin as you are, and is in her way sweet as sugar, she bears no comparison to you, my little Dot, as I used to call you when you were a wee thing and let me kiss you as often as I liked. My Welsh rose I call you now, when you wear long dresses and will not let me kiss you, or at least will not kiss me as you did before you made that trip to London two years ago last June. Something happened to you then which shot you up into a woman, and I lost my little Bessie. But how absurdly I am writing, as if I were your lover, instead of your cousin, and as good as engaged to Blanche. I suppose mother would break her heart if I did not marry that £10,000 a year. I used to say I wouldn't, you know; but, *nous verrons*; what I wish to tell you now is, that I am coming to Stoneleigh for the holidays. Mother wishes me to go with her and Blanche to some stupid place near Edinburgh, and we have had a jolly row about it, but I prefer Stoneleigh and you; so you may expect me the 23rd, on the evening train from Bangor; and please tell old Dorothy to have a roasting fire in my room, which you know is something after the stable order, and oh, if she would have plum-pudding and chicken-pie for dinner! You see, I make myself quite at home at Stoneleigh, and I have a weakness for the good things of this world. I do not believe I was cut out for a poor man. I might be poor and honest, but never poor and happy.
>
> "By the way, I am to bring a friend with me, or rather he is to stop first at Carnarvon, to hunt up somebody by the name of Rogers, whom he is very anxious to find."

"Rogers—Rogers," Bessie repeated, thoughtfully. "Seems to me I have heard that name before. Who is Neil's friend, I wonder? I am sorry he is coming, for that means another fire, and another plate at table, and we are so poor. Neil is right; it is not so easy to be poor and happy as one might think," and the look of care habitual to Bessie's face deepened upon it, for funds were very low at Stoneleigh just then.

It was weeks since they had received anything from Daisy, and Archie's slender income would barely suffice for absolute necessaries, leaving nothing for extra fires and extra mouths to feed with plum-pudding and chicken-pie, and all the etceteras of a regular Christmas dinner such as Neil would expect.

Resuming the letter at last, Bessie read on:

> "I have asked him to spend a day at Stoneleigh after he has finished his business in Carnarvon, and he has accepted and will be with us at Christmas. He is an American—Grey Jerrold, from Boston—and the right sort of a fellow, too: not a bit of a cad, if he did thrash me unmercifully the first time I ever saw him. He served me just right, and we are great friends now. He was at Eton with me and at Oxford, too, and took the wind out of all our sails in both places. No sneak about him, and though he seems more English than American from having lived with us so long, he would knock me down now if I were to say a word against his star spangled banner. His father and mother are in Boston, and he has crossed, I don't know how many times, mostly, I think, to see an old Aunt Hannah, whom he seems to worship, and whose photograph he actually kissed the day he got it at Eton. Such an old fashioned woman, too, as she must be, judging from her dress and hair; but such a sweet, patient, sorry face, with an expression about the mouth like you when 'la petite madame' is under discussion. I hear she is at Monte Carlo still. A friend saw her there flirting with and fleecing an Italian count, who has quite cut out that poodle of a Hardy."

"Oh, Neil! oh, mother!" Bessie cried, and the look about her mouth, of which Neil had spoken, was pitiable to see, as the lips quivered and the great tears sprang to her eyes and stood on her long lashes. "Fleecing an Italian count!" she whispered. "If mother were to send us money now, I do not believe I would touch it."

Then she read on:

> "You are sure to like Grey Jerrold, and if you do not fall in love with him I shall be surprised. He, of course, will surrender to you at once, and he is worthy of you. I am to make some stupid calls with my mother and Blanche so good-by till Tuesday night. I only live till then.
>
> "Your loving cousin,
>
> "NEIL."

For some time after finishing Neil's letter Bessie staid by the window, very still and thoughtful, with a half-pleased, half-troubled look in her young face. She was thinking of Neil's projected

visit, and planning how she could make him comfortable, and his friend.

"I can dispense with a fire in my room, and the boots I was going to buy; these are not so very bad, though they do leak at times," and she glanced down rather ruefully at the little shabby boots in which her feet were incased, and which she had worn so long. "I hope Neil will not notice them, he is so fastidious about such things," she said, with a sigh; and then her thoughts went back to the summer when she had visited London and met Jack Trevellian who had been so kind and done so much for her.

Her mother had been home several times since then, and had spoken of Jack as a noble fellow, with nothing small in his nature.

"But he is greatly changed from what he used to be," she said. "When I first knew him at Monte Carlo, he was almost as regular at the tables as I was myself, and a capital partner at cards; but now he never plays at all, and did not even go inside the Casino, notwithstanding I did my best to persuade him. I think there must be some woman concerned in the change. Well she is fortunate if she gets Jack Trevellian. I wish Bessie, you had more tact, for I know he was interested in you. He is worth forty Neil McPhersons."

"Oh, mother, please don't talk like that," Bessie said, thinking to herself that she could tell, if she would, why he did not play as formerly, and feeling a great throb of gladness that he was keeping his promise to her.

If he had been coming to Stoneleigh, Bessie would not have cared for her surroundings, or her shabby shoes for he would not have noticed them, or if he did, he would not have let her know it as Neil was sure to do. Neil was very particular and critical, and had more than once hurt Bessie cruelly with his criticism upon her dress. But then he was just as severe upon Blanche, and that was some comfort, and with a sigh, as she remembered what he had said of being as good as engaged, she put the letter aside, and went to tell Dorothy of the expected guests and to consult with her as to the ways and means of making them comfortable.

"Fortunately I have some money saved, of my own, and you must make it go as far as possible, and be sure that we have a good Christmas dinner, with plum-pudding and whipped cream," she said, as she emptied into the old servant's hand what had been intended for boots and gloves, and a Christmas present for her father.

And now the day when Neil was expected had come, and it lacked but a few minutes of the time for the arrival of the train. Everything was ready, and the old house wore quite a festive appearance with its holiday dress of evergreens and scarlet berries, and all the flowers there were in blossom in the conservatory, which opened from the dining room, and was kept warm without extra expense. Everything which could be spared from other parts of the house had been brought to Neil's room, where a cheerful fire was burning in the grate, and where Bessie's own easy chair, and couch, and bright Afghan were doing duty, and making the place very comfortable and attractive.

During the two years and a half which had elapsed since Bessie's visit to London, she had changed somewhat, and was more a woman than a child, with a matured and, if possible, a sweeter expression in her face, though there still lingered about her mouth that same sorry, patient look which Jack Trevellian had wanted so much to kiss away. It was very apparent this afternoon, as she stood by the window looking out upon the snow which covered the garden and park, and made her shiver a little, and think of the mother who should have been at home, lightening her daughter's burden and cheering her lonely life.

"How happy the girls must be who have real mothers," Bessie thought, and then as if the regret for the mother reflected upon the father, who was so much to her, she went up to him by the fire, and stooping over him kissed him tenderly.

She always did that when her mother was in her mind and by some subtle intuition Archie had come to know it, and now his voice was very tender and loving as he drew her down upon his knee, and stroking her hair, said to her:

"Good little Bessie, what should I do without you? You are very lovely to-night in your finery. Are you glad Neil is coming?"

"Yes, very glad," Bessie replied, blushing a little. "Very glad for Neil, but I do not think I want that American here, too. I wish Neil had left him from the programme."

"Oh, yes; I remember you told me that Neil said he was coming. They are great friends, I believe," Archie said. Then, after a moment, he continued: "I dare say he is a gentleman. You may like him very much."

"No, I shall not," Bessie rejoined, tapping the floor impatiently with her boot, whose shabbiness French blacking could not wholly conceal, "I shall be civil to him, of course, as Neil's friend, but I would rather he did not come, spoiling everything. I see Neil so seldom that I want him all to myself when he is here. He is the only cousin I have, you know."

For a moment Archie was silent, and when at last he spoke, he said:

"Bessie, don't think too much of Neil. As I told you once in London, so I tell you now. He is too selfish by nature, and too ambitious to care particularly for anything which cannot advance his

interests. He likes you very much, no doubt, and if you had a fortune, I dare say he would seek to make you his wife; but as you have not he will marry Blanche Trevellian, who has."

"Yes, he will marry Blanche," Bessie said, softly, and the old, tired, sorry look crept into her eyes and deepened about her mouth as she thought: "If I had a fortune! Oh, that *if*! What a big one it is in my case. And yet it is impressed upon me that somewhere in the world there *is* a fortune awaiting me; very far from here, it may be, but still somewhere; but then, Neil will be gone before I get it, and I shall not care."

And as it had done more than once before, a sharp pain cut through Bessie's heart as she thought what life would be with Neil making no part of it. So absorbed had she and her father been that neither of them had heard the train as it glided swiftly by, but when, after a few moments had elapsed, there was the stamping of feet outside, and a cheery call to the house dog, who had set up a welcome bark, Bessie sprang from her father's knee, exclaiming:

"That's Neil; he has come, and I am so glad."

She was out in the hall by this time, waiting expectantly, while Anthony opened the door admitting Neil, who kissed Bessie twice, and told her how glad he was to see her again, and how well her stuff dress of dark claret became her, or would, if she had left off that knot of Scotch plaid ribbon at the throat, which marred the effect.

Bessie's checks flushed at this criticism upon the ribbon she liked so much, and had bought for this very occasion, with a view to please her cousin. He was in very high spirits, it seemed to her, as she listened to his gay badinage and laughter. But how handsome he was in his new holiday suit, every item of which was faultless, and of the latest style. If his mother stinted him in other ways, she surely did not where his wardrobe was concerned, and he had the reputation of being one of the best dressed young men in London.

When dinner was over, and he had finished his cigar which he smoked in the presence of Bessie, she asked him of the American, who was coming the next evening.

"Oh, yes, Grey Jerrold," Neil said, "and the finest specimen of a Yankee you ever saw."

"I don't believe I like Yankees," Bessie said curtly, and Neil replied:

"You will like this one; you cannot help it, every body likes him, from the shabbiest old woman in the railway carriage to the prettiest girl in Piccadilly. Perhaps it was a liberty I ought not to have taken, inviting him here without consulting you first, but I wanted you to see him, and him to see you," and there was a vehemence in Neil's voice and manner which Bessie could not understand. "He is rich, or will be by and by," Neil said. "And the most generous chap I ever saw. He was always helping us out of scrapes at school. He has a rich aunt in America, who keeps him well supplied with money, besides what his father gave him when he came of age."

"What did you say he was doing in Carnarvon?" Bessie asked, and Neil replied:

"Hunting up some old woman, or young woman, I don't know which, as I never paid much attention to what he did say about it, I believe, though, there is some money in the case. I wish it was for me," Neil said, and then suddenly he sank into a thoughtful, abstracted mood, from which he did not rouse till the clock struck ten and it was time to say good-night. "I have not been very good company for the last hour, I have been worried lately and am not quite myself," he said to Bessie, when she asked if he were ill and if there was anything she could do for him or send to his room.

And Neil had been worried and exasperated and wrought upon until he was half beside himself. His mother had wished him to accompany her and Blanche to the house of a friend near Edinburgh, and when he refused, saying he preferred to go to Stoneleigh, there had been a jolly row, as he expressed it, and his mother had charged him with his preference for the daughter of that bold adventuress, and had told him decidedly that if he ever dared to marry her he should never touch a shilling of her money either during her life-time or after, for once assured of the marriage she would so arrange her matters that he would be as great a beggar as Archie McPherson himself.

"A family of paupers!" she said, scornfully. "Your father has nothing to give you; absolutely nothing, and you can yourself judge, how, with your tastes and habits, you will like living at Stoneleigh with two meals a day, as I hear they sometimes do, blacking your own boots and building your own fires."

Here Neil winced, for he knew very well that he had no fancy for poverty, even if Bessie shared it with him But he told his mother he had, and consigned Blanche's ten thousand a year to a place where the gold might be melted, and said he loved Bessie McPherson better than anything in life, and should marry her if he pleased in spite of a hundred mothers. But he knew he should not—knew he could not face the reality when it came to the point. He was too dependent upon what wealth would bring him to throw it away for one girl, even if that girl were Bessie, whom he loved with all the intensity of his selfish nature—loved so much that for an hour or so after his interview with his mother, he balanced the two questions, Blanche with ten thousand a year, or Bessie with nothing. Naturally Blanche turned the scale, and then to himself, he said:

"I will go to Stoneleigh and live for a few days in Bessie's presence, and then I will say good-by forever and marry Blanche as mother wishes me to do. She is not so very bad except for her

eyebrows and that horrid drawl. But Bessie, oh, Bessie, how can I give her up!" and the young man's heart cried out in pain for the sweet young girl he had loved all his life, and who, he was sure loved him. To do Neil justice, this was the bitterest drop in the cup—the knowing that Bessie, too, would suffer. "She has enough to bear," he said, "without an added drop from me, I wish she would get in love with some one else and throw me overboard. I believe I could bear it better. There's Jack he was awfully sweet on her in London, but he has only been to see her once since. He is too poor to marry, and there is no one else—yes, by Jove, there is!" and Neil started to his feet. "There is Grey Jerrold. He is just the man for Bessie to fall in love with if she could see him, and I'll bring that about."

It may seem strange that one so utterly selfish as Neil McPherson should have devised this plan to help him in his dilemma, but this in fact was only another phase of his selfishness. He knew it was impossible for him to marry Bessie, and felt that it was also impossible to give her up without other aid than his own feeble will. If she could prefer some one else to himself, it would be a help, however much his self-love might be wounded, and if another than himself must taste the sweetness he so coveted he would far rather that other should be Grey Jerrold, an American, even though he bore the rose away to foreign soil, than to have one of his own countrymen flaunting his happiness in his face, Bessie and Grey were suited to each other, he thought, and he would bring them together; so, when he heard from Grey of his intended trip to Carnarvon, he suggested that he defer it until the holidays and spend a day or two at Stoneleigh. Then he wrote to Bessie that he was as good as engaged to Blanche, and that she would probably fall in love with Grey, who was sure to do so with her. This done, he began to anticipate the visit, which he said to himself was to be his last, and from which he meant to get all the happiness possible, he would kiss Bessie as often as he liked; he would hold her hands in his, the dear little hands which had worked so hard, but, which nevertheless, were so soft and pretty; he would look into the innocent blue eyes and see them kindle and droop beneath his gaze, and then there should be one long, never to be forgotten walk by themselves across the suspension bridge, through the straggling old town, and along the road by the river toward Beaumaris, and he would tell her everything, all his love for her and its utter hopelessness because they were both so poor, and he would say good-by forever, and bid her marry Grey Jerrold, and so remove temptation from him and make it easier for him to be true to Blanche.

It was much easier for Neil to form this plan than to be satisfied with it, and during the few days which elapsed before he started for Stoneleigh he was cross and irritable and even rude at times both to his mother and Blanche, the latter of whom finally treated him with a cold indifference which made him fear a little for the ten thousand.

"What if she should take the bits in her teeth and throw me overboard?" he thought, and at the very last, he changed his tactics and devoted himself to the heiress with an assiduity which left her little doubt of his intentions. Still, to her he did not speak, though to his mother he said, half irritably, as if it were something wrung from him against his will:

"Don't trouble yourself. I intend to marry Blanche in my own good time; but I will not be hurried, and am going to Stoneleigh first."

And he went to Stoneleigh and tried all the way there to think of Bessie as she looked in the park, in the old faded gown with the disfiguring puffs; tried to make himself believe that she had no manner, no style, and would not pass for a great lady among people city bred; that she was better suited to some quiet home such as Grey Jerrold might give her, were he happy enough to win her. Neil had no doubt that Grey would try to win her when once he had seen her, and he began at last to feel sorry that he had invited his friend to Stoneleigh, and to have doubts as to his ability to give Bessie up even to him. He was sure of it when he reached Stoneleigh and saw her with the brightness on her face and the sparkle in her eye as she welcomed him. She might not be as elegant or as stylish as Blanche, who had lived in the city all her life, but she was inexpressibly sweet and womanly, and there was in every movement a grace and quiet dignity which stamped her as a lady. And Neil recognized it as he never had before, and fought the battle over again all through the silent night, and was still fighting it in the morning when he went down to breakfast and looked at Bessie as she poured his coffee, in her gray dress and pretty white muslin apron, with the daintily frilled pockets, and just the corner of a blue-bordered handkerchief showing in one of them. Neil liked the dress and the effect of the blue handkerchief but he did not like the apron, it made her look so like a housemaid, and he told her so when breakfast was over and they stood a moment alone by the fire.

Reddening a little, Bessie answered him, laughingly; "Yes, you told me once before that you did not like my apron, and I know it would be out of place on your mother or Blanche, but it suits me, for you see I *am* housemaid here, and clear my own table and wash my own silver and china. Dorothy is old and has the rheumatism in her feet, and I must help; so, Mr. Aristocrat, if you do not wish to see me degrade myself, just go and take a walk, and when you come back the obnoxious apron shall be laid aside and we will practice that song you brought me."

Neil did not go out and walk, but staid in the dining-room and smoked his cigar, and looked at Bessie as she cleared away the breakfast dishes and washed the silver and china, with her sleeves drawn half-way to her elbows, showing her round, white arms.

"Yes, she is just suited to America, where, I believe, the women all wear aprons and wash their own dishes," Neil thought, as he watched her with a strange feeling in his heart of pain and happiness; happiness that for a few days at least she was his to look at, to love, to caress; pain that the days were so few and so short when he must leave her.

And then there arose before him, as in a vision, a picture of a quiet home amid green hedge-rows and sunny lanes, not a home such as Blanche's would be, with gorgeous surroundings and liveried servants everywhere, but such a home as makes a man better for living in it; a home where the housewifely Bessie was the presiding goddess, flitting about just as she was doing now, putting away the silver and china, brushing up the hearth, moving a chair here and another there, watering her pots of flowers in the conservatory, tea-roses and carnations and heliotrope and lilies all in bloom and filling the room with sweet perfume as if it were the summer-time, instead of chill December with its biting blasts sweeping against the windows.

"There!" Bessie said, at last, removing her apron, pulling down her sleeves, and smoothing her bright wavy hair, "I have dismissed the housemaid, and now I am ready to sing for you, or play chess, or do whatever you like."

But Neil was in no mood for singing or playing chess, or even talking much, and his fit of abstraction lasted all day, or until late in the afternoon, when Bessie began to speak of getting herself in readiness for Grey, who was to come in the evening train from Carnarvon. Then Neil roused, and as if he had nerved himself for the sacrifice, manifested a great deal of interest with regard to Bessie's personal appearance.

"I want you to get yourself up stunningly," he said, "so as to make a good first appearance. I have told Grey so much about you that he must not be disappointed."

"Ridiculous! I shall wear just what I wore yesterday, bow and all, for I like it," Bessie said, with a little defiant toss of her head.

She, too, had been thinking while Neil sat so silent and moody by the fire, and had decided that he had greatly changed for the worse since she had seen him last—that he was hard to please, moody, exacting, and quite too much given to criticising her and her dress.

"As if it is any of his business what I wear," she thought, and she took a kind of exultant satisfaction in fastening on the knot of ribbon he had condemned and which really was very becoming to her plain, dark dress.

"I suppose, Mr. Grey Jerrold, I must waste a clean collar and a pair of cuffs on you, though that will be so much more for me to iron next week," she said, as she stood before the mirror in her room, which was to be given to the coming guest, "I hope, sir, you will appreciate all I am doing for you, for I assure you it is no small matter to turn out from my comfortable quarters into that barn of a room where the wind blows a hurricane and the rats scurry over the floor. Ugh! how I dread it, and *you*, too!" she continued, shaking her head at the imaginary Grey, who stood before her mind's eye, black-eyed, black-whiskered, black-faced, and a very giant in proportions, as she fancied all Americans to be.

Her toilet completed, she removed from the room everything which she thought would betray the fact that it was her apartment, and carried them with a shiver to the chamber facing the north, where the rats scurried over the floor at night, and the wind blew a hurricane.

"There! I am ready for your Pythias! Do you think I shall pass muster?" she said to Neil, as she entered the dining-room where he was sitting.

It would indeed have been a very censorious, fault-finding man who could have seen aught amiss in the beautiful young girl, plain as her dress might be, and for answer to her question, Neil stood up and kissed her, saying as he did so:

"He will think you perfect, though I don't like the ribbon, I don't like any color about you except your hair and eyes. I wish you would take it off."

"Mr. Jerrold may think differently. I am dressed for him, and as I like it I mean to wear it," Bessie answered, curtly, but with a bright smile, as she looked into Neil's face.

"Oh, well; *chacun a son gout*," he said, consulting his watch, and adding: "It is time I was starting for the station; the train is due in fifteen minutes."

When he was gone Bessie began to feel a little nervous with regard to the stranger coming among them. Hitherto she had thought only of the extra expense and the trouble he would give old Dorothy, whose feet and ankles were badly swollen and paining her so much.

"I may have to cook and serve the Christmas dinner myself," she said, "and I don't mind the work; only I do not want this American from Boston, where the women are so full of brains, to think me a mere dishwasher and chimney-sweep. I wonder if he is half as nice as Neil says he is, and if I shall like him. Of course I sha'n't, but I shall treat him well for Neil's sake, and be so glad when he has gone."

Then she proceeded to lay the table for supper, as they usually dined in the middle of the day. Dorothy's feet were more active then, and Archie preferred an early dinner. Everything was in readiness at last; the bread and the butter and the jam, with cold chicken and ham, and the kettle singing on the hearth; the curtains drawn and the bright fire making shadows on the wall and falling upon the young girl, who, as her ear caught the sound of footsteps without, ran to the window, and parting the heavy curtains, looked out into the darkness so that the first glimpse Grey Jerrold had of her was of her fair, eager face framed in waves of golden brown hair, and pressed against the window pane in the vain effort to see the dreaded American.

CHAPTER X.

GREY.

Between the man of twenty-three and the boy of fourteen, who had knelt upon the snow in the leafless woods and asked God to forgive him for his grandfather's sin, and had pledged himself to undo as far as was possible the wrong to others that sin had caused, there was the difference of nine years of growth, and culture, and experience, and knowledge of the world; but otherwise the boy and the man were the same, for as the Grey of fourteen had been frank, and truthful, and generous, and wholly unselfish, with a gentleness in his nature like that of a tender, loving woman, so was the Grey of twenty-three whom we last saw upon the steamer which was taking him away from home and the lonely woman watching so tearfully upon the wharf, and feeling that with his going her joyless life was made more desolate.

Since that time there had been a year's travel upon the Continent with his parents, and then he had entered at Eton, where he renewed his acquaintance with Neil McPherson, between whom and himself there sprung up a friendship which nothing had weakened as yet. Several times he had been a guest in Neil's home, where Lady Jane treated him with the utmost civility, and admitted that for an American he really was refined and gentlemanly. He knew Jack Trevellian, and Blanche, and all Neil's intimate friends, and had the *entree* to the same society with them, whenever he chose to avail himself of it, which was not very often. He was in Europe for study, he said, and not for society, and he devoted himself to his books with an energy and will which put him at the head of his class in Eton, and won him an enviable reputation for scholarship at Oxford, where he had now been for nearly four years, and where he intended to remain until his Aunt Lucy, and possibly his Aunt Hannah, crossed the sea and joined him for an extended tour.

Then he was going home for good to settle down and marry, he said, for in all Grey's dreams of the future there was always the picture of a happy home with some fair, sweet-faced girl in it, reigning equally as mistress with the dear Aunt Hannah, still living her solitary life in the old farm house, and keeping watch over that hidden grave under the bedroom floor, and laying up year by year the interest on the gold which was one day to go to the heirs of Elizabeth Rogers, of Carnarvon, if they could be found. But could they? That was the question both she and Grey asked themselves as the years went on and no trace was discovered of any such person either in or around Carnarvon, for Grey had been there more than once, and with all due precaution had inquired of everybody for the woman, Elizabeth Rogers, and finally, as he grew a little bolder, for Joel Rogers himself, who went to America many years before. But all to no avail; both Joel and Elizabeth were myths, and the case was getting hopeless.

Still, Grey did not despair, and resolved that during the holidays he would go again to the old Welsh town and try what he could do, and so it came about that he accompanied Neil as far as Carnarvon, where he proposed to spend a day and then go over to Stoneleigh on Christmas Eve, more to please Neil, who had urged him so strongly to stop there, than for any particular satisfaction it would be to him to pass the day with strangers, who might or might not care to see him. He knew there was a cousin Bessie, a girl of wondrous beauty, if Neil was to be believed, and he remembered to have heard of her, years ago, when he was a boy and first met Neil McPherson at Melrose. Faint memories, too, he had of hearing her talked about at the memorable Thanksgiving dinner which had preceded his grandfather's death and his own sickness, when they said he had asked Miss McPherson to send for her and stuff her with mince pie, as a recompense for the many times she had gone hungry to bed because there was not money enough to buy dinner for three. And all this came back to him as he stood in the station in Carnarvon waiting for the train.

"She must be a young lady now seventeen or eighteen years old," he thought; "and Neil says she is beautiful. But I dare say she is like most English girls—with a giggle and a drawl and a supreme contempt for anything outside the United Kingdom. I fancy, too, she is tall and thin, with sharp elbows and big feet, like many of her sisters. I wonder what she will think of me. People say I am more English than American, which I don't like, for if there is a loyal son of Uncle Sam in this world I am he. I can't help this confounded foreign accent which I have picked up from being over here so long, and I do not know as I wish to help it. Perhaps it may help me with Miss Bessie, as well as my English cut generally," and Grey glanced at himself in the dingy little glass to see how he did look.

What he saw was a broad-shouldered, finely-formed young man, who stood so erect, that he seemed taller than he really was. A face which strangers would trust without a moment's hesitancy; large dark-blue eyes, thick brown hair just inclined to curl at the ends; and a smile which would have made the plainest face handsome and which was Grey's chief point of attraction, if we except his voice, which, though rich and full, was very sweet, and expressive of the genuine interest and sympathy he felt for every human being in distress or otherwise. No tired, discouraged mother in a railway car, trying to hush her crying infant, would ever fear that he would be annoyed or wish her and her child in Jericho. On the contrary, she would, if necessary, ask him to hold her baby for a moment, and the child would go to him unhesitatingly, so great was the mesmeric power he exercised over his fellow-creatures. This influence or power was inborn, and he could no more have helped it than he could have helped his heartbeats. But,

added to this, was a constant effort on his part to make those with whom he came in contact happy, to sympathize with them in their griefs, to help them in their needs, to sacrifice his own feelings to their pleasure, for in this way he felt that he was in part atoning for the wrong done by the poor old man dead long ago and forgotten by nearly all who had known him.

Such was the Grey Jerrold whom Neil McPherson met at the Menai station and escorted along the road to Stoneleigh.

"I should have driven out for you, only there is no carriage. I think I told you that Mr. Archie McPherson is awfully poor," he explained apologetically as he saw Grey pull his fur cap over his ears, for the wind was blowing a gale and drifting the snow in their faces.

"I do not think you ever told me in so many words that they were very poor, but I had an impression that they were not rich," Grey said, adding, "I prefer to walk, and rather enjoy battling with a north-wester: it takes me back to New England, the very land of snows and storms."

They were in the park by this time, nearing the house, when suddenly the curtains of a window parted, letting out a flood of light into the darkness and Grey saw for an instant pressed against the pane a face which made his heart throb quickly with a kind of glad surprise as if it were a face he had seen before, while with it came a thought of his Aunt Hannah, and the lonely old house in the pasture land in far-off Allington. A moment later, and the face was looking up to his with a half fearful curious expression, which was, however, changed to one of great gladness as Bessie met his winning smile and the kind eyes bent so searchingly upon her. She had no fear or dread of him now, and she gave him her hand most cordially and bade him welcome to Stoneleigh with a warmth which made him feel at home, and put him at his ease.

"Perhaps you would like to go to your room at once, and Neil will show you the way," she said to him; then, in an aside to Neil, "my room, you know, at the head of the stairs."

Neil looked at her in surprise, while a cloud gathered upon his brow. That Bessie should give her room to Grey seemed to him absurd, though he never stopped to ask himself where she could put him if not there Neil knew perfectly well the capabilities of the old stone house, and that spare rooms were not as plenty as blackberries, but so long as he was not incommoded it was no business of his to inquire into matters; nor could he understand that an extra fire even for a day was a heavy drain on Bessie's purse. But Grey's quick ear caught Bessie's whispered words, and before he entered the warm, pretty room at the head of the stairs he knew it belonged to her, and guessed why she had given it to him. Under any circumstances he would have known by certain unmistakable signs that it was a young girl's apartment into which he was ushered, and after Neil left him he looked about him with a kind of awe at the chintz-covered furniture, the white curtains at the window, and the pretty little toilet table with its hanging glass in the center, and its coverings of pink and white muslin.

Just then, through the door, which had inadvertently been left a little ajar, he caught the sound of voices in the hall below, Neil's voice and Bessie's and Neil was saying to her, disapprovingly:

"Why did you give your room to Grey? Was it necessary?"

"Yes, Neil; there was no other comfortable place for him; the north room is so large and the chimney smokes so we could never get it warm," Bessie said, and Neil continued:

"And so you are to sleep there and catch your death-cold?"

"Not a bit of it," Bessie replied. "Dorothy will warm the bed with her big warming-pan and I shall not mind it in the least. I am never cold."

"Well, I think it a shame!" Neil said, feeling more annoyed that Grey was to sleep in Bessie's room, than that Bessie was to pass the night in the great, cheerless north chamber with only old Dorothy's warming-pan for comfort.

But it never occurred to him that he could give Grey his room and himself take the cold and the dreariness of the north room, nor yet that he could share his bed with Grey. He never thought for others when the thinking conflicted with himself, and returning to the dining-room he sat down by the fire with anything but a happy expression on his face, as he wished that he had not invited Grey to Stoneleigh.

Something in the expression of Bessie's and Grey's faces as they looked at each other had disturbed him, for he had read undisguised admiration in the one, and confidence and trust in the other, and knew that there were already sympathy and accord between them, and that they were sure to be fast friends at least, just as he had told himself he wished them to be.

Meanwhile Grey was thinking, as he made his toilet for supper, and as a result of his thoughts he at last rang the bell which brought old Dorothy to him.

"My good woman," he said, flashing upon her the smile which always won those on whom it fell, and drawing her inside the door which he shut cautiously, "My good woman, I do not wish to be particular or troublesome, but really I should like a room without a fire, the colder the better. One to the north will suit me, if there is such a one. No matter for the furniture; a bed and wash-stand are all I require. You see, I have so much health and superfluous heat that I like to be cool; and then I have the—" he stopped short here, for he could not quite deviate from the truth so far

as to say he actually had the asthma, so he added, in an undertone, "If I had the asthma I could not breathe, you know, in this small room, pretty as it is, and upon my word it is lovely. Have you no larger chamber which I can take?"

"Ye-es," Dorothy said, slowly, with a throb of joy, as she reflected that her young mistress might not be deprived of her comfortable quarters after all. "There is a big chamber to the north, cold enough for anybody, but Miss Bessie got this ready for you. She will not like you to change. Do you have the *tisick* very bad?"

Grey did not answer this question, but began to gather up his brushes and his combs, and putting them into his valise, he said, "I want that north room; take me there, please, and say nothing to your mistress."

Dorothy knew this last was impossible; she should be obliged to tell Bessie; but she did not oppose the young man whose manner was so masterful, and whom she led to the great, cheerless room with its smoky chimney down which the winter wind was roaring with a dismal sound, while across the hearth a huge rat ran as they entered it.

"'Tis a sorry place, and you'll be very cold, but I'll warm your bed and give you plenty of blankets and hot water in the morning," Dorothy said, as she hastily gathered up the few articles belonging to Bessie, who had transferred them from her own room to this.

"I shall sleep like a top," Grey replied. "Much better than by the fire. This suits me perfectly, and the cold is nothing to what America can do."

He was very reassuring; and wholly deceived by his manner, Dorothy departed and left him to himself.

"Whew!" he said, as a gust of wind stronger than usual struck the windows and puffed down the chimney, almost knocking over the fire-board. "This is a clipper and no mistake. And what an old stable of a room it is, and what a place for that dainty little Bessie to be in. She would be frozen solid before morning. I guess I shall sleep in my overcoat and boots. What a lovely face she has, and how it reminds me of somebody—I don't know whom, unless it is Aunt Hannah, whose face I seemed to see right side by side with Bessie. They must be awfully poor, and I wish I had brought her something better for a Christmas present than this jim-crack," and opening his valise he took out a pretty little inlaid work-box fitted up with all the necessary appliances, even to a gold thimble.

Remembering the Christmas at home when a present was as much a part of that day as his breakfast, Grey had bought the box in London as a gift to Bessie, and when he caught a glimpse, as he did, of the worn basket, with its spools and scissors and colored yarns for darning, which Dorothy gathered up among other articles belonging to Bessie, he was glad he had made the choice he did. But now, as he surveyed the apartment and felt how very poor his host and daughter must be, he wished that he could give them something better than this fanciful box, which could neither feed nor keep them warm.

As he had finished his toilet in Bessie's room there was nothing now for him to do except to give an extra twist to his cravat, run his fingers through his brown hair and then he was ready for the dining-room, where he found Bessie alone. As a matter of course, Dorothy had gone to Bessie and told her of the exchange, which delighted her far more than it did her mistress.

"Mr. Jerrold in that cold, dreary room!" Bessie exclaimed. "Oh, Dorothy, why did you allow it, and what must he think of us?"

"I could not help myself, darling, for he would have his way," Dorothy replied. "He was that set on the cold room that you couldn't move him a jot. His breathing apparatus is out of killer; he has the *tisick* awful and can't breathe in a warm room. I shall give him some *cubebs* to smoke to-morrow. And don't you worry; he won't freeze. I'll put a bag of hot water in the bed. He is a very nice young gentleman, if he is an American."

Bessie knew she could not help herself, but there was a troubled look on her face when Grey came in, and, approaching her as she stood by the fire, made some casual remark about the unusual severity of the weather for the season.

"Yes, it is very cold," she said, adding quickly, as she looked up at him: "Oh, Mr. Jerrold, Dorothy has told me, and I am so sorry. You do not know how cold that north chamber is, and we cannot warm it if we try, the chimney smokes so badly. You will be so uncomfortable there. You might let the fire go down in m—, in the other room, if the heat affects you. Dorothy says you suffer greatly with asthma."

"Yes—no," Grey replied, confusedly, scarcely willing to commit himself again to the asthma. "I shall not mind the cold at all. I am accustomed to it. You must remember I come from the land of ice and snow. You have no idea what blizzards America is capable of getting up, and ought to hear how the wind can howl and the snow drift about an old farm-house in a rocky pasture land, which I would give much to see to-night."

There was a tone of regret in his rich, musical voice, and forgetting that Neil had said he was from Boston. Bessie said to him:

"Is that farm-house your home?"

"Oh, no; my home proper is in Boston," he answered her, "but I have spent some of my happiest days in that house, and the memory of it and the dear woman who lives there is the sweetest of my life, and the saddest, too," he added, slowly; for, right in Bessie's blue eyes, looking at him so steadily, he seemed to see the hidden grave, and for a moment all the old bitter shame and humiliation which had once weighed him down so heavily, and which, naturally, the lapse of years had tended to lighten, came back to him in the presence of this young girl who seemed so inextricably mixed up with everything pertaining to his past.

It was like some new place which we sometimes come suddenly upon, with a strange feeling that we have seen it before, though when we cannot tell; so Bessie impressed Grey as a part of the tragedy enacted in the old New England house many, many years ago, and covered up so long. He almost felt that she had been there with him and that now she was standing by the hidden grave and stretching her hand to him across it with an offer of help and sympathy. And so strong was this impression that he actually lifted his right hand an instant to take in it the slender one resting on the mantel, as Bessie talked to him.

"What would she say if she knew?" he thought, feeling that it would be easy to tell her about it,—feeling that she was one to trust even unto death.

Bessie was interested in Grey, and already felt the wonderful mesmeric influence he exercised over all who came in contact with him. In the *salons* of fashion, in the halls of Eaton and Oxford, in the railway car, or in the privacy of domestic life, Grey's presence was an all-pervading power, or as an old woman whom he had once befriended expressed it:

"He was like a great warm stove in a cold room."

And Bessie felt the warmth, and was glad he was there, and said to him:

"I wish you would tell me about that house among the rocks and the woman who lives there, I am sure I should like her, and I know so little of America or the American people. You are almost the first I have ever seen."

Before Grey could answer her Neil came in, and as supper was soon after served, no further allusion was made to America until the table was cleared away, and the party of four were sitting around the fire, Archie in his accustomed corner with Bessie at his side, her hand on the arm of his chair and her head occasionally resting lovingly against his shoulder. Neil was opposite, while Grey sat before the fire, with now and then a shiver running down his back as the rising wind crept into the room, even through the thick curtains which draped the rattling windows behind him. But Grey did not care for the cold. His thoughts were across the sea, in the house among the rocks, and he was wondering if his Aunt Hannah was alone that Christmas Eve, and was thinking just how dark, and ghostly and cold was the interior of that bedroom, whose door was seldom opened, and where no one had ever been since his grandfather's death except his Aunt Hannah and himself. As if divining his thoughts, Bessie said to him: "I wish you would tell us about that house among the rocks. Is it very old?"

"Yes, one of the oldest in Allington," Grey replied, and instantly Archie roused from his usual apathetic State and repeated:

"Allington? Did you say Allington, in Massachusetts?"

"Yes," Grey replied. "Allington, in Massachusetts; about forty miles or so from Boston. Do you know the place?"

"My aunt lives there—the woman for whom Bessie was named, Miss Betsey McPherson. Do you know her?"

"Yes, I used to know her well when I was so often in Allington before my grandfather died," Grey replied, and Neil said to him:

"What manner of woman is she? Something of a shrew, I fancy. I saw her once when I was a boy, and she boxed my ears because I called her old Bet Buttermilk, and she said that I and all the English were fools, because I asked her if there were any wildcats in the woods behind her house."

"Served you right," Grey said, laughingly, and then continued; "She is rather eccentric, I believe, but highly respected in town. My Aunt Lucy is very fond of her. Did you ever see her?" and he turned to Bessie, who replied:

"I saw her once at Aberystwyth, when I was a child; and she afterwards sent me this turquois ring, the only bit of jewelry I own," and Bessie held to the light her hand on which shone the ring Daisy had unwillingly given up to her on the occasion of her last visit to Stoneleigh.

For a long time they sat before the fire talking of America and the places Grey had visited in Europe, and it was rather late when the party finally retired for the night, Neil going to his warm, comfortable room facing the south, and Grey to his cheerless one facing the north, with only the cold and the damp, and the rats for his companions, if we except the bag of hot water he found in his bed, on which Dorothy had put woolen sheets and which she had warmed thoroughly with her big warming-pan.

"This is not very jolly, but I am glad I am here instead of Bessie," Grey thought, and undressing himself more quickly than he had ever undressed before, he plunged into the bed which was

really warm and comfortable, and was soon wrapped in the deep sleep which comes to perfect health and a good conscience.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

When Grey awoke the next morning there was a little pile of snow on the foot of his bed, which stood near a window, and more on the hearth, which had sifted down the chimney, while the wind was, if possible, blowing harder than on the previous night.

"Whew!" Grey said, as he rubbed his cold nose, "I believe this beats Allington! How shall I ever get myself together?"

Just then Anthony came in with jugs of hot water and a huge soapstone on which he said the young man was to stand while he dressed himself.

"Sharp weather this, even for Wales!" he began, as he lingered a little and put back the curtains to admit more light.

"Sorry, sir, I cannot make you a fire. Hope the cold did not keep you awake?"

"Never slept better in my life, I did not mind the cold at all," Grey said, and Anthony continued:

"Yes, you like air, *Tisicky* my old woman says, and she sent me out last night for a pipe and some cubebs which you are to smoke three times a day. Nothing like cubebs for your disorder. Had it long?"

"Thank you, no, sir; you are very kind," Grey said, with a little groan, as he wondered if the confounded things would make him sick, inasmuch as he had never smoked in his life.

Making his toilet with all speed, and finding the soapstone and hot water great comforts to him, he hastened down to the dining-room, where he found Neil, looking rather tired and worn, and out of sorts, as if there was something on his mind.

Neil had not slept well at all, though, after Archie, he had the best bed and the best room in the house, and, his fire burned all night and was replenished by Anthony, early in the morning. He had been restless, and nervous, and had lain awake for hours, watching the flickering firelight on the wall, thinking of Bessie, and wondering if she would not be frozen stiff before morning.

He had known nothing of the exchange of rooms, and when he heard footsteps in the north chamber, which adjoined his, though it did not communicate with it, he supposed it was Bessie, and was surprised that she stepped so heavily, and moved the chairs with such a jerk.

At last, however, all was still; Bessie was asleep, no doubt, and did not feel the cold or hear the wind as he heard it moaning through the old yew trees, and screaming around the house, as if it were some restless spirit trying to get in. Suddenly, however, there was a sound which made Neil start, and listen, and raise himself on his elbow to make sure he was not mistaken.

"No I am not" he whispered to himself. "It is a *snore*," and he gave a groan as he thought: "Bessie snoring! and such snores! who would imagine that she could do anything so vulgar and unlady-like! Heavens and earth, it is enough to raise the rafters! If I did not know Bessie was in there. I'd swear it was a man. How can a girl—and Bessie of all girls—go it like that?" and the fastidious Neil stopped his ears with his fingers to shut out the obnoxious sounds which grew louder as Grey's sleep became more profound.

There was a feeling of keen disappointment in Neil's heart, a sense of something lost, or as if in some way he had been wronged, and then he thought of Blanche, and wondered if she snored, and how he could find out.

"It would be a tearer if she did, she is so much larger and coarser every way than Bessie," he thought, as he finally put the pillow over his head so that he could not hear.

At last, however, the sound ceased as Grey, who only snored when he was very tired, half awoke and turned upon his side, nor was it resumed again. But Neil could not sleep for thinking of it, and when at last he did fall into a restless slumber, he awoke suddenly with the impression that Bessie was frozen to death in the next room, and that Grey Jerrold was trying to bring her to life and calling her his darling.

Altogether it was a bad night for Neil, and he was glad when Anthony came in and he knew he might get up. And thus it chanced that he was first in the dining-room, where he sat, gloomily regarding the fire, when Grey came in, followed in a moment by Bessie, whose sweet girlish lips, as she bade merry Christmas to the young men, did not look as if they could ever have emitted the sounds which were still ringing in Neil's ears, and making him shudder a little.

"Oh, Mr. Jerrold," she said to Grey after the morning greetings were over, "didn't you almost freeze last night in that cold north room? I thought of you when I was awake and heard the wind

howl so dismally."

"Never slept better in my life, I assure you; and I was far better pleased with the cold room than I should have been with the warm one," Grey replied.

"Wha-at!" Neil exclaimed. "Did *you* occupy the north room adjoining mine?"

"Yes," was Grey's reply; and crossing the hearth swiftly to where Bessie stood, Neil kissed her twice, as he said.

"I am so glad!"

If Grey occupied the room, then it was Grey who snored, and not Bessie, who again went into the scales with the ten thousand a year, and who looked up surprised, and a little displeased at this salute before a stranger.

Grey had wondered when he ought to present his Christmas gift, and glanced around the room to see if Neil's was visible; but it was not, and he concluded to wait the progress of events.

Breakfast was late that morning, for Dorothy's rheumatic feet and ankles were worse than usual, and locomotion was difficult and painful; but with Bessie's assistance it was ready at last, and the family were just seating themselves at the table when there was the sound of a vehicle outside, with voices, and a great stamping of feet, as some one entered at the side piazza and came toward the dining-room.

"Mother; it must be mother," Bessie cried, but Neil had recognized a voice he knew, and said, a little curtly:

"It is not your mother; it is Jack Trevellian," and in a moment Jack stood in the room, brushing the snow from his coat, and wishing them a merry Christmas as he shook hands with each in turn.

"Hallo, Jerrold, and Mack, you both here? This is a surprise!" he said, as he saw the two young men, and something in his tone made the watchful Neil suspect that it was not altogether a pleasant surprise.

Nor was it. Jack Trevellian had never been able to forget the soft blue eyes which had shone upon him in London, or the sweet month, with its sorry expression, which asked him not to play with the mother when he met her. No matter where he was, those eyes had haunted him, and the low earnest voice had rung in his ears until at last he had made up his mind that he would see her once more, and then he would go from her forever, for it would be madness to ask her to share his small income.

The puny Dick of Trevellian Castle was dead, and Hal was master there. Only one life now between Jack and wealth and Bessie; but as once before he called himself a murderer, so he had done again when he heard of Dick's death, and pulling the wild thought from him he wrote to Hal just as he had written to Dick, and told him he supposed he would be marrying now and settling down in the old home, and then there came over him so intense a longing for Bessie that he resolved upon the visit, feeling glad for the storm and the cold which would keep him in the house where he could have her all to himself. How then was he surprised to find both Neil and Grey Jerrold, the latter of whom he had met many times and between whom and himself there was a strong liking. But Jack was one who could easily cover up his feelings, and he greeted the young men warmly, and held Bessie's hand in his while he explained rapidly, as if anxious to get it off his mind, that he had gone to the "George" intending to take a room there as he had done before, but had found it quite shut up, and so he added, laughingly:

"I have come here bag and baggage, and if I spend the night, as I should like to, I shall have to ask for a bed, or cot, or crib, or cradle; anything will do."

Bessie could not help glancing at Grey, who detected the troubled look in her eyes as she assured the new arrival of her readiness to grant the hospitality he craved. In Grey's mind there could be no doubt now as to what Neil would do. "He will offer to share his room with Jack, of course," he thought, and so, perhaps, thought Bessie; but into Neil's mind no such alternative entered; first come first served was his motto, and besides, what business had Jack to come there anyway, uninvited and unannounced? For his part, he thought it rather cheeky, and there was a cloud on his face all through the breakfast, nor was it at all dispelled when, after the meal was over, Jack brought out a lovely seal-skin cap and pair of seal-skin gloves which he had bought as a Christmas gift for Bessie, and a handsomely bound edition of Shakespeare for Archie, who he knew was very fond of the poet.

Now was Grey's time, and the work-box was produced, and Bessie's face was a study in its surprise and delight, for Christmas presents of any value were rare with her, and the cap and the gloves were just what she wanted, and the box was so beautiful that there were tears in her eyes as she thanked the donors for their kindness, and asked Neil if the gifts were not pretty.

"Yes, very," he said, inwardly cursing himself for an idiot that he, too, had not thought to bring anything. "I never do think till it is too late," he said to himself; "but then, I never have any spare money, while Grey is rich and Jack is his own master;" and entrenching himself behind these excuses he tried to seem at his ease, though he was very far from being so.

In the course of the morning Grey managed to see Jack alone for a few moments, and immediately broached the subject of the bed, or cot, or crib which the latter had bespoken.

"I am afraid it will be a crib," he said, "unless you share my room with me;" and then he told of the north chamber which he had insisted upon taking on account of his *phthistic*, which required so much fresh air.

"Phthisic!" Jack repeated. "*You* have the phthisic, when I know you have climbed the Rigi and Montanvert, and half the mountains in Switzerland! Why, you are the longest-winded fellow I ever knew."

"Still, I have the asthma so terribly that I could never sleep in Miss Bessie's room, knowing she was freezing in that north wing," Grey said, affecting a terrible wheeze.

"Yes, I see," Jack replied, a light beginning to dawn upon him. "I see—and I am *tisicky*, too, and must have fresh air; so, old chap, if you'll take me in, I'm yours."

"But you will have to smoke *cubebs*," Grey rejoined. "You remember Mrs. Opie's 'White Lies' and the 'Potted Sprats?' My asthma has proved a sprat, and there is a clay pipe at this moment waiting for me in the kitchen, and pretty soon you will see me puffing like a coal-pit. Do you suppose they will make me vomit?"

"No doubt of it; they are awful nasty, but I will be a coal-pit too if necessary," Jack said, ready for any emergency; but this was not required of him, and only Grey paid the penalty of the white lie, and smoked cubebs until everything around him grew black except the stars which danced before his eyes, and he was so dizzy he could scarcely stand.

The day passed rapidly, and both Jack and Grey enjoyed it immensely, especially the latter, who conducted himself as if he were perfectly at home and had known Bessie all his life.

After the dinner, which proved a great success, except that it was not served, as Neil would like to have had it, by liveried servants instead of the hobbling Dorothy. Bessie announced her intention of washing the dishes to save the tired old woman's feet.

"Nonsense, Bessie," Neil said to her, in an aside "You surely will not do that before Jack and Grey; besides, so much dishwater will spoil your hands, which are red enough now."

But Bessie cared more for Dorothy than for her hands, and proceeded with her dishwashing, while Grey insisted upon helping her.

"I know how to wipe dishes. I've done it many a time for Aunt Hannah," he said, while Jack proffered his assistance so earnestly that the two were soon habited in long kitchen aprons, that of Grey's having a bib, which Bessie herself pinned upon his shoulders, standing on tiptoe to do it, her bright hair almost touching his moustache, and her fingers, as they moved upon his coat, sending strange little thrills through every nerve in his body.

What sport they had, and how awkwardly they handled the silver and the china, Jack assuming the Irish brogue he knew so well, and Grey the Yankee dialect, with the nasal twang, which nearly drove Bessie into hysterics, and made Archie laugh as he had not laughed in years.

Neil was disgusted, and thought the whole a most undignified proceeding, and wondered what his mother and Blanche would say could they see it, and if, after all, he had not made a mistake in coming to Stoneleigh instead of going with them. He changed his mind, however, when, after the dishwashing was over, and the aprons discarded, and the Irish brogue and Yankee dialect dropped, he was alone a moment with Bessie, who came shyly up to him, and laying her hand, red with dishwater, on his arm, said to him, softly:

"Are you sick, that you seem so sober?"

"No," he replied, taking her hand in his, and drawing her closely to him, with his arm around her, "I am not sick, but I cannot enjoy myself—in just the way—Trevellian and Jerrold do. I think them rather too free and easy for strangers, and quite too familiar with you. Don't let them make a fool of you."

There was something very pathetic and pleading in his voice, and it went to Bessie's heart, and when he took her face between his two hands and kissed her lips, she kissed him back again, and then withdrew from him just as Jack and Grey entered the room. They had been out for a little walk after dinner, and had returned, reporting the weather beastly, as Jack Trevellian expressed it.

"But it is jolly here," Grey said, rubbing his hands, and holding them to the bright fire. "Just the night for whist. What do you say?" he continued, turning to Bessie, who, having no objection to the game as she knew they would play it, assented readily, and the round table was brought out and the chairs arranged for the four.

Then arose the question:

"With whom should Bessie play?"

"Naturally with me, as I am the eldest and the last arrival," Jack said, while Grey rejoined, laughingly:

"I don't know about that. I think we will draw cuts for her; the longest wins," and he proceeded to arrange three slips of paper in his hand.

"Be fair, now. I can't trust you where a lady is concerned," Jack replied, while Neil maintained a dignified silence, and, when told to draw first, drew, and lost.

"Your turn next, Trevellian. Hurry up; faint heart never won fair lady. Suppose you try that one," Grey said, indicating, with his finger, one of the two remaining slips.

"I shall not do it; there is some trick about it. You have fixed them. I shall take this," Jack said, and he did, and lost.

"I have won; the lady is mine," Grey cried, exultingly, as he held up the longest slip of paper.

Then, leading the blushing Bessie to her chair, he took his seat opposite her, and continued;

"Now I know you English are never happy unless you play for something, and as none of us, I hope, would play for money, suppose we try for that knot of plaid ribbon at Miss Bessie's throat. I think it exceedingly pretty."

There was a gleam of triumph in the glance which Bessie flashed upon Neil, for she had not quite forgiven him his criticisms upon the ribbon, which both Grey and Jack seemed to admire, and which she consented to give to the victor.

"If your side beats you will draw cuts for the prize," Grey said to Jack; "and if my side beats there is no cut about it, it is mine."

And so the game began, Neil bending every energy to win, and feeling almost as much excited and eager as if it were a fortune at stake, instead of the bit of Scotch ribbon he had affected to dislike. And it did almost seem to him as if he were playing for Bessie herself; playing to keep her from Grey, the very man to whom he had said he would rather give her than to any one else in the world, if she were not for him. The first game was Grey's, the second Neil's; then came the rubber, and Bessie dealt.

"Oh, Bessie," Neil said, in a despairing voice, when he found that he did not hold a single trump, while Jack gave out the second time round, and Grey turned up five points, making six in all.

Suddenly the tide turned and Neil's was the winning side until they stood six and four, and then Grey roused himself and played as he had never done before, carefully watching the cards as they fell, knowing exactly what had been played, and calculating pretty accurately where the others were, and finally coming off victorious.

"The ribbon is mine, and I claim my own!" Grey said, with a ring in his voice and a warmth in his manner which brought the hot blood to Bessie's cheeks, as she took the knot from her throat and presented it to him, blushing still more when he raised it to his lips and then pinned it upon his sleeve.

"What a cad he is! I'd like to knock him down, if he were any one but Grey," Neil thought, and pushing back his chair from the table he said he had had enough of cards for one night. Whist was a stupid game anyway, and he never had any luck.

Neil was very quiet the remainder of the evening, though he could not altogether resist Grey, who was at his best, and kept them all in a roar of laughter at his jokes and the stories he told of the genuine Yankees whom he had seen in New England, and the Johnny Bulls he had encountered in England, and whose peculiarities of voice and expression he imitated perfectly. Then he recited poetry, comic and tragic and descriptive; and was so entertaining and brilliant, and so very courteous and gentlemanly in all he did and said, that Bessie was enraptured and showed it in her speaking face, which Neil knew always told the truth, and when at last he retired to his room he could not sleep, but lay awake, torn with jealousy and love and doubt as to what he ought to do.

The next morning both Grey and Jack departed by different trains, for the latter was going to the Scottish house where Lady Jane and Blanche were staying, and then to Trevellian Castle to see his cousin Hal, while Grey was going another way. And Neil said good-by without a pang, but Bessie was full of regret, especially for Grey, whom she should miss so much and to whom she said she hoped she should see him again.

"I am sure you will," he answered. "I am to leave Oxford next summer and join my Aunt Lucy, who is coming in June for a trip on the Continent. But before I go home I shall come here again, and I shall always remember this Christmas as the pleasantest I ever spent, and shall keep the knot of ribbon as a souvenir of Stoneleigh and you. Good-by," and with a pressure of the hand he had held in his all the time he was talking, he was gone, and Bessie felt that something very bright and strong and helpful had suddenly been taken from her, and nothing left in its place but Neil, who, by contrast with the American, did not seem to her quite the same Neil as before.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONTRACT.

For nearly a week longer, Neil remained at Stoneleigh, growing more and more undecided as to his future course, and more and more in love with Bessie, whose evident depression of spirits after the departure of Jack Trevellian and Grey Jerrold had driven him nearly wild. All the better part of Neil's nature was in the ascendant now, and he was seriously debating the question whether it were not wiser to marry the woman he loved, and share his poverty with her, than to marry the woman he did not love, even though she had ten thousand a year. Yes, it was better, he decided at last, and one day when Archie had gone to Bangor and he was alone with Bessie, who sat by the window engaged in the very unpoetical occupation of darning her father's socks, he spoke his mind.

The storm, which was raging at Christmas, had ceased, and the winter sunshine came in at the window where Bessie was sitting, lighting up her hair and face with a halo which made Neil think of the Madonnas which had looked at him from the walls of the galleries in Rome.

"There!" she said, as she finished one sock, and removing from it the porcelain ball, held it up to view. "That is done, and it looks almost as good as new."

Then she took another from the basket, and adjusting the ball inside, began the darning process again, while Neil looked steadily at her. Had Grey Jerrold been there, he would have thought her the very personification of what a little housewifely wife should be, and would have admired the skill with which she wove back and forth, over and under, filling up the hole with a deftness which even his Aunt Hannah could not have excelled. But Neil saw only her soft, girlish beauty, and cared nothing for her deftness and thrift. In fact he was really rebelling hotly against the whole thing—the socks, the yarn, the porcelain ball, and more than all, the darning-needle she handled so skillfully. What had the future Mrs. Neil McPherson to do with such coarse things? he thought, as, forgetful of his mother's anger, he began:

"I say, Bessie, I wish you would stop that infernal weaving back and forth with that darning-needle, which looks so like an implement of warfare and makes me shudder every time you jab it into the wool. I want to talk to you."

"Talk on; I can listen and work too. I have neglected father's socks of late and have ever so many pairs to mend," Bessie said, pointing to the piled-up basket, without looking at the flushed, eager face bending close to her.

But when Neil took her hands in his, and removing from them the sock and darning-needle, said to her, "Bessie, I did not mean to tell you, at least not yet, but I cannot keep it any longer. I love you and want you for my wife," she looked up an instant, and then her eyes fell before the passionate face, and she cried:

"Oh, Neil! You are not in earnest! You do not mean what you say. You cannot want *me*. I am so very poor. I must take care of my father, and then—there is—there is—oh, Neil, I am sorry if it is wrong to say it—there is my mother!"

She put the whole hard facts before him at once, her poverty, her father, for whom she must always care, and her mother, the greatest obstacle of all.

"I know all that. Don't you suppose I thought it out before I spoke?" Neil said, drawing her closer to him as he continued: "I am going to tell you the whole truth about myself, and show you my very worst. I am a great, lazy, selfish fellow, and have never in my life done any one any good. I have lived for myself and my pleasure alone. I am not one quarter as good as Grey Jerrold, or even Jack Trevellian."

At the mention of Grey, Bessie gave a little start, for a thought of him seemed to cast a shadow over the sky, which for a moment had been very bright, if Neil really and truly loved her. But the shadow passed as Neil went on, rapidly:

"I never had any home training; that is, never met any opposition to my wishes. Everything bent to me until I came to believe myself supreme; but, Bessie, I know that there is in me the material for a man, something like Grey Jerrold. I speak of him because he represents to me the noblest man I ever knew, and I always feel my inferiority when I am with him, and show at my worst by contrast. You know what I mean. You felt his power when he was here; the tone of his voice; the way he put things; the indescribable something which makes him so popular everywhere, I don't know what it is. I would give the world if I possessed it. I have watched him many a time at Eton and at Oxford and elsewhere, when he was surrounded by a lot of London swells, young lords and sons of earls, who would cut me dead, but who took to the American at once and made him more than their equal. Once I asked him how he did it and if it were not an awful bore always to consider others before himself. I shall never forget the expression of his face as he hesitated a moment and seemed to be looking far off at something in the past. Then he said: 'Sometimes it is hard; but long ago, when I was a boy, I made a vow to live for others rather than myself, to try to make somebody happy every day with a kind word or act or look, and only think, if I live to a good old age, how many people's lives will have been a little sunnier because of me. Suppose I commenced this plan at fourteen and that I live to be seventy, which is not very old, it will make over twenty thousand, and that surely ought to atone for a great deal—don't you think so?—and in a way my life is a kind of atonement.' That is what he said, or the substance of it, and I have often thought of it and wondered what he meant by an atonement."

In his enthusiasm over Grey, Neil forgot for a moment what he had been saying to Bessie, who had listened intently, and who exclaimed:

"Twenty thousand people happier because of him. Oh, Neil, that is worth more than the crown of England I wish you—I wish we could be like him."

"You *are* like him," Neil said, coming back to his original subject. "You make me think of him so much in your sweet forgetfulness of yourself and your thoughtfulness of others, and, Bessie, I am going to try to be like him, too, if you will help me, if you will be my wife, by and by, when I have made a man of myself, and am more worthy of you. Will you, Bessie, will you promise to be my little wife when I come to claim you?"

He had her face between his hands and was looking into her eyes where the tears were shining, as she said to him:

"Neil, you do not know what you ask, or all it involves. I cannot leave my father, and there is Blanche. You are as good as engaged to her; you said so in your letter."

"I know I wrote you so," Neil said, "because I wanted to fortify myself against doing just what I have done, but I shall never marry Blanche Trevellian; if you tell me no, I shall remain single forever; but you will not, Bessie. You will not destroy my last chance to be a man. You do love me, I am sure, and you will love me more when you know all I mean to do. I shall not separate you from your father. He shall live with us, and Anthony and Dorothy too; though not here at Stoneleigh, except it be in the summer when the roses are in bloom. Father has a small house in London, in Warwick Crescent; he will let us live there, and—and—"

Here Neil stopped, for he remembered his mother's threat of disinheritance if he should marry Bessie, and he knew she was capable of performing it and if she did how was he to live even in that small house in Warwick Crescent? But Bessie's eyes were upon him; Bessie's upturned face was between his hands, and poverty with her did not seem so very terrible. They could manage some way, but he would be frank with her, and, he continued, at last, "Bessie, I shall not deceive you, or pretend that mother will receive you at first, for she will not. She means me to marry Blanche, and will be very angry for a time, and perhaps refuse to give me my present allowance, so we may be very poor; but that I shall not mind if you are with me. Poverty will be sweet if shared with you, who, I know, are not afraid of it."

"No, Neil," Bessie said, getting her face free from his hands, "I am not afraid of poverty, and I do love you; but—"

"But what?" Neil cried, in alarm, as be caught her hands in his and held them fast, "You are not going to tell me no? Surely you are not?"

"No, Neil. I am going to tell you nothing as yet. I was only thinking, that if we are so poor, couldn't you do something? Couldn't you work?"

It was the same question put by the girl Daisy to the boy Archie years before in the old yew-shaded garden, and as the boy Archie had then answered the girl Daisy, so the man Neil now made reply:

"I am afraid not, my darling. It is not in the McPherson blood to work, and I dare not be the first to break the rule."

"Don't you think Grey Jerrold would work if he were poor?" Bessie asked, and Neil replied:

"Grey is an American, and that makes a difference; every body works there, and it does not matter."

"Then let us go to America and be Americans, too," Bessie said, but Neil only shook his head, and replied:

"I could never live in that half-civilized land of equality, where the future President may be buttoned up in the jacket of my bootblack. I am an out-and-out aristocrat and would rather be poor and be jostled by nobility than be rich and brush against Tom, Dick and Harry and have to bow to their wives."

Bessie gave a little sigh, for this was not at all like Grey Jerrold, whom Neil was going to imitate; but before she could speak, he continued:

"We shall pull through somehow in London, and in time mother will come round when she finds I am determined. So, Bessie, it is settled, and you promise to be my wife when I can fix things?"

He was taking his consent too much for granted, and Bessie did not like it, and said to him:

"No, Neil; it is not settled for sure. I can never be yours without your mother's sanction. Think what you would be taking upon yourself—poverty, father and me!"

"The *me* would not be so very bad," Neil said, drawing her closely to him, and caressing her hair as he talked, advancing argument after argument why she should consent to a secret engagement, the greatest argument of all being the influence such an engagement would have over him, helping him in his new resolution to be a man after the Grey Jerrold order; for Grey's name was mentioned often in the strange plighting of vows, and when at last Bessie's consent was won to be Neil's wife as soon as his mother was reconciled, her mind was almost as full of Grey as it was of Neil, who, now that she was his, became the most tender and devoted lover during his remaining stay at Stoneleigh, and Bessie was happier than she had ever been in her life, though there was one drawback upon her happiness: she would like to have told her father,

but Neil had said she must not, and she obeyed, wondering to herself if Grey would have bound her to secrecy.

Grey was a good deal mixed up in Bessie's thoughts after Neil was gone, and she often found herself thinking:

"More than twenty thousand happier because of him! Could any life be nobler than that, and why should not I imitate it?"

And then Bessie began the experiment of trying to make somebody happy every day; and the butcher's boy of whom she bought the meat, and the girl who brought the milk, and the man of whom she bought their bread, and the beggar woman who came to the door for cinders and cold bits, found an added graciousness of manner in the young girl who smiled so sweetly upon them and interested herself so kindly in their welfare, and who, in her limited sphere, was imitating Grey Jerrold, and trying to make a few people happier, even though she could never hope, like him, to number twenty thousand!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW GREY.

That was what Neil signed himself in the first letter he sent to Bessie after his return to London, and in which he assured her that he was instant in season and out of season in his endeavors to be like the American and make himself worthy of the dearest little girl a man ever called his wife. He had borne with perfect equanimity his mother's frequent ebullitions of temper; had read aloud to Blanche for two hours, when she had a headache, although he wanted so much to go to his club; and had listened daily, without a sign of impatience, to his father's tiresome talk upon politics and the demoralized condition of the country generally. Then he told her how much he loved her, and how a thought of her and her sweet face was constantly in his mind, inspiring him to a nobler life than he had hitherto been living.

And Bessie, as she read his letter, felt her love grow stronger for him, and her face grew brighter and lovelier each day, and there was a ring of gladness and hopefulness in her voice as she went singing about the house thinking of the future which stretched so pleasantly before her, and in which she could be always with Neil, "the new Grey." Sometimes she thought of the real Grey, who was still at Oxford, which Neil had left for good. He was not fond of study, and greatly preferred his idle, pleasant life at home, breakfasting when he pleased and as he pleased, either in bed or in the breakfast-room, lounging through the morning, playing duets with Blanche, sorting her worsteds for her, or teasing her about the grotesque figures she was embroidering and calling shepherd boys and girls. The comfort and luxury of Trevellian House suited him better than Stoneleigh, and now that he was engaged and there was no probability of his marrying Blanche, her society was not half as distasteful to him as it had formerly been, neither were her eyebrows as light nor her shoulder-blades as sharp, and he began to think she really was a good-natured kind of a girl and played splendidly. And then he remembered with a pang that Bessie did not play at all, except simple accompaniments to songs, and found himself wondering in a vague kind of way what people would say to a Mrs. Neil McPherson who had no accomplishments except a sweet voice for ballad singing and a tolerable knowledge of French and German, which she had picked up when a child leading a Bohemian life on the Continent. Bessie was neither learned, nor accomplished, nor fashionable; but she was good and pure and beautiful, and Neil loved her with all the intensity of his selfish nature, and meant to be true to her. He wrote to her, three times a week, long letters, full of love and tenderness, and of Grey Jerrold, with whom he corresponded.

Once he tried to tell his mother of his engagement. She had been speaking to him of Blanche, talking as if everything were settled, and asking why it were not as well to announce the engagement at once.

"Because," Neil said to her, "I am not engaged to Blanche, and do not know that I ever shall be. To tell you the truth, mother, I love my Cousin Bessie better than any woman living, and if I had money of my own I would marry her to-morrow."

This was a great deal for Neil to say, knowing his mother as he did, and possibly he might not have said it could he have foreseen the storm which followed his declaration. What she had once before said to him upon the subject was nothing when compared with her present anger and scorn, as she assured him again and again that if he married Bessie McPherson, she would at once cut off his allowance and leave him to shirk for himself. That was the way she expressed it, for she could be very coarse in her language at times, even if she were a titled lady. Bessie should never enter her house as her daughter-in-law, she said, and she would not only cut off Neil's allowance during her life, but at her death would leave what little money she had to some one else—Jack Trevellian, perhaps, who would represent the family far better than her scapegrace son, with his low McPherson tastes.

After this Neil could not tell her. On the contrary, he bent every energy to keep the secret from her, and never again mentioned Bessie or Stoneleigh in her presence, but devoted himself to

Blanche in a friendly, brotherly kind of way, which kept the peace in that quarter and left him in quiet. But his thoughts were busy with plans for the future, when Bessie would be his wife and he disinherited, for her sake. Once he calculated the possibility of living at Stoneleigh on the meagre annuity which he knew Archie received, and which would die with him. But he could not do that, and he called himself a sneak for considering the matter an instant.

"If there was something I could do which would not compromise me," he thought. "I might become an inventor, or an author. I could do better at that, for I have some talent for yarning, they say. Wilkie Collins and George Eliot make heaps of money with their pens. Yes, I believe I'll try it."

And so Neil shut himself in his room for some hours each day, and commenced the story which was to make his fortune. But as Bessie sat for his heroine and Grey Jerrold for his hero, he became furiously jealous when he reached the love passages, and tearing up his manuscript in disgust, abandoned the field of authorship forever.

Suddenly his thoughts turned to the old aunt in America, whom, his fancy painted as fabulously rich. She could help him, and perhaps if he wrote her the right kind of a letter she would. And so he set himself to the task, which proved harder, even, than the story-writing had been. Neil knew his Aunt Betsey was very eccentric, and he hardly knew how to make her under stand him without saying too much and so ruining his cause.

"By Jove, I'll tell her the truth, that I want money in order to marry Bessie," he said, and he took Bessie for his starting paint, and waxed eloquent as he described her sweetness and beauty, and told of her life of toil and care and self-denial at Stoneleigh, with her father, whom he represented as just on the verge of the grave. Then he told of his engagement and his mother's fierce opposition to it, and the sure poverty which awaited him if he remained true to his cousin, as he meant to do, and then he came to the real object of his letter, and asked for money on which to live until his mother was reconciled, as she was sure to be in time, when she knew how lovely and good Bessie was. A few thousand pounds would suffice, he said, as he knew his father would allow him to occupy a house in Warwick Crescent which belonged to him and which would save his rent. And then, growing bolder as he advanced, he hinted at the possibility that his aunt might be intending to make Bessie her heir, and said if it were so he should be glad to know it, and would keep the secret religiously from Bessie until such time as he might reveal it. A speedy answer to this letter was desired, and Neil closed by signing himself:

"Your very affectionate nephew, Neil McPherson."

He posted the letter himself, and feeling almost sure of a favorable response, went and bought Bessie a small solitaire ring, such as he could afford, and sent it with the most loving, hopeful letter he had yet written to her.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS McPHERSON AND THE LETTER.

Nine years had made but little change in Miss Betsey McPherson, either mentally or physically. As she had been at the Thanksgiving dinner where we first met her, so she was now, with possibly a little sharper tone in her voice and a shade more of eccentricity in her nature. As she lived alone then with her two servants, so she lived alone now, with the same cook in the kitchen, but not the same housemaid to attend her. Flora had been married for five or six years to a respectable mechanic, and lived in a small white house across the common, with three children to care for—two boys and a girl. This last she had thought to call for her former mistress to whom she had timidly expressed her intention, asking if she would be godmother.

"Flo is a fool to saddle her child with a name she hates," Miss McPherson thought, but she consented to act as sponsor, and wore her best black silk in honor of the occasion, when Sunday came and she took her accustomed seat in church.

But her thoughts were evidently not upon the service, for she knelt in the wrong place, and once said aloud in her abstraction, "Let us pray," and there was a twinkle in her round bright eyes, and a grim smile on her face when she at last arose, and straight and stiff as a darning-needle walked up the aisle, and took in her arms the little pink and white baby who was to bear her name. It was a pretty child, and as she held it for a moment and looked into its clear blue eyes fixed so questioningly upon her face, there came to her the thought of another little blue-eyed girl who had come to her on the sands of Aberystwyth, and the touch of whose hands as they rubbed and patted the folds of her dress she could feel even now after the lapse of many years. That child had said to her that Betsey was a horrid name; this child in her arms would think so, too, and hate it all her life, and when the clergyman, said, "Name this child," she answered, in a loud, clear voice, which rang distinctly through the church:

"Bessie McPherson!"

"No, no; oh, no!" Flora gasped in a whisper, "it is Betsey, ma'am; it is for you."

"Hush! I know what I am about," was whispered back, and so Bessie McPherson, and not Betsey, was received into Christ's flock and signed with the sign of the cross, and given to the happy mother happier than she dared to own because of the change of name.

The next day five hundred dollars were placed in the Allington Savings Bank to the credit of Bessie McPherson Bowen, and the spinster washed her hands of the whole affair, as she expressed it to herself. But she could not quite forget the child, and when on the Monday evening after the christening she sat by her open fire with her round tea table at her side, there was a thought of it in her mind, and she said to herself:

"I am glad I did not give it my name. Betsey is not very poetical, and they are sure to call you Bets when they are angry at you. Bessie is better and sweeter every way."

And then her thoughts went over the sea after that other Bessie, her own flesh and blood, of whom she had not heard in years. It was very seldom that her brother John wrote to her, and when he did he never mentioned Archie or his family, and so she knew nothing of them except that Daisy was still carrying on her business at Monte Carlo and was known as an adventuress to every frequenter of the place. But where was Bessie? Miss McPherson asked herself, us she gazed dreamily into the fire. Was she like her mother, a vain coquette and a mark for coarse jests and vulgar admiration?

"For the girl must be pretty," she said, "There was the promise of great beauty in that face, and true, pure womanhood, too, if only she were well brought up."

And then through the woman's heart there shot a pang as she wondered if she had done right to leave Archie and his child to their poverty all these years. Might she not have done something for them, and so perhaps have saved the daughter from sin? The little room at the head of the stairs was still kept just as it was when she was expecting Bessie. There was the big doll in the corner, the dishes on the shelf, and the single bed with its lace hangings was freshly made every month, and by its side each night the lonely woman knelt and prayed for the little girl who had come to her on the sands and looked into her eyes with a look which had haunted her ever since. But of what avail was all this? Ought she not to have acted as well as prayed? What was faith without works, and if Bessie had gone to destruction, as most likely she had, was it not in part her fault? Such were the questions tormenting Miss McPherson when at last Winny came in to remove the tea things and brought with her a letter, which she gave into her mistress' hand. It was Neil's letter, and Miss Betsey examined it very carefully before opening it, wondering who had written her from London, and experiencing a feeling that its contents would not prove altogether agreeable. Adjusting her spectacles a little more firmly on her nose, she opened it at last, and read it through very slowly, taking in its full meaning as she read, and commenting to herself in her characteristic way.

Two years before, she had met an old acquaintance from London, who knew Neil and disliked him, consequently the impression she had received of him was not altogether favorable.

"A good-looking, well-meaning fellow," the man had said, "but very indolent, and selfish, and proud, with an inordinate love of money, and respect for those who have it."

And in this opinion the spinster was confirmed by his letter.

"Let me see!" she said, taking off her glasses, and regarding the fire intently. "He wishes me to send him a few thousand pounds to enable him to marry his cousin and live in idleness in his father's house on Warwick Crescent until his mother is reconciled, and he wishes to know if I intend to make Bessie my heir. No, my fine London gentleman! If Bessie ever has a fortune it will not be from me. Now, if Neil wanted this money to set himself up in business; if he was going to work to earn his own bread and butter and support his family like an honest man, I would let him have it cheerfully. But work is the last thing he thinks about. It would degrade him. Ugh! it makes me so mad!" and she shook her head fiercely at the fire, as she went on:

"But the girl, if he tells the truth, is the right kind of stuff, staying at home, caring for her father, wearing shabby clothes, and even washing the dishes, which I have no doubt hurts him the most. I rather like this girl, and for her sake I will give Neil a chance, though I don't suppose he will accept it. There are those cotton mills which I had to take on that debt of Carson's. They have been nothing but a torment to me for the want of a capable man to look after them. I will offer the situation to Neil with a salary of two thousand dollars a year, and ten per cent. of the net profits, and I will let him have, rent free, the house which Carson occupied, and will furnish it, too, and have everything in running order when he gets here with his bride. That I call a right generous offer, but, bless your soul, do you suppose he will take it?"

And she interrogated the fire, which made no response, except that a half dead coal dropped into the pan and went out into blackness.

"Of course he won't," she continued, "for that would be doing something! But we shall see. I will write the letter to-night," and ringing for her writing materials the old lady began her letter to Neil, telling him what she would do for him if he chose to come to America and try to help himself.

"The work is not hard," she wrote. "It requires more thought, and judgment, and tact, than anything else, but it will bring you in contact with some very second-class people—*scum*, if you choose to call them so—and with some of the excellent of the earth as well for all grades are

represented in the mills, and for what I know, the future Governor of Massachusetts is working there to-day; but if he is, you may be sure he has a book somewhere around and studies it every chance he gets, for in this way our best men are made. If you do not choose to take my offer, I shall do nothing for you, and Bessie will be a fool to marry one who does not care enough for her to be willing to work and support her. I have no intention of making her my heir. My will is made, and I do not often change my mind. Still, I have a fancy for the girl—have always had a fancy for her, and if you bring her to me on the terms I offer, you will never be sorry."

This last Miss Betsey wrote because of the desire which kept growing in her heart as once it had before, to look again in Bessie's face, to hear her voice, to feel the touch of her hands; and in short, to have some one to love and be interested in, as something told her she could be interested in and love Bessie McPherson.

The letter was sent to Neil, and the same mail took another to a well-known banking house in London with which Miss McPherson had business relations. To this house she gave instructions that the sum of one hundred pounds should at once be forwarded to Archibald McPherson, who was not on any account to know from whom the money came.

When her letters were gone she began again to build castles with regard to Bessie, whom she was expecting, in spite of her lack of confidence in Neil's willingness to accept her offer.

In fancy she furnished the large stone house on the cliff above the mills, which Bessie was to occupy, and furnished it with no sparing hand. In fancy she climbed the sleep steps every day, and went in and out with the freedom of a mother, for such she meant to be to the young couple, both her own blood, and both seeming very near to her now when there was a chance of their coming to her and dispelling the loneliness of her monotonous life. But she kept her expectations to herself, not even telling them to Lucy Grey, or Hannah Jerrold, her most intimate friends, both of whom noticed a change in her, but did not guess why she seemed so much more cheerful and happy, or why she was so often in Worcester, inquiring the prices of china and glassware, and household furniture generally.

Once she was very near letting it out, and that was when Hannah was spending the afternoon with her, and said: "I have received a letter from Grey, who writes that he spent a day at Stoneleigh and saw your grandniece Bessie."

"What did he think of her?" Miss Betsey asked, and Hannah replied:

"He thought her the loveliest creature he had ever seen. I do believe he is more than half in love with her, for I never knew him so enthusiastic over a girl before."

"Yes," Miss McPherson said, and remembering what she knew Grey to be and what she feared Neil was, she thought, "Oh, if it were Grey and Bessie;" and that night she dreamed that it was Grey and Bessie, and that she tore down the house on the cliff, overlooking the mill, and built there a palace something after the fashion of Chatsworth, except that it was more modern in its style and general appearance, and many pairs of eyes like those seen on the terrace at Aberystwyth looked into hers, and many little hands rubbed holes in her stuff dress, and many little voices called her grandma the name she bade them give her in place of auntie.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM JANUARY TO MARCH.

Never had Neil been more gracious or agreeable than during the interval when he was waiting for the answer to his letter. He felt sure of a favorable reply and that Bessie would be his before the June roses were in bloom, and that of itself kept him in a happy frame of mind. He was very attentive to Blanche and very kind to his mother, and he wrote long letters to Bessie three times a week, and went to church every Sunday and gave a half-penny to every little ragged child he met, and felt that Neil McPherson was a pretty good fellow after all.

At last the letter came, and Neil read it in the privacy of his room, and, being alone with no one to hear, called his aunt a name which sounded a little like swearing, and paced up and down the apartment with the perspiration standing thickly around his white lips, and a feeling at his heart as if he were not only bitterly disappointed but had also been insulted by the offer made to him.

"An overseer in some cotton mills!—factories they call them there. Not if I know myself!" he said. "*I* stoop to that? Never! The old woman is a fool," (this with an adjective), "and she evidently thinks she is doing a big thing. Two thousand dollars a year! Why, that is not much more than mother allows me now, and I am awfully hard up at times. No, Bessie, you must wait a little longer until something turns up, as I am sure there will. An overseer! *I!*" and Neil's voice was indicative of the scorn and contempt with which he regarded an overseer of cotton mills, and the vast difference he felt there was between such an individual and himself.

Neil was very sore and very much depressed, and his depression told upon his health, and he became so pale and haggard that his mother was alarmed, and insisted upon his leaving England for a time and going down to Cannes, in Southern France, where several of her friends were

spending the winter. To this Neil made no objection, and wrote to Bessie of his plans, and made himself out so great an invalid that Bessie felt a fear in her heart lest her lover should die and she be left in the world alone, in case—She did not dare finish the thought, or put into words her conviction that her father was daily growing weaker, with less care for or interest in any thing passing around him. This change for the worse had commenced with a heavy cold, taken soon after the holidays, and which none of Dorothy's prescriptions could reach. It was in vain that Bessie tried to persuade him to let her call a physician.

"No, child," he said, "it's nothing. I shall be better in a few days, when the weather moderates. I do not want a doctor, and if I did we are too poor. How much have we on hand?"

Bessie did not tell him the exact amount, for fear of troubling him in his weak, nervous condition.

Their Christmas hospitalities had cost them dear, and there was very little in the family purse with which to meet their necessities. Just after Neil's departure there had come a letter from Daisy, who was in Nice, with some Americans, whose acquaintance she had made in Paris and whose party she had joined.

> "These American friendships cost a great deal," she wrote, "for they stop at the most expensive hotels, and I must have a parlor and bedroom in order to keep up appearances, so I really have nothing to spare just now; but I send you a five-pound note which I borrowed for you from Mr. Jack Trevellian, who came day before yesterday and told me of his visit to Stoneleigh. If I am any judge, he is more than half in love with you, and when I said I was going to write and regretted that I could not send you any money, as I was sure you must need it after so much company, he insisted upon loaning me twenty pounds, and when I refused so large a sum he made me take ten, which I will divide with you. It was very generous in him, and when I said I should pay him as soon as possible, he begged me never to speak of it, as he would gladly give ten times that sum to one as faithful and kind to her father as you are. Jack is a good fellow, and there is only one life between him and a, title, I hear. Try for him, Bessie; I know you can get him. Write him a little note and tell him how kind it was in him to loan me the money. That will be a beginning, but you need not say how much of it I sent you; as he designed it all for you, he might not like it if he knew I kept half. How is your father? The last time I was home I really thought he was threatened with softening of the brain, he seemed so sleepy and stupid and forgetful. Give him my love, and believe me always your affectionate mother,
>
> "DAISY McPHERSON.
>
> "P.S.—I hear Lord Hardy has returned from Egypt and is expected here. I am glad, for a sight of him will do me good. He is the best friend I ever had, and the first, except, of course, your father."

Such, in part, was Daisy's letter, which Bessie read with an aching heart and cheeks which burned with shame. She wanted money sadly, for her boots were giving out at the sides, and the butcher's bill was unpaid, and her father needed wine and jellies to tempt his sickly appetite and keep up his failing strength. But she would have gone barefoot and denied herself food for a week sooner than touch the five-pound note her mother had wrung from Jack Trevellian, her recent guest.

"It was begged; it is a charity; it burns my hand," she said, as she held the note between her thumb and finger. "I will not have it in the house," and the next moment it was blackening on the fire where the indignant girl had thrown it, together with her mother's letter, which her father must never see.

Oh, how for an instant Bessie loathed herself as she thought of her mother and saw in fancy the whole sickening performance at Nice, the daily jesting and badinage with those people around her—second-class Americans, she was sure, or they would not take up her mother; but worst of all was the interview with Jack Trevellian, whose feelings had been wrought upon until he gave her ten pounds, because of her poverty!

"Oh, it is too horrible; but I will pay it back some time," she said, and kneeling by the firelight with her hot, tear-stained face buried in her hands, Bessie prayed earnestly that in some way see might be enabled to pay this debt to Jack Trevellian.

In her excitement she did not then regret that she had burned the note, though she knew that it was a rash act, and that it necessitated extra self-denials which would tell heavily upon her. With strong black linen thread and a bit of leather she patched her boots; she dressed and undressed in the cold, for she would allow no fire in her room; she never tasted meat, or tarts, or sweets, or delicacies of any kind, but contented herself with the simplest fare, and piled her father's plate, begging him to eat, and watching him with feverish anxiety as her mother's dreadful words rang in her ears—softening of the brain! Was that terrible disease stealing upon him? Would the time come when the kind eyes which now always brightened when they rested on her would have in them no sign of recognition, and the lips which spoke her name so lovingly utter only unmeaning words? It was terrible to contemplate, and Bessie felt she would rather see him dead than an imbecile.

"But what should I do with father gone?" she said, and her thoughts turned to Neil, who would

surely take her then, even if he took her into poverty.

And so in a measure Bessie was comforted, and watched her father with untiring vigilance, and felt that he was slipping from her and that in all the world there was for her no ray of joy except in Neil's love, which she never doubted, and without which her heart would have broken, it was so full of care and pain. And it was just when her heart was saddest because her father had that morning called her *Daisy*, and when she corrected him had said, "Yes, but I can't think of your name; words go from me strangely at times; everything is confused," that Neil's letter came, bringing her fresh cause for anxiety, and seeming with its brevity and strangeness, to put him farther from her than he would be in Cannes, whither he was going.

That night Bessie cried herself to sleep, and was so weak and sick the next morning that Dorothy persuaded her to stay in bed and brought her up her breakfast of toast, crisp and hot, with a fresh boiled egg and a cup of tea which she declared would almost give life to a dead man.

"But, Dolly," Bessie said, "you should not have brought me the egg; they are two pence apiece, and father must have them all. Can't you keep it and warm it up for him?"

"Warm up an egg! Bless the child," and Dorothy laughed till the tears ran. "You can't warm over a boiled egg, so eat it down; it will do you good, and you are growing so thin and pale. Here is a letter for your father; but as he is asleep I brought it to you."

Taking the letter, Bessie examined the address, which was a strange one to her. Evidently it was on business, and as nothing of that kind could mean anything but fresh anxiety and annoyance for her father, she resolved to know the contents and, if possible, keep them from the weak invalid. So she broke the seal and read with astonishment that Messrs. Blank & Blank, bankers, in Lombard street, London, had been instructed by one who did not wish his name to appear, to send to Mr. Archibald McPherson of Stoneleigh, Bangor, the sum of one hundred pounds, and inclosed was a check for the same.

"Oh!" Bessie exclaimed, as she sprang up and began to dress herself rapidly. "One hundred pounds! Why, we are rich, and father can have everything he wants. I wonder how much a bottle of Johannisberger wine would cost."

Then there crept into her mind the question, who sent it? Was it the Hon. John? Was it Neil? or—and Bessie's heart stood still a moment and then beat with a heavy pain—or was it Jack Trevellian, who had done this because of what her mother had told him of their needs? It was like him, she knew, but if it were he, she could never touch the money, and without a word to her father of the letter, she wrote at once to Messrs. Blank & Blank, Lombard street, asking if it were Mr. Trevellian, and saying if it were, she must return the check as they could not keep it.

"Direct your answer to me," she wrote, "as I transact all my father's business for him."

In two days the answer come, very stiffly worded, but assuring her that the donor was not Mr. Trevellian and that her father need have no scruples about taking the money, and would have none did he know from whom it came. This satisfied Bessie, who took the letter to her father, confessing all she had done, and with him trying to guess who had been so kind to them.

"I can think of no one except my aunt in America," Archie said, "and she is not likely to remember us in this way after so many years' silence."

"If I thought it were she I would write to her," Bessie said, "and at all events I will write to *somebody* and thank them, and send the letter to Messrs. Blank & Blank, in London. They know who it is and will forward it for me."

Accordingly the next Bangor mail for London bore in it a letter from Bessie to their unknown friend.

> "DEAR MADAM, OR SIR, whichever you may be," she began, "I wish I could tell you how much joy and gladness, and relief, too, your generous gift of one hundred pounds brought to both father and me. God bless you for it, and may you never know the want and actual need which made your gift so very welcome that instead of shrinking from it we could only cry over it, and be glad that somewhere in the world there was somebody thinking and caring for us. Every night of my life I shall pray for you, and if I ever know who you are, and meet you face to face, I will try and thank you better than I feel that I am doing on paper. Yours gratefully and sincerely,"
>
> BESSIE McPHERSON,
>
> "P.S.—If, as papa half suspects, you are his Aunt Betsey, I am doubly glad, because it shows that you sometimes think of us in the old home at Stoneleigh, and I wish you would write a few words to father. It will do him so much good, and he is so sick and helpless, and lonely, and—I dare not tell you what I fear, only he sometimes forgets my name and his own, too, and calls things different from what they are. Oh, if he should die, I should die, too!"

This was sent to Messrs. Blank & Blank with instructions to forward it to the donor. But Messrs. Blank & Blank were very busy with other matters than forwarding letters of thanks. They had just written to Miss McPherson that her orders had been obeyed and the money paid, and so Bessie's

letter was put aside and forgotten, for weeks and even months, when an incident occurred which brought it to their minds and it was forwarded to Miss McPherson.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM MARCH TO JUNE.

When Bessie knew that the money was really theirs, when she had it in her hand and counted the bank-notes, her happiness knew no bounds, and she felt richer than Blanche Trevellian ever had with fifty times that sum. To her that hundred pounds represented so much actual good and comfort for her father, for whom she would use nearly all of it. But first she must pay Jack Trevellian, and she said to her father:

"May I have ten pounds of this to do with as I like? I promise to make good use of it."

"Yes, child," he answered, "it is all yours to do with as you please."

So she sent ten pounds to Jack, and wrote:

> "I return the money you were so good as to loan mother. Ten pounds she said it was. It was very kind in you to let her have it, and I know you meant it well. You could not mean otherwise; but please, Mr. Trevellian, for my sake don't do it again.
>
> "Yours truly,
>
> "BESSIE McPHERSON."

This done, Bessie paid the butcher and the baker and the grocer, and a part of what they were owing Anthony and Dorothy, and bought herself a pair of shoes, and then religiously put by what was left to buy the medicines and dainties, the beef tea and wine and jellies and fruit, which were to nurse her father back to health physically and mentally. But it would take more than fruit or jelly to repair a constitution never strong and now greatly weakened by disease. Every day Archie grew weaker, while Bessie watched over and tended him with anguish in her heart and a terrible shrinking from the future when he would be gone forever. From Neil she heard often, but his letters did not do her much good they were so full of regret for the poverty which was keeping her from him and would keep her indefinitely for aught he knew. From her mother she seldom heard. That frivolous butterfly was too busy and gay to give much time or thought to her dying husband and overburdened child. She was still at Nice and still devoted to her American friends, the Rossiter-Brownes, as they called themselves, to the great amusement of their neighbors, who had known them when they were plain Mr. and Mrs. Isaac R. Brown, of Massachusetts, or, as they were familiarly called, Miss Brown and Ike. But they were rich people now; a turn in the wheel had made Ike a millionaire and transformed him into Mr. Rossiter-Browne, and with his wife and his two children, Augusta and Allen, he was doing Europe on a grand scale, and Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, an ambitious but well-meaning woman, had taken a violent fancy to Daisy, and had even invited her to go home with her in June, offering to defray all her expenses out and back if she would do so.

"And I half made up my mind to go," Daisy wrote to Bessie in May. "I have often wished to see America, and shall never have a better chance than this. Though not the most refined people in the world, the Rossiter-Brownes are very nice and very kind to me. Lady June, I dare say, would call them vulgar and second-class, and I am inclined to think they are what their own countrymen call *shoddy*. They have not always been rich as they are now. Indeed, Mrs. Rossiter-Browne makes no secret of the fact that she was once poor and did her own washing, which is very commendable in her, I am sure. By some means or other—either oil, or pork, or the war—they have made a fortune and have come abroad to spend it in a most princely manner. Mrs. Rossiter-Browne is good-looking, and wears the finest diamonds at Nice, if I except some of the Russian ladies, but her grammar is dreadful, her style of dress very conspicuous, and her voice loud and coarse. Augusta, the daughter, is twenty, and much better educated than her mother. She is rather pretty and stylish, but indolent and proud. Allen, the son, is twenty-two, tall, light-haired, good-natured, and dandified, kisses his mother night and morning, calls her *ma* and his father *pa*, and his sister *sis*; drives fast horses, wears an eye-glass, carries a cane, and affects the English drawl. *Pere* Rossiter-Browne is a little dapper man, with a face like a squirrel. At breakfast, which is served in their parlor, he eats with his knife, and pours his tea into his saucer in spite of Augusta's disgust and his wife's open protestations.

"'Now, Angeline, you shet up with your folderol,' he will say, with the most imperturbable good humor. 'At *table dote* I can behave with the best of 'em, but in my own room I'm goin' to be comfortable and take things easy like, and if I want to cool my tea in my *sasser* I shall. Miss McPherson don't think no less of me for that, you bet.'

"They have given me a standing invitation to breakfast with them when I like.

"'It don't cost no more for five than for four,' Mr. Rossiter-Browne says, and as juicy beefsteaks and mutton chops and real cream have a better relish than rolls and tea, I accept their hospitality in this as in many other things.

"They take me everywhere, and I am really quite useful to them in various ways. None of them speak French at all except Augusta, and she very badly. But she is improving rapidly, for I hear her read both French and Italian every day, and help her with her pronunciation. Then I have introduced them to a great many people, among whom are some English lords and ladies and German barons and baronesses; and, as all Americans dote on titles, notwithstanding their boasted democracy, so Mrs. Rossiter-Browne is not an exception, but almost bursts with dignity when she speaks to her Yankee friends of what Lady So-and-so said to her and what she said to Baron Blank. She nearly fell on her face when I introduced her to Lord Hardy, who has returned from Egypt and was here for a few days. He took to her wonderfully, or pretended that he did, and she was weak enough to think he had an eye to Augusta's charms, and asked if I supposed him serious in his attentions to her daughter, and what kind of a husband he would make. What an absurd idea! Lord Hardy and Augusta Browne! I laughed till I cried when I told Ted about it and asked him what he thought of it.

"'I might do worse,' he said, and then walked away, and that afternoon took Mrs. Browne and Augusta over to Villefranche.

"Ted is very much changed from the boy whom I smuggled into the play-room at Monte Carlo as my Cousin Susan, and I can't get him near there now. It seems that he lost a great deal of money one night, and actually left the Casino with the intention to kill himself. But he had not the courage to do it, though he told me he put the muzzle of the pistol to his forehead, when a thought of his mother stayed his hand and the suicide was prevented. She was in heaven, he said, and he wanted to see her again. If he killed himself he knew he should not, and so he concluded to live, but made a vow never to play again, and he has kept it and become almost as big a spoony as Jack Trevellian. By the way, I saw Trevellian the other day, and when I said something about hoping to pay him his ten pounds soon, he told me *you* had paid it. Very kind in you, I am sure, but I don't see where you got the money. You might have kept it, as he would never have pressed me for it, and I could not pay it if he did. My rooms cost me so much that I never have a shilling to spare, and I do not go to Monte Carlo often, for these Rossiter-Brownes profess to be very religious people—Baptists, I believe—and hold gambling in great abhorrence, so, as I wish to stand well with them I have to play on the sly, or not at all. They have a house in New York and another in the country somewhere, and a cottage at the sea-side; and they have a maid and a courier, and Mrs. Rossiter-Browne talks as familiarly with both of them as she does with me, and I think feels more at ease in their society than in mine. But she is a good woman, and since commencing this letter I have decided to accept her invitation and accompany her to America. They sail the last week in June, and I shall manage to spend a few days at Stoneleigh before I go. How is your father? Write me soon, and if you can do so please send me a pound or two. I have so very little; and I had to borrow of Ted, who, I must say, loaned me rather unwillingly, I thought, while Trevellian, whom I tried cautiously, never took the hint at all. It must be I am going off and have not the same power over the men which I once had; and yet Mrs. Rossiter-Browne told me the other day that I was called the prettiest woman in Nice, and said she was very proud to have me of her party. What a fool she is, to be sure!"

This letter filled Bessie with disgust and anxiety, too, while for a moment there arose within her a feeling of rebellion and bitter resentment against the woman who got so much from life and left her to bear its burdens alone.

"But I would far rather be what I am than what she is," she thought, as she wiped her tears away and stole softly to her father's room to see if he were still sleeping.

He was usually in a half-unconscious condition now, seldom rousing except to take his meals, or when Bessie made a great effort to interest him, and she did not guess how fast he was failing. The second week in June Daisy came, fresh and bright and eager, and looking almost as young as Bessie, who knew no rest day or night, and was pale and thin and worn, with a look on her face and in her eyes very sad to see in a young girl.

"Oh, mother, I am so glad you have come," she cried, and laying her head in her mother's lap, she sobbed passionately for a moment, while she said: "And you will not go away; will not leave me here alone, with no one to speak to all day long but Dorothy. Oh, mother, the loneliness is so terrible and life is so dreary to me."

For a moment Daisy's heart was stirred with pity for the tired, worn girl, and she half resolved to give up America and stay at home where she was needed. But as the days went on and she saw just what life at Stoneleigh meant, she felt that she could not endure it, and, fondly stroking Bessie's hair and smoothing her pale cheek, she told her she would not be gone long. She should return in September and would positively remain at home all winter and take the care from Bessie.

"Your father will not die," she said. "People live years with his disease; he is better than when I first came home; at least he is more quiet, which is a gain."

And so Bessie gave it up and entered at last into her mother's anticipations of her journey, and listened with some interest to what she had to say of the Rossiter-Brownes, the best and most generous people in the world, for they were not only to bear all her expenses to and from America, but Mrs. Browne had given her a twenty-pound note for any little expenditures necessary for her journey.

"I am sure I don't know why they fancy me as they seem to," Daisy said, "unless they have an idea

that I am a much more important personage than I am, and that to take me home as their guest will raise them in the estimation of their friends. They know the McPherson blood is good, and they know about Lady Jane, who Mrs. Browne persists in thinking is my sister-in-law. Did I tell you that the Rossiter-Brownes' old home is near Allington, where your father's aunt is living?"

"No," Bessie replied, looking up with more interest in her manner.

"Well, it is," Daisy continued, "and I mean to beard the old woman in her den and conquer a peace. She has heaps of money, the Brownes say, and is greatly respected in spite of her oddities, and is quite an aristocrat in the little place; and, as I suspect, is far above Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, who wishes to show me to her. She does not guess how the old woman hates us all."

And so Daisy rattled on with her small, tiresome talk, to which Bessie sometimes listened and sometimes did not. The Rossiter-Brownes were in Leamington now, but were coming through Wales on their way to Liverpool, and Mrs. Browne and Augusta were to stop for a day or two at the "George" and take Daisy with them when they left.

"I wish we could show them some attention," Daisy said to her daughter. "Don't you think we might manage a French tea in the garden at four o'clock? We have some rare old china and some solid silver and Dresden linen, and we could get Lucy Jones to wait upon us. Do you think we can do it?"

"Perhaps we can," Bessie replied, reflecting that a French tea in the garden at four o'clock meant only thin slices of bread and butter, with biscuits and possibly some little sponge cakes which would not cost much. She could go without a pair of gloves and make the old ones do. All extras came out of poor little Bessie, but she was accustomed to it, and did not mind, and just now she was so glad to have her mother with her, for Daisy, as if a little remorseful for what she was about to do, was unusually sweet and affectionate and kind, and devoted herself to her husband as she had never done since Bessie could remember. She washed his face and hands and brushed his hair, and wheeled him out into the garden under the old yew tree, where he once slept on the summer morning while she kept the sun and the flies from him. And stooping over him, she asked if he remembered the little girl who used to come to him there when he was a boy.

"Yes; that was Daisy," he said, "but I have not seen her in many a year. Where is she now?" and he looked at her in a strange, bewildered way. Then, as the brain fog lifted a little and cleared away, his chin quivered and he went on: "Oh, Daisy, Daisy; it comes back to me now, the years that are gone, and you as you were then. I loved you so much."

"And don't you love me now, Archie?" she asked, kneeling beside him with her white arms across his knees, while she looked into his face with the old look she could assume so easily, and which moved even this weak man.

Laying his thin, pale hands upon her head, he burst into tears and said;

"Yes, Daisy, I have always loved you, though you have made no part of my life these many years."

"And have you missed me? Have you been unhappy without me?" she asked, and he replied:

"Missed you? Yes; but I have not been unhappy, for I have had Bessie. No man could be unhappy with Bessie, I think I will go in now and find her. I am better with her; and the birds are not singing here."

"What birds?" Daisy asked, looking curiously at him, as, with closed eyes, he leaned wearily back in his chair and replied:

"The birds which sing to me so often; birds of the future, and the past, too, I think they are, for they sing sometimes of you, but oftener of Bessie and a journey far away where she is going to be happy when we are both gone and the winds are blowing across our graves—over there," and he pointed toward the little yard where his father and mother were lying side by side, and where he soon would lie.

For an instant Daisy shuddered, and fancied she felt an icy chill, as if her husband's words were words of prophecy and a blast were blowing upon her from some dark, cold grave. But she was too young to die; death was not for her these many years; it was only waiting for this enfeebled man, whom she wheeled back to the house where Bessie was, and where the birds he heard so often came and sang to him of green fields and flowery meadows beyond the sea, where he saw always Bessie with a look of rest and sweet content upon her face, instead of the tired, watchful, waiting look habitual to it now.

And so, listening to the birds, he fell asleep, as was his wont, and Daisy shook off the chill which had oppressed her, and busied herself with the preparations for her journey.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. ROSSITER-BROWNE.

In due time Mrs. Rossiter-Browne and her daughter, Augusta, came to the "George," with their maid, and took possession of the best rooms, and scattered shillings and half-crowns with a lavishness which made every servant their slave. Of course Daisy called, bearing Bessie's compliments and regrets, and then Mrs. Browne and Augusta came to Stoneleigh in the finest turn-out which the hotel could boast, for though the distance was short, Mrs. Browne never walked when she could ride, and on this occasion she was out for a drive, "to see the elephant of Bangor, trunk and all, for she was bound nothing should escape her which she ought to see, if she died for it, and she guessed she should before she got round home, as she was completely tuckered out with sight-seeing," she said, as she sank pantingly into an easy-chair in the large cool room, which Daisy had made very bright and attractive with fresh muslin curtains, a rug, a table-spread, and some tidies brought from Nice. This room, which was only used in summer, had on the floor a heavy Axminster, which had done service for forty years at least, but still showed what it had been, and spoke of the former grandeur of the place, as did the massive and uncomfortable chairs of solid mahogany, the old pier-glass against the wall, and the queerly shaped sofa, on which Daisy had thrown a bright striped shawl, which changed its aspect wonderfully. She wished to make a good impression upon her American friend, and she succeeded beyond her most sanguine hopes. With her ideas of the greatness and importance of the McPhersons, who, if poor, were aristocrats, Mrs. Browne was prepared to see every thing *couleur de rose*, and the old wainscoted room and quaint furniture delighted her more even than the pretty little devices with which Daisy had thought to make the room more modern and heighten the effect.

"If there's anything I dote on particularly, it's on ancestry halls," Mrs. Rossiter-Browne said, as she looked admiringly around her. "Now them chairs, which a Yankee would hide in the garret, speak of a past and tell you've been somebody a good while. I'd give the world for such an old place as this at home; but, my land! we are that new in America that the starch fairly rattles as we walk. We are only a hundred years old, you know; had our centennial two or three years ago. That was a big show, I tell you; most as good as Europe, and better in some respects, for I could be wheeled in a chair and see things comfortable, while over here, my land! my legs is most broke off, and I tell Gusty I'll have to get a new pair if I stay much longer. Think of me climbing up Pisa, and St. Peter's, and all the Campyniles in the country, and that brass thing in Munich to boot, where I thought I should of sweltered, and all to say you've been there. It's a park of nonsense, I tell 'em, though I s'pose it does cultivate you, and that reconciles me to it."

Here the lady paused for breath, and Augusta, whose face was very red, began to talk to Bessie of Wales and the wild, beautiful scenery. She was as well educated as most young ladies of her class, and was really a very pretty, lady-like girl, who expressed herself well and intelligently, and was evidently annoyed by her mother's manner of speaking, for she tried to keep the conversation in her own hands, and Bessie, who guessed her design, helped her to do so; and after a few moments Mrs. Browne arose to go, and, shaking out her silk flounces and pulling her hands to her ears to make sure her immense diamonds were not unclasped, because, as she said, she would not for a farm lose her *solitarys*, she said good-morning, and was driven away to see the *elephant* of Bangor and vicinity.

Bessie drew a long breath of relief as she saw the carriage leave the park, and said: "Oh, mother, how can you find pleasure in her society, and are the Americans generally like her?"

"Not half as good as she, some of them, though vastly more refined and better educated," Daisy replied, warming up in defense of the woman who was so kind to her, and whom she knew to be honest and true as steel. "There are plenty of ignorant, vulgar women in England, traveling on their money recently acquired, who at heart are not half as good as Mrs. Browne," she said; "and for that matter there are titled ladies too who know precious little more than she. Why, old Lady Oakley once sent me a note, in which more than half the words were misspelled, and her capitals were everywhere except in the right place; but she is *my lady*, and so it is all right. I tell you Bessie, there is, after all, but little difference between the English and the Americans, who, as a class, are better informed than we are and know ten times more about our country than we do about theirs."

Daisy grew very eloquent and earnest as she talked, but Bessie was not convinced, and felt a shrinking from Mrs. Rossiter-Browne as from something positively bad; and here she did the woman great injustice, for never was there a kinder, truer heart than Mrs. Browne's, and if, in her girlhood, she had possessed a tithe of her present fortune, she would have made a far different woman from what she was.

For a few days longer she staid at the "George," and astonished the guests with the richness of her toilets and the singularity of her speech, which was something wonderful to her hearers, who looked upon her as a specimen of Americans generally. But this she would not permit; and once, when she overheard the remark, "that's a fair sample of them, I suppose," turned fiercely on the knot of ladies who, she knew, were discussing her, and said:

"If it's me you are talking up and think a fair sample let me tell you that you are much mistaken. I ain't a sample of nothin'. I am just myself, and Uncle Sam is not at all responsible for me, unless it is that he didn't give me a chance, when young, to go to school. I was poor, and had to work for my livin', and my old blind mother's, too. She is dead this many a year; but if she could of lived till now, when I have so much more than I know what to do with, I'd have dressed her up in silks and satins, and brought her over the seas and flouted her in your faces as another sample of your American cousins, who, take 'em by and large, are quite as refined as your English women, and

enough sight better informed about everything. Why, only t'other day one of 'em asked me what language was generally spoken in New York city, and didn't a school-girl from Edinburgh ask Gusty if the people out West were not all heathens, and if Chicago was near Boston! I tell you, ladies, folks who live in glass houses should not throw stones. You are well enough, and nice enough, and on *voices* you beat us all holler, for 'tis a fact that most of us pitch ours too high and talk through our noses awful, and maybe you'd do that too, if you lived in our beastly climate, but as a rule you have not an atom more learning or refinement at heart than we."

Thus speaking, she sailed from the room with an air which would have befitted a grand duchess, leaving her astonished auditors to look at each other a moment in silence, and then to express themselves fully and freely and unreservedly with regard to American effrontery, American manners, and American slang, as represented by Mrs. Rossiter-Browne.

It was a day or two after this that the French tea was served in the Stoneleigh garden, with strawberries and cream and sponge cakes, and Daisy did the honors as hostess admirably, and Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, resplendent in garnet satin and diamonds, sat in a covered garden-chair and noted everything with a view to repeat it sometime in the garden of her country house at home. "She'd show 'em what was what," she thought. "She'd Let 'em know that she had traveled and had been invited out among the gentry," for such she believed Daisy to be, and she anticipated with a great deal of complacency the sensation which that airy, graceful, woman would create in Ridgeville, the little place a mile or more from Allington, where her husband's farm was situated, and where stood the once old-fashioned house, but now very pretentious residence, which she called the Ridge House. She was going there direct after reaching New York, and thither numerous boxes had preceded her, containing pictures and statuary and other trophies of her travels abroad, and Daisy, whose exquisite taste she knew and appreciated, was to help her arrange the new things, and then "she'd give a smasher of a party," she said, as she sat in her garden-chair and talked of the surprise and happiness in store for the *Ridgevillians* when she issued cards for her garden party.

"I sha'n't slight nobody at all edible to society," she said, "for I don't believe in that. I shall have Miss Lucy Grey, of course, from Grey's Park, for she is the cream-dilly-cream of Allington, she and your Aunt, Miss McPherson," turning to Daisy, "and mebby I shall ask Hanner Jerrold, though she never goes anywheres—that's Grey's aunt," and now she nodded to Bessie, who at the mention of the name Jerrold, evinced a little interest in what the lady was saying.

Turning to Augusta, who was eating her strawberries and cream in silence, with a look of vexation on her face as her mother floundered on, she said:

"I think you told me you knew Mr. Grey Jerrold?"

"Yes," Augusta replied, "that is, he once spent a summer in Allington and I went to the same school with him; since then we have met several times in Allington and two or three times here. Still, I really know very little of him."

"Who's that you know very little of—Grey Jerrold?" Mrs. Browne chimed in. "Well, I call that droll. Have you forgot how often he used to come home from school with you, and how he fished you out of the pond that time you fell in? Why, he was that free at our house, that he used always to ask for something to eat, and would often add on, 'something baked to day.' You see, he didn't like dry victuals, such as his Aunt Hannah gave him. She is *tight* as the bark of a tree, and queer too, with it all."

It grated on Bessie's nerves to hear Mrs. Browne speak of Grey as if she were his equal, and recognized as such at home, and she was glad when Augusta said, quietly:

"But, mother, I was a little girl then, six or seven years old, and Grey felt at home at our house because—"

She did not finish the sentence, as she had evidently struck against a reef which her mother overleaped by saying:

"Yes, I know, Grey was always a nice boy, and not one bit stuck up like his proud mother. I hate Geraldine Grey; yes, I do!" and Mrs. Browne manifested the first sign of unamiability which Daisy had ever seen in her. But Daisy, who remembered perfectly the haughty woman she had met at Penrhyn Park years before, hated her, too, and so there was accord between her and her guest.

"Mr. Jerrold told me of his aunt who lives in the pasture, and whom he loves very much. Do you know her?" Bessie asked, and Mrs. Browne replied:

"Yes; that's his Aunt Hanner, the one I told you was so tight. She is an old maid, and queer, too; lives all alone, and saves and lays up every cent. I believe she wears the same black gown now for best which she wore thirteen years ago to her father's funeral. He was a queer one too; crazy, some said, and I guess 'twas true. He took a fancy to stay in one room all the time and would not let anybody in but Hanner, and now he is dead she keeps that room shet up and locked, some say. I was at the funeral, and Grey, who was a boy, took on awful, and hung over the coffin ever so long. He was sick with fever after it, and everybody thought he'd die. He was crazy as a loon. I watched with him one night and he talked every thing you could think of, about a grave hid away somewhere—under his bed, he seemed to think—and made me go down on all fours to look for it. I suppose he was thinking of his grandfather so lately buried. And then, he kept talking about *Bessie* and asking why she did not come."

"Bessie! Me!" the young girl exclaimed, with crimson cheeks, and Mrs. Browne replied:

"No; 'taint likely it was you; and yet, let me see! Yes, well, I declare; I remember now that his Aunt Lucy, who sat up with me, told me it was a little girl they had talked about before him, a grandniece of Miss Betsey McPherson. Yes, that was you, sure! Isn't it droll, though?"

Bessie did not reply, but in her heart there was a strange feeling as she thought that before she had ever heard of Grey Jerrold, he had been interested in and talked of her in his delirium and in his fevered dreams.

Soon after this, Mrs. Browne arose to go, and said good-by to Bessie, whom she did not expect to see again, as they were to leave on the morrow for Chester, where her husband and son were to meet them. It was Daisy's last day at home, and though she had been away many times for a longer period than it was now her intention to stay, this going was different, for the broad sea she was to cross would put an immense distance between her and her husband and child, and she was unusually quiet and gentle and affectionate, telling Bessie, who seemed greatly depressed, that the summer would pass quickly and she should be back to stay for good until the invalid was better or worse.

The next morning when she went to say good-by to her husband he welcomed her with a smile, and with something of his old, courteous manner put out his hand to greet her. She took it between her own, and raising it to her lips, knelt beside him, and laying her head against his arm, said to him, softly:

"Archie, I have come to say good-by, but only a little while. I shall soon be back to stay with you always, or until you are better."

"I shall never be any better," he replied, never suspecting how far she was going from him, "but go, if you like," he continued, "and be happy. I do not mind it as I used to, for I have Bessie and the birds, who sing to me now all the time. Can't you hear them? They are saying 'Archie, Archie, come,' as if it were my mother calling to me."

His mind was wandering now, and Daisy felt a thrill of pain as she looked at him and felt that he was not getting better, that he was failing fast, though just how fast she did not guess.

"Archie," she said, at last, "you love me, don't you? You told me you did in the garden the other day, but I want to hear it again."

"Love you? You?" he said, inquiringly, as he looked at her with an unsteady, imbecile gaze as if to ask who she was that he should love her.

"Yes," she said. "I am Daisy. Don't you remember the little girl who used to come to you under the yews?"

"Yes," and his lip trembled a little. "The girl who gave herself and her bonnet to shield me from the flies and sun. You did that then; but Bessie has given herself to me, body and soul, through cold and hunger, sunshine and storm. God bless her, God bless my darling Bessie."

"And won't you bless me, too, Archie? I should like to remember that in time to come," Daisy said, seized by some impulse she could not understand.

Archie hesitated a moment as if not quite comprehending her, then drawing her down to him he kissed her with the old, fervent kiss he used to give her when they were boy and girl together, and, laying his hand upon her head, said tremblingly:

"Will God bless Daisy, too, and bring her at last to where I shall be waiting for her?"

Then Daisy withdrew herself from him, and without another word went out from his presence and never saw him again. To Bessie, sobbing by the door, she said very little; there was a passionate embrace and a few farewell kisses and then she was gone, and twenty minutes later Bessie heard the train as it passed bearing her mother away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BIRDS WHICH SANG, AND THE SHADOW WHICH FELL.

Daisy wrote to her daughter from Liverpool where they were stopping at the Adelphi, and where Lord Hardy had joined them *en route* for America and the far West.

"He is not at all the *Ted* he used to be," Daisy wrote, "and it really seems as if he blames *me* because he has lost so much at Monte Carlo. In fact, he says if I had not smuggled him in, he should probably never have played there at all. I think I shall know it when I take another young Irishman in hand. By the way, he brought me news of the death of Sir Henry Trevellian, of Trevellian Castle, in the north of England He was thrown from his horse and killed instantly Jack Trevellian was with him, and, it is said, was nearly heart-broken, though by this accident he has

become Sir Jack, and is master of a fine old place and a tolerably fair fortune. He will be much sought after now, but if ever he comes in your way again, and you play your cards well you may be my Lady Trevellian. How does that sound to you?"

"Sir Jack Trevellian," Bessie repeated to herself, while there swept over her a great pity for the poor young man, smitten down so suddenly, while for Jack she was glad, knowing how well he would fill the place and how worthy he was of it.

Of herself, as Lady Bessie Trevellian she never thought, though there came to her a strong presentiment that she should see Jack again ere long—that he would come to tell her of his new honor, and would he just as kind and friendly and familiar as he was that day in the park when she first saw him more than two years ago.

Three days later and there came another short letter from her mother, written on shipboard and sent off at Queenstown. The sea had been very rough and the Brownes and Lord Hardy were sick in their state-rooms, as were many of the passengers, but Daisy had never felt better in her life and was enjoying herself immensely. She should cable as soon as she reached New York, and she bade Bessie keep up good courage, and sent her love and a kiss to Archie, who, if Bessie thought best, might now be told where she had gone.

Archie was sleeping very quietly when Bessie went into his room, taking her mother's letter with her. But there was a white pinched look upon his face which she had never seen there before, and it seemed to her that his breath was growing shorter and more labored, as she watched him with a beating heart until she could no longer endure the fear which had seized upon her, and stooping down, she called aloud:

"Father, father!"

Her voice awoke him, and lifting his eyes to her face, he smiled upon her the old, loving smile she knew so well and which reassured her a little.

"You have slept very sweetly, and you are better," she said to him, and he replied:

"No, Bessie, not better. I shall never be any better in this world. There is a weakness all over me this morning, and I cannot lift my hand to touch you—see?" and he tried to raise the thin, wasted hand lying so helplessly upon the counterpane.

Taking it in her own, Bessie felt that it was cold as ice, but she rubbed it gently, and said:

"It is only numb, I shall soon make it warm again."

"No, Bessie; never any more warmth for me. I know it now; the end is very near, and the birds are singing everywhere, just as they sang in the summer mornings years ago, when I was a boy. I used to lie on the grass under the yews, and listen to them, and think they were singing of my future, which I meant should be so bright. Oh, Bessie, everything has been so different; everything has changed but you and the birds, singing now to me of another future which *will* be bright and fair. What season is it, Bessie? My mind wanders a little. Is it summer again in the dear old rose-scented-garden?"

"Yes, father; summer everywhere," Bessie answered him with a choking sob, and he continued:

"I am glad. I would rather die in the summer time just as father and mother did. Bury me by them, Bessie; with no expense, and when Daisy dies lay her by me, too, in the grass where the birds are singing. She ought to be here now—to-day; send for her, Bessie; send at once, if a telegram can reach her."

Bessie must tell him now, and kissing his pale forehead, she said:

"A telegram cannot reach her, father, for she is on the sea, going to America."

"Gone to America! When she knew how sick I was. Oh, Daisy, Daisy, I would not have served you so," the sick man cried, with a bitter cry, which rang in Bessie's ears many a day, but did not reach the heartless woman at that very moment coquetting with the doctor of the ship, and tapping his arm playfully with her fan as she told him she had lost her appetite for everything but champagne, and asked what he would advise her to take.

"She was invited to go by some friends, who bear all the expense. She has long wished to see America, and it was such a good opportunity that she took it. She will not be gone long; only through the summer," Bessie said, trying to find excuse for her mother, but Archie shook his head, and replied:

"I shall not be here when she comes back; shall not be here to-morrow; and, oh, my child, what will you do? You cannot live here alone, and my annuity dies with me. Bessie, oh, Bessie, you will not pursue your mother's course?"

"Never! so help me Heaven!" Bessie answered, as she fell on her knees beside him, and bowed her face in her hands.

Surely in this extremity she might tell him of her engagement to Neil, and after a moment she said:

"Father, don't let a thought of my future trouble you. That is provided for. I am to be Neil's wife.

We settled that last Christmas, but he did not wish me to tell you till something definite was arranged. He meant you to live with us. We were not to be separated; he is very kind," she added, earnestly, as she felt her father's surprise and possible disapprobation in his silence.

"And you love him? You believe he will make you happy?" Archie said, at last, and Bessie replied:

"I love him; and I believe he will make me as happy as I can be with you gone. Oh, father, you don't like Neil! You never did."

There was reproach in Bessie's voice, as she said this, and the sick man answered her:

"There are many noble traits in Neil's character, but he is a McPherson, with all their foolish pride of birth, and blood, and ancestors. As if paupers like us have any right to such nonsense! Were I to live my life again, I would turn a hand-organ in the street to earn my bread if there were no other way. Yes, Neil is very nice and good, but not the husband I would have chosen for you. I liked the others better, Mr. Trevellian, and the American—what is his name?"

"Jerrold, Grey Jerrold," Bessie replied, and after a moment her father continued:

"Where is Neil? His place is here with you, if he is to be your husband. Send for him at once; there is no time to lose. You must not be alone, and the hours are very few, and the birds are singing so loud; send for Neil at once."

Bessie did not know where Neil was now, as the last time she heard from him he was in Paris, with his mother and Blanche; but she would take the chance that he was at home, and a telegram that her father was dying and he must come immediately was soon speeding along the wires to Trevellian House, in London.

Slowly the hours of that glorious summer day went by, and Archie's pulse grew fainter and his voice weaker, while the real birds without in the yews, and in the hedge-rows, and the imaginary birds within, sang louder and clearer, and the dying man listened to them with a rapt look in his white face, and a light in his eyes which told of peace and a perfectly painless death.

At last the day was ended, and the shades of night crept in and around the old gray house, while a darker shadow than any which night ever brings was in the sick-room where Archie lay, half unconscious, and talking, now of Daisy, now of Bessie, and now of Neil and asking if he had come. He had not nor any answer to the telegram, and Bessie's heart was very heavy and sad with a sense of desertion and terrible loneliness. How could she bear to be alone with her dead father, and only Anthony and Dorothy to counsel her? What should she do, and where was Neil, that he made no response to tell her he was coming? She did not consider that, even had he received the telegram, he could not reach Stoneleigh that night.

She did not realize anything except the dread and pain which weighed her down, as, with her father's hand in hers, she sat waiting for the end, while the old servants stole in and out noiselessly.

Suddenly, as she waited thus, she caught the sound of a footstep without, a quick footstep which seemed familiar to her, and with a cry of "Neil!" on her lips, she arose swiftly, and hastened to the outer door just as the tall form of a young man stood before the threshold.

Bessie's eyes were full of tears, and the lamp on the bracket rather blinded than helped her, and so she could not see the stranger distinctly; but it was Neil, of course—come in response to her summons; and with a great glad cry she sprang toward the young man, and clinging convulsively to him, sobbed out:

"Oh, Neil, Neil! I am so glad you have come, for father is dying, and I am all alone. It is so dreadful, and what shall I do? *Oh, oh*, it isn't Neil!" and she gave a little scream of terror and surprise, as, looking up, she met Grey Jerrold's face bending over her instead of Neil's.

Grey had been to Carnarvon on the old business, and, moved by a desire to see Bessie's blue eyes again, had come to the "George Hotel" to pass the night, intending to call at Stoneleigh in the morning. But hearing of Mr. McPherson's illness, he had decided to step over that night and inquire for him, and thus it was that he found himself in a very novel position, with Bessie sobbing in his arms, which had involuntarily opened to receive her when she made the rush toward him.

"No, it is not Neil," he said, trying to detain her as she drew herself from him. "It is Grey; but perhaps I can help you. I heard at the 'George' of your father's illness, and came at once. Is he so very bad?" And, leading her to a sofa and sitting down beside her, he continued: "Tell me all your trouble, please, and what I can do for you."

Grey's voice was very low and soft, and had in it all the tenderness and gentleness of a sympathizing woman, and it touched Bessie as Neil's words of love could not have touched her had he been there beside her. Bursting into a fresh fit of sobbing, she told Grey of her father's serious illness, and her loneliness and desolation, and how glad she was he had come.

"I telegraphed to Neil," she said, "and thought you were he, though it is not time for him to be here, even if he received the telegram. Perhaps he is not in London: do you know?"

Grey did not know, as he had not heard from Neil in some time; but he comforted Bessie as well as he could, and said he hoped her father might yet recover.

"No, he cannot," Bessie replied. "He will soon be dead, and I shall be alone, all alone; for mother has gone to America with a Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, who lives in or near Allington? You know her, I believe," and Bessie looked up in time to see the look of surprise and the half-amused smile which flitted over Grey's face as he replied:

"Mrs. Rossiter-Browne? Oh, yes, I know her. I have always known her. She is a good, kind-hearted woman, and your mother is safe with her."

Bessie felt intuitively that Grey was keeping something back, which he might have told her, but she respected him far more for speaking kindly of Mrs. Rossiter-Browne than she would have done, if he had said, as he might have done: "Oh, Yes, I know Mrs. Rossiter-Browne. She was for years my Aunt Lucy's hired girl, Angeline Peters, who married Isaac Brown, the hired man, and became plain Mrs. Ike Brown, until some lucky speculation turned the tide and gave them immense wealth, when she blossomed out into a fine lady, and, dropping the *Ike*, adopted her husband's middle name, *Rossiter*, with a hyphen to heighten the effect, and so became Mrs. Rossiter-Browne."

All this Bessie learned afterward, but now she was too full of grief to care what Mrs. Rossiter-Browne had been, or what she was. All her thoughts were with her father, whose weak voice was soon heard calling to her:

"Bessie, are you here?"

"Yes, father," she said, going quickly into the sick-room, followed by Grey, who saw in Archie's face the look which comes once, and but once, to all, and knew that his life was numbered by hours, if not, indeed, by minutes.

"Bessie," the sick man said, as she bent over him "has he come? I heard some one speaking to you."

"Neil has not come; it is not time. It is Mr. Jerrold who is here. He was with us last Christmas, you remember."

"Yes," Mr. McPherson replied, "the American; I remember. I liked him very much. I wish it were he rather than Neil."

Grey looked curiously at Bessie, who knew what her father meant and that his mind was wandering. After a few moments, during which Archie appeared to be sleeping, he started suddenly and seemed to listen intently. Then he said:

"The birds have stopped singing, but I hear other music; the songs of the redeemed, and my mother is there by the gate waiting for me, just as I shall wait one day for you, my child. Give me your hand, Bessie, I want to feel that you are with me to the last."

She put her hand in his, and Grey noticed with a pang how small and thin it was and brown, too, with toil. Some such thought must have been in Archie's mind, for, pressing the fingers to his lips, he continued:

"Poor little tired hands, which have done so much for me. May they have rest by and by. Oh, Bessie, darling, God bless you, the dearest, sweetest daughter a man ever had. Be kind to her, young man. I leave her in your charge; there is no one else to care for her. Good-by; God bless you both."

He did not speak after that, though he lingered for some hours, his breath growing fainter, and fainter until, just as the summer morning was stealing into the room, old Anthony, who, with his wife, had been watching by him, said, in a whisper:

"God help us; the master is dead!"

Bessie uttered no sound, but over her face there crept such a pallor and look of woe that Grey involuntarily passed his arm around her and said:

"Let me take you into the air."

She did not resist him, but suffered him to lead her into the garden, which was sweet with the perfume of roses and cool with the fresh morning dew, and where the birds were singing in the old yew trees as blithely and merrily as if no young heart were breaking in their midst. In a large rustic-chair, where Archie had often sat, Grey made Bessie sit down, and when he saw her shiver as if with cold, he left her a moment while he went to the house for a shawl and a glass of wine, and some eau-de-cologne, which he brought to her himself. Wrapping the shawl around her as deftly as a woman could have done, he made her taste the wine, and dipping her handkerchief in the cologne bathed her forehead with it and pushed back a few locks of her wavy hair, which had fallen over her face. And all the time he did not speak until Bessie said to him:

"Thank you, Mr. Jerrold. You are so kind. I am glad you are here. What should I do without you, and what shall I do anyway? What must I do?"

"Leave it all to me," he answered her. "Don't give the matter a thought, but try and rest; and when you feel that you can, I will take you back to the house."

"No, no," she said quickly. "Let me stay here in the sunshine with the birds who used to sing to him. It seems as if he were here with me."

So he brought her a pillow for her head, and a hassock for her feet, and wrapped her shawl more closely around her, and made her taste the wine again. Then he went back to the house and consulted Anthony and Dorothy with regard to what was to be done. The funeral was fixed for the fourth day, and Grey telegraphed to London, with instructions, that if the family were not in town the message should be forwarded to them immediately. Then he cabled to Daisy, ship Celtic, New York, and lest by any chance she should miss the news at the wharf he asked that a dispatch be sent to her at Allington, Mass., care of Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, who, he knew, would in all probability go at once to her country home.

"Mrs. McPherson can return or remain where she is. I have done my duty to her," he thought, as he busied himself with the many details it was necessary to see to. "If Neil were only here," was his constant thought, as the day wore on, and he found himself in the rather awkward position of master of ceremonies in a strange house, deferred to and advised with not only by Anthony and Dorothy, but by all the people who came to assist.

But Neil did not come, and the night came and went, and it was morning again, and Bessie, who had passed the most of the preceding day in the garden, and had only returned to the house late in the afternoon, seemed a little brighter and fresher, with a look of expectancy in her face whenever a train dashed by. She was watching for Neil, and when at about four o'clock a carriage came through the park gates, she rose and went swiftly to the door, meeting not Neil, but Jack Trevellian, whose face and manner told plainly how great was his sympathy with the desolate young girl. He was in London, he said, and chanced to be calling at the Trevellian house where he learned that all the family, Neil included, were at Vichy, where Lady Jane had gone for the waters and bathing. Just as he was leaving, Grey's telegram was received, and the housekeeper, Mrs. Jervis, told him that another telegram had come two days before for Mr. Neil, from Stoneleigh.

"I did not open it," she said, "as did not suppose it of any consequence. He often has despatches, and as I expect him home within a week or ten days I put it on the table in the hall. You will find it there," she continued, as she saw Jack unceremoniously tear open the envelope just received, and heard his cry of surprise.

Then, quick as thought, he read the first telegram from Bessie, telling of her father's illness and asking Neil to come at once.

"Poor little Bessie, alone with her dead father," he said, and his heart throbbed with a great pity for the girl who, he supposed, was alone, for Grey had not signed his own but Bessie's name to the message he had sent.

In an instant Jack's resolution was taken, and he acted upon it at once. The telegram was forwarded to Vichy, together with the fact that he was going immediately to Stoneleigh, where he would await any orders they chose to send. Then he took the first train for Wales, and reached Bangor about three o'clock the next day. All this he explained after expressing his surprise at finding Grey there, and saying to him, good-humoredly:

"You always manage to get ahead of me. If I ever get to heaven I do believe I shall find you there before me."

"I hope so," Grey answered, laughingly, and then added: "We ought to have heard from Vichy before this time, if they received your message yesterday."

"That's so," Jack replied, adding after a moment: "It may be waiting for me at the 'George.' They would naturally direct it there."

And on sending to inquire if there was anything for him at the hotel, there was brought to him an envelope directed to "Sir Jack Trevellian," received that morning, the bar-maid said. Breaking the seal, Jack read aloud:

> "VICHY, July ——, 18—.
>
> "To Sir Jack Trevellian, George Hotel, Bangor, Wales:
>
> "It is impossible for me to come. Will write Bessie soon. Please see that everything is done decently, and send bill to me.
>
> "JOHN McPHERSON."

Nothing could have been colder or more matter of fact, and Bessie's cheeks were scarlet as she listened, while Grey involuntarily gave a low whistle, and turning on his heel, walked away, and Jack tore the paper in shreds, which he threw into the empty grate. Then he looked at Bessie, whose face was now very white and quivering with pain and disappointment. Jack's first impulse was to denounce Mr. McPherson for his selfishness and neglect, but his kinder nature prevailed, and he said, apologetically:

"It is a long way from Vichy here, and the weather is very hot. But never mind. Grey and I will do all we can, and both Mr. McPherson and Lady Jane will surely come to you later."

"It is not that. I don't know what it is, only it is dreadful to be without one of your own kindred at such a time as this. Surely Neil might come or write," Bessie said, with such pathos in her voice that Jack looked sharply at her, thinking to himself:

"Is it possible she cares for him more than as a cousin? Doesn't she know Neil is the last one to inconvenience himself, if he can help it? Funerals are not to his taste."

But he did not give expression to his thoughts; he said, instead:

"Perhaps Neil is not there. I hardly think he is, as he does not like Vichy. You will hear from him soon no doubt. I am sorry for your sake that none of your relatives are here. But don't distress yourself. Grey and I will do everything."

"I know you will," she said; "but, Mr. Trevellian," and she laid her hand upon his arm, "you will not send that bill to Neil's father? I have over forty pounds. I can pay it myself. You will not send it?"

"Never!" Jack answered, emphatically, and then he went out to consult with Grey, who was sitting in the porch staring hard at an iron post which Jack began to kick vigorously, as he said: "Well, Jerrold, we are in for it, you and I; and we will see it through in shape. The old curmudgeon! He might come as well as not if he chose. There is plenty of time to get here, and he knows her mother is gone, for I added that to the dispatch I sent, so as to insure his coming. And where is Neil, the milksop? He, at least, might come. I have no patience with the whole tribe. But we will do what we can for the poor little forsaken girl."

"Yes," Grey answered him. "We will do what we can."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT GREY AND JACK DID.

They did everything that it was possible for two men to do under the circumstances. They filled the old house with flowers, until it seemed like one great garden of bloom, and the coffin they ordered would hardly have shamed a duke, while the undertaker had orders to send Bessie only a very small part of the real cost of the funeral. The rest they were to pay between them, though Jack at first insisted upon paying the whole. But in this Grey overruled him, and they agreed to share the expense equally. Nothing could be kinder or more deferential than their demeanor toward Bessie, who, wholly overcome with grief and fatigue, lay perfectly quiet in her room, and let them do what they liked, she was so weary and worn, and it was so good to be cared for; but on the day of the funeral she roused herself, and insisted upon going to the grave and seeing her father buried; so, with Grey and Jack on either side she walked through the yew-shaded garden to the small inclosure which was the family burying-place, and was so full of the McPhersons that after Archie's grave, there was only room for one more between him and the wall, and both Grey and Jack noticed this as they stood there and wondered if it would be Bessie or Daisy who some day would be brought there and laid in her last bed.

"Not Bessie," Grey thought, and there arose before him a beautiful spot far over the sea, where the headstones gleamed white in the sunlight, and the grass was like velvet to the touch, and flowers were blooming in gay parterres and the birds were singing all day long over Mount Auburn's dead.

And "not Bessie," Jack thought, as he, too, remembered a quiet spot away to the north of England, where the tall monuments bore the name of Trevellian, and where his race were buried.

The services over at the grave, they went back to the house, and in the evening Grey said good-by, for on the morrow he was due at Liverpool to meet his Aunt Lucy, who was coming abroad to spend a year with him in travel.

"I shall see you again before I go to America, and it possible will bring my Aunt Lucy with me," he said to her, when at parting he stood a few moments with her small, thin hand in his, while he spoke a few words to her of Him who can heal all pain and cure the sorest heart sorrow, because he has felt it all.

Grey's piety, which was genuine, did not so often manifest itself in words as in deeds, but he felt constrained to speak to Bessie, whose tears fell like rain as she listened to him, and who felt when he was gone a greater sense of loneliness than before, even though Jack was left to her; Jack, who tried so hard to soothe her, and who was tender and thoughtful as a brother, and gave no sign to her of the volcano raging within when he thought of the Hon. John and Neil, neither of whom sent a word to the stricken girl waiting so anxiously for news from them. But he wrote to them both. To the Hon. John, he said:

> "DEAR SIR:—Mr. Grey Jerrold and myself saw your nephew buried *decently* as you suggested, but there is no bill to send you, as Miss Bessie would not allow it. I am sorry you did not find it convenient to come to the funeral. The presence of some one of her family would have been such a comfort to Miss Bessie, who, in that respect, was quite alone, though I may say that hundreds of people attended the funeral, and had the deceased been the eldest son of an earl, instead of your nephew, more respect could not have been paid him. I must leave here to-morrow for Trevellian Castle, and then Miss Bessie will be quite alone, but I dare say you

and Lady Jane will soon arrive to take charge of her.

"Respectfully,

"JACK TREVELLIAN."

"That will settle him," Jack thought, and taking a fresh sheet, he commenced a letter to Neil, which ran as follows:

"STONELEIGH, July ——.

"OLD BOY; Where in the name of wonder are you, that you neither come, nor write, nor answer telegrams, nor pay any more attention to your Cousin Bessie than if she were not your cousin, and you had never been pretty far gone in regard to her and afraid a chap like me would look at her! Don't you know her mother is on the sea, going to America, sick as a horse, I hope, as she ought to be, and that her father is dead and buried, and not a soul of her kin here to comfort her? But she was not deserted, I assure you, and I call it a dispensation of Providence which sent Grey Jerrold here the night before Mr. McPherson died, and a second dispensation which sent me here the day after. I never pitied anybody in my life as I did the little, tired out, girl, who stood between Jerrold and myself at the grave. And now, the day after the funeral, she is white as a piece of paper and seems as limp and exhausted, as if all the muscle were gone from her. Poor little Bessie! Foolish Bessie, too, to make the moan she does for some of her relatives to be here —for you, old chap, for I heard her say, 'Oh, if Neil were here.' By Jove! if I'd had you by the nape of the neck, I'd have shaken you into shoestrings, for I know well what you are at—saying soft speeches to Blanche as if that were not settled long ago. But no matter, Bessie will not need attention from her relatives much longer if I can have my way. I do not mind telling *you* that I intend to make her Lady Trevellian, if she will be that. But meantime your mother ought to take her in charge and not leave her here alone. The thing is impossible, and I have no idea that butterfly of a Daisy will come back at once. I shall not ask Bessie *now* to be my wife, but in a week or two, I shall do so, and will then report success. I think Jerrold is hard hit, too; but I mean to get the start of him. I need not tell you that, notwithstanding I am so disgusted with you, I shall be glad to see you at Trevellian Castle whenever you choose to come. I cannot get accustomed to my change of fortune, and I am so sorry poor Hal is dead.

"Yours truly, JACK."

The next day Jack left Stoneleigh, as it was necessary for him to be at the castle, he said, alluding for the first time to his new home.

"Yes," Bessie replied, looking up at him with the first smile he had seen upon her face since her father died, "you are *Sir Jack* now. I had scarcely thought of it before, or remembered to give you your title."

"Don't remember it now," he said, with a look of deep pain in his eyes and a tremor in his voice, "Believe me, I'd give worlds to bring poor Hal back to life again, and you do not know what anguish I endured during the few moments I held him in my arms and knew that he was dying. Just an instant before and he had bandied some light jest with me, and I had thought how handsome he was with that bright, winning smile, which death froze so soon upon his lips. It was awful, and the castle seems to be so gloomy without him."

"Is that young girl there still?" Bessie asked, and he replied:

"Yes, Flossie Meredith, the sweetest, prettiest little wild Irish girl you ever saw; but she cannot stay, you know."

"Why not?" Bessie asked, and he replied.

"Mrs. Grundy will not let her live there alone with me. Hal was her cousin, but I am no kin to her, and so she must go back to Ireland, which she hates, unless—Bessie," he cried, impulsively, then checked himself as he saw the startled look in her eyes, and added, quite calmly: "You and Flossie would be the best of friends, and would suit each other exactly. You are so quiet, she so wild and frolicsome. Let me bring her to see you this summer."

"I am sure I should be so glad if you would," Bessie said, and then Jack went away, promising to write her from London, whither he was first going.

And in a few days his letter came, saying he had learned that Neil had gone to Moscow with a party, and so his silence and absence were explained.

"I wrote him a savage letter," he said, "and shall have to apologize for it when I see him, I dare say you will hear from him ere long. Remember, I am coming again to Stoneleigh very soon.

"Always your friend,

"JACK TREVELLIAN."

Bessie's heart beat rapidly as she read this letter, and comprehended its meaning; but she was

true to Neil and waited patiently for the letter she knew was sure to come as soon as he heard of her trouble.

Two weeks went by, and then one lovely July day Jack came again, and sitting with her on the bench in the garden where her father once sat and made love to Daisy, he told her first of his home with its wide-spreading pastures, its lovely views, its terraces and banks of flowers, and of Irish Flossie, who cried so hard because she must give up this home and go back to her old house by the wild Irish sea, with only a cross grandmother for company.

"And so, Bessie," he said, "I have come to ask you to be my wife, and make both Flossie and myself the happiest people in England. It is too soon after your father's death to speak of love and marriage, perhaps; but under the circumstances I trust you will forgive me, and believe it is no hasty step with me. I think I have loved you since the day I first saw you in the park and looked into your bright face, the fairest and truest I ever saw. Flossie is beautiful and sweet and good, and makes one think of a playful kitten, which you wish to capture and caress awhile and then release before you get a spit and scratch; but you, Bessie, are my ideal of a woman, and I could make you so happy. Think what it would be to have no care or thought for the morrow, to do nothing but rest, and you need it so much. You are so tired and worn, and up there among the hills you would grow strong, and I would surround you with every comfort and make you a very queen. Will you come, Bessie? Will you be my wife? and when I ask *you* to share my home I do not mean to exclude your mother. She shall be welcome there for your sake, and we will try to make her so happy that she will stay with us, or live here if she chooses, and give up her wandering life. Dear Bessie, answer me. Can you not like me a little?"

As he talked Bessie had covered her face with her hands, and he could see the great tears dropping through her fingers.

"Don't cry, darling," he said, winding his arm around her and trying to draw her to him. "Don't cry, but answer me; don't you like me a little?"

"Yes, a great deal, but not that way. I think you one of the noblest, best of men, and always have thought so since I first knew you, and you were so kind to father and me; but I cannot be your wife."

"Oh, Bessie, don't say that," Jack cried, with such bitter pain in his voice that Bessie looked quickly up at him, and asked wonderingly:

"Do you then care so much for me?"

"Care for you!" he exclaimed. "Never man cared for or loved another better than I love and care for you I have staked my all upon you. I cannot give you up. Trevellian Castle will have no charm for me if you are not its mistress. I want you there; we need you there, Flossie and I. Ah! I had forgotten *this*," and taking a letter from his pocket he handed it to Bessie, saying: "It is from Flossie. She knew of my errand here and wished to send a message. I do not know what she has written, but read it, please. She may be more successful than I have been."

Opening the letter, which was written in a bold, dashing, schoolgirl hand, Bessie read as follows:

> "Trevellian Castle, July ——.
>
> "DEAR DARLING BESSIE:—I must call you that, though I have never seen you, but I have heard so much of you from Sir Jack that I feel as if I knew you, and very soon I hope to see you face to face, for you *are* coming here as Lady Jack, and so save me from that horrid, pokey place on the Irish coast, where I never can be happy, never. I do so want to stay at the castle, but Madam Propriety says it would not be proper. I hate proper things, don't you? and I do love the castle! Such a grand old place, with lovely views from every window. Acres of green sward, smooth as satin, with shade trees here and there, and banks, and borders, and beds of flowers, and from the room I have selected as your sitting-room you can see a broad, grassy avenue nearly a mile long, with the branches of the trees which skirt it meeting overhead. Every day I gallop down that avenue, which they call by my name, on Midnight, my black horse, and I always clear the gate at a bound. I like such things, and there is not a fence or a ditch in the neighborhood which I cannot take. Hoidenish, do you call me? Well, perhaps I am, but I am a pretty nice girl, too, and I love you and want you to come here at once and be happy. Sir Jack has told me how different your life has been from mine, and how tired and worn you are; but here you shall never know weariness again. Your life shall be one long rest, in the loveliest place you ever saw, and we will all care for you so tenderly, and bring the roses back to the dear face Sir Jack says is now so pale. I am seventeen, and not a mere child, though I am not much larger than your thumb, and I can be your companion and friend, if you will only come. You must love Sir Jack. You cannot help loving him when you know how good he is! Why, if I tried real hard I could love him myself! But he looks upon me as a child, though he does not play with and tease me as Cousin Harry did. Poor Hal! There is such a pain in my heart when I think of him so strong and full of fun in the morning, and then dead before noon. Oh, Hal. Hal! My tears are falling fast for him, and I am so lonely without him. Come to me, Bessie, and you shall never have a more devoted friend than little

"FLORENCE MEREDITH."

There were tears in Bessie's eyes when she finished this letter, which told her something of the warm, loving nature of the impulsive Irish Flossie, whom she knew she could love so much, while the perfect rest promised her at Trevellian Castle looked so very pleasant to her and she was so tired, oh, so tired in mind and body, that it seemed to her she could gladly lie down in some quiet spot and die, if only thus she could rest. And Jack had offered her rest and happiness and luxury with him, but she must not take it, must not consider it for a moment. She was promised to Neil. She would be true to Neil, even though he neither wrote nor came. She had loved him always, and tired as she was, she was ready to take up life's work again and battle and toil for him, if need be. And when Jack said to her, "You will be my wife, Bessie?" she answered him, sadly, "No, I cannot. I might learn to love you in time, if I could forget the past—forget that I love another, am promised to another."

"Love another! Promised to another! Not Grey Jerrold?" Jack exclaimed, and Bessie answered him:

"No, not Mr. Jerrold. He never thought of me that way. It surely cannot be wrong to tell you now, though I am pledged to secrecy for awhile. I told father just before he died, I am plighted to my Cousin Neil, and we are only waiting for him to find something to do, or his mother to be reconciled to me, to be married."

"Plighted to Neil! To Neil McPherson! *You*!" Jack exclaimed, and for a moment his cheek grew pale and then flushed with resentment, as he thought of this fair young girl being thus sacrificed to one who, he knew, was not worthy of her.

Jack was fond of Neil in a certain way, but he knew him thoroughly and knew that supreme selfishness was his ruling principle, and that Bessie's life with him would be quite as hard as it had been with her father; besides this, he could not reconcile this engagement with the fact that he knew Neil to be very attentive to Blanche Trevellian, to whom current rumor said he was certainly engaged. Hence, his astonishment, which Bessie was quick to detect, for she answered him a little proudly:

"Yes, I! Do you think it so very strange that Neil should have chosen me?"

"No, Bessie," he replied; "but strange that you should have chosen him. I cannot help it, Bessie, and I do not mean to be disloyal to Neil, when I say that he will not make you happy, and further, that you will never marry him. I am sure of it, and knowing that *he* only stands in my way, I can still hope for the future, and when you are free, remember I shall come again. Good-by, Bessie, and forgive me if I have wounded you. In my bitter disappointment I spoke out what I thought. I must go now, and with a heavy heart, Flossie will be so disappointed, too."

He had risen as he spoke, and offered her his hand, which she took, and lifting her eyes full of tears to his face, she said:

"I have faith in Neil; if I had not, I believe I should die. He cannot help his mother's pride and opposition to our marriage. He is true to me through all, and he will come to me as soon as he knows of my trouble, I am sorry for you, Mr. Trevellian, if you really care for me, but you will get over that feeling and be again my friend. I do not wish to lose you, I have so few friends, oh, so few. I am sorry too, for Flossie, and interested in her. Mr. Trevellian, why don't *you* marry Flossie yourself and so keep her at the castle?"

"*I* marry Flossie! That child!" Jack exclaimed, staring blankly at Bessie, who smiled faintly and said:

"She is seventeen; I am eighteen, and yet you sought me!"

"Yes, I know," Jack rejoined, "but there is a vast difference between you and Flossie; she is so small and she seems so young. I did not suppose she was seventeen. I have always looked upon her as a mere child to pet and not as a woman to marry."

"Then look upon her in that light now," Bessie said, but Jack only shook his head as he replied:

"I have loved you, Bessie. I shall never love another. Farewell, and God bless you."

Stooping over her, he kissed her forehead, and then walked rapidly away with her question occasionally ringing in his ears and stirring new and strange thoughts in his heart where the pain was still so heavy.

"Why don't you marry Flossie?"

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT THE McPHERSONS DID.

They did just as little as they could, at least that portion of the family which was at Vichy when the news of Archie's death was received there. This portion comprised the Hon. John and Lady

Jane, for Neil had already started for Moscow with Blanche and a few other young people.

"How very inconvenient that he should die just now when we are so far from Wales. It is quite impossible for you to undertake the long journey in this hot weather; and what good could you do if you were there? You could not pretend to be sorry, and we are not able to do much for the girl; Neil's trip will take all our spare cash," Lady Jane said, as she read the telegram received from Jack, and that decided her better-half at once.

If Lady Jane said he could not go, he could not, but something of his better nature prompted him to say that he would pay the funeral expenses. This, however, he kept from his wife, who, dismissing Stoneleigh from her mind, resumed her daily routine of duties—baths at seven, music in the park at eight, breakfast at ten, gossip till one, sleeping till three, driving at four, dressing for dinner, dining at six, and going to the casino in the evening. This was her life, while the Hon. John bathed, and smoked, and read the newspapers, and called it all a confounded bore, and wished himself at home, and thought not unfrequently of Stoneleigh and what was to become of Bessie.

Meantime Neil was enjoying himself immensely. His mother had given him plenty of money, and his companions and surroundings were most agreeable to him. And still, he never for a moment swerved in his heart from Bessie; that is, he never harbored the thought that she would not one day be his wife, and he still hugged the delusion that he preferred poverty with her to riches with any other woman in all the world. But until the time arrived when he must take her and poverty, he surely might enjoy himself, and he was doing so to the best of his ability when Jack's letter came, informing him of Archie's death and of his intention to make Bessie his wife if she would have him.

Then Neil roused himself, and, telling his party what had happened, said he must start for Stoneleigh at once. Mr. McPherson was dead, and his Cousin Bessie was alone, and it was his duty to go to her; and in spite of Blanche's entreaties and his friends' protestations against it, he started immediately, and, travelling day and night, reached Stoneleigh on the afternoon of the day of Jack's departure.

With a cry of glad surprise, Bessie threw herself into his arms, and wept as she had not done since her father died.

"Oh, Neil," she sobbed, "I am so glad, I have wanted you so much, and been so wretched because you neither wrote nor came."

"But I did write you, darling, before I left Vichy, and the letter must have gone astray," he said, "and then the moment I got Jack's letter I started and came to you. Don't cry, Bessie; it hurts me to see you feel so badly. Try and be quiet, and tell me all about it, and what Grey Jerrold and Jack did and said. They were both here, I understand, and both in love with you."

Neil spoke a little sharply now, and Bessie looked inquiringly at him, as, drawing her to a seat, he sat down beside her, and with his arm around her and her head upon his breast he went on:

"Jack wrote me all about it—that he believed Grey pretty far gone, but that *he* should get the start and ask you to be Lady Trevellian, and I believe he will do it, too; and if he does I hope you will put him down effectually, but don't for Heaven's sake, tell him of our engagement. That must be our secret awhile longer. I cannot meet mother's disapproval just yet. Do you believe, that horrid old aunt in America wrote asking me to come out there and oversee the hands in a cotton mill. Niggers, I dare say, as I believe they are mostly that in Massachusetts, are they not?"

Bessie did not reply to this, but said to him, quietly:

"Mr. Trevellian asked me to be his wife—here—this morning, and I told him no, and that I was plighted to you."

"Oh, Bessie, how could you have been so indiscreet. Now the news must reach mother, and my life will be a burden to me," Neil exclaimed, with so much severity in his tone that Bessie shrank a little from him as she replied:

"I had to tell him, Neil. There was no other way to make him believe I meant it, he was so much in earnest. He will not repeat it. He has too much honor in his nature for that. He is one of the best and noblest men I ever knew."

Bessie was very earnest in her defense of Jack, and Neil grew angry at once.

"Maybe you prefer him to me?" he said. "By Jove, I do not blame you if it is so. You'd better be Lady Trevellian, with plenty of money, than plain Mrs. Neil McPherson, not knowing where I the next meal is to come from. Say the word and I will set you free, though it breaks my heart to do it."

No wonder if Bessie felt that Neil's presence was productive of more pain than pleasure, or if for a moment she felt keenly the contrast between his manner and Jack's. But Neil's mood soon changed, and winding his arm around her, and kissing her fondly, he called himself a brute and a savage to wound her so, and talked of their future, when he could be always with her, and worked himself up to the point of proposing marriage at once—a private marriage, of course, which must be kept secret for an indefinite length of time, during which she would live at Stoneleigh, and he would visit her often. But Bessie shrank from this proposal, and when Neil

asked what she was to do there alone, she answered that she could do very well until her mother came, and then they would manage together somehow on the little there was left, and if nothing better offered she could go out as governess to small children. But this plan Neil repudiated with scorn. His wife must never be a governess, never earn her own bread! The idea was preposterous; and then he talked of the bright future before them if they waited patiently, and how happy he would make her; and in the morning he left her and went back to London, and she was alone again, and looking anxiously forward to news from her mother, and the day after Neil left a letter came from Daisy with the blackest and deepest of borders, and Bessie opened it eagerly to learn where she was, and when she was coming home.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT DAISY DID.

She flirted with every man on the ship who would flirt with her. Even Allen Browne was not insensible to her charms. During the last few months he had developed amazingly, and had put on all the airs of a first-class dandy. He parted his hair in the middle, carried an eye-glass and a cane, wore a long overcoat, and pants so tight that it was a matter of speculation with his friends how he ever got into them, or being in, how he ever got out! His last purchase in London had been a pair of pointed shoes, which were just coming into vogue, as was the species of the male gender called "dudes."

"A dudle I call 'em, and think 'em too shaller for, anything," was Mrs. Rossiter-Browne's comment, and she looked a little askance at her son, wondering how he would impress the Ridgevillians at home, and especially what Miss Boughton would think of him. "I wouldn't make a 'tarnel fool of myself if 'twas the fashion," she said to him when the pointed toes appeared.

But Allen had his own ideas, and, encouraged by Daisy, who, though wonderfully amused at his appearance, told him he was "*tout-a-fait parisien*," he followed his own inclinations, and, arrayed in all his finery, made himself the laughing-stock of the passengers. But he did not care so long as Daisy smiled upon him, and allowed him to attend her. He walked with her on deck and brought her chair for her, and her shawl, and rug, and wrapped her feet carefully, and held the umbrella over her head to screen her from the wind, and hovered over her constantly, leaving his mother to stagger, or rather crawl up the stairs as best she could, with her rug, and shawl, and waterproof, and saw her umbrella turned inside out, and carried out to sea, without offering her any assistance, even when, as she expressed it, she was "sick enough to die."

Augusta did not need his attentions, for Lord Hardy devoted himself to her, and nothing which Daisy could do availed to lure him from her side. Once when Allen said to her that "Hardy seemed pretty hard hit with Gus," her lip curled scornfully, but she dared not express her real feelings and say how little the Irish lord cared for the girl herself. She must not offend the Rossiter-Brownes, and she smiled sweetly upon her rival, and called her "Gussie dear," and flattered Mrs. Browne, and made eyes at Mr. Browne, and asked him to *bet* for her in the smoking-room, where he spent most of his time with a set of men who are always there, smoking, drinking, joking, and betting upon the daily speed of the ship, or any other trivial thing to pass away the time. So, while his son flirted with the fair lady on deck, Mr. Browne bet for her in the smoking-room with so good success, that when the losses and gains were footed up she found herself richer by one hundred and fifty dollars than when she left Liverpool. Mrs. Browne did not believe in betting. It was as bad as gambling, she said. And Daisy admitted it, but said, with, tears in her eyes, that it would do so much good to Bessie and her sick husband, to whom she should send every farthing as soon as she reached New York.

The voyage had been unusually long, but this was their last day out. New York was in sight, and in her most becoming attire Daisy stood upon the deck, looking eagerly at the, to her, new world, and wholly unconscious of the shock awaiting her on the shore which they were slowly nearing. At last the ship reached the dock, the plank was thrown out, and a throng of passengers crowed the gangway.

"Is Mrs. Archibald McPherson on board?" was shouted through the ship, and in a flutter of expectation Daisy went forward, announcing herself as the lady in question. "A telegram has been waiting for you more than a week," was the response, as the officer placed in her hand the yellow missive whose purport he knew.

"A message for me! Where could it have come from, I wonder," Daisy said, as, without a suspicion of the truth, she broke the seal and read:

> "STONELEIGH, June ——.
>
> "Your husband died this morning, quietly and peacefully. Bessie well, but very tired.
>
> "GREY JERROLD."

"Oh-h! Archie, my husband!" Daisy cried, bitterly as she sank down into a chair and covered her face with her hands, while over her for a moment there swept a great wave of regret for the man

she had loved in the days when she was innocent and young, and not the hard, selfish woman of the world that she was now. "Archie is dead, dead!" she moaned, as the Rossiter-Brownes gathered around her, together with Lord Hardy, who took the telegram from her and read it aloud, while he, too, experienced a throb of pain for the man he had known so long and esteemed so highly, even while he despised him for his weakness in suffering his wife to lead the life she had.

How vividly it all came back to him—the day when he first saw Archibald McPherson, the fair English boy, for he was scarcely more than that, with his young girl-wife, so innocent and lovely then. And she was lovely still and he pitied her, for he believed her grief genuine, mingled as it must be with remorse for the past, and laying his hand on her bowed head, he said to her, kindly:

"I am very sorry for you, and if I can do anything for you, do not hesitate to command me."

Alas for poor weak human nature when perverted from its better side! The sound of Teddy's voice, so different from what it had been before during the voyage, awoke a throb in Daisy's heart, which she would not like to have confessed to those around her. She was free now, and who knew that she might not one day be mistress of that handsome place in Ireland, Lord Hardy's home, if she only played her cards well. Surely that low-born Yankee girl, Augusta Browne, could never be her rival, even if she had money. Such was the thought which flashed like lightning through Daisy's mind as she felt the touch of Lord Hardy's hand and heard his sympathetic voice.

Her first impulse, when she read the telegram, had been that she must go back to Bessie in the first ship which sailed, but now her decision was reversed. Archie was dead and buried. She could do no good to him, and she might as well stay a little while, especially as she knew Lord Hardy had accepted Mrs. Browne's invitation to spend a few days with them at the Ridge House. It would never do to abandon the field to Augusta, she reflected, but her tears flowed just as fast, and, to do her justice, there was a sense of bitter pain in her heart, as she sat with her head bowed down, while the Brownes and Lord Hardy stood around trying to comfort her. Mrs. Browne offered her sal-volatile and called her "my poor dear;" Augusta put her arms around her neck; Allen fanned her gently, and Lord Hardy asked what he could do, while Mr. Browne said it was "plaguey hard on her, but somebody must go and see to them confounded custom-house chaps, or they would have every dud out of the ten trunks, and there'd be a pretty how-d'ye-do."

Thus reminded of what had been a terror to her all the voyage, Mrs. Browne suggested that Daisy should leave the ship and sit on the wharf with "Gusty to attend to her, while she helped her husband pull through."

It was in vain that Mr. Browne protested against any help, telling his better-half to mind her business, and saying that she'd only upset everything with her fussiness and red face. But Mrs. Browne would not listen. She was not going to let him lie. She had given him numerous lectures on that point during the voyage, and had always ended them with the assertion that she wouldn't pay duty either! Just what she meant to do she did not know, but she went with her husband to the field of combat, and was soon hotly engaged with three officers, who, seeing her nervousness and hearing her excited voice, scented mischief, of course, and notwithstanding that she declared she was Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, of Ridgeville, a church member in good standing, and asked if they thought she would do a thing she believed was wrong, they answered that her idea of wrong and theirs might not agree, and they went to the bottom of her largest trunk, and found the silk dress she had bought for her friend, Mrs. Boughton, who had told her "to get one *worth* four dollars a yard, but not to give over two, and on no account pay duty."

"I trust to your Yankee wit to get it through," Mrs. Boughton had written, citing several instances where similar things had been done and no lies told either!

And it was this particular dress at the very bottom of her trunk for which Mrs. Browne felt the most anxiety. But the remorseless officers found it, and found a plush table-spread she had bought in Paris and a cushion to match, and, as they held them up, they facetiously asked her to what church she belonged.

She told them none of their business, and as her principles and patience were both at a low ebb by this time, and the meaning of rendering to Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's did not seem at all clear to her, she whispered fiercely to her husband:

"Ike, you fool, why don't you fee 'em? I can't have 'em riddlen' all them tother trunks, with my seal-skin, and Gusty's fur-lined cloak, and Allen's new overcoat, and that clock and mosaic table. Fee 'em high, too, and do it quick! there's that wretch now liftin' out a tray!"

To those who have witnessed similar scenes it is needless to say that by some magic the search was stopped, and neither Mrs. Browne's seal-skin, nor Augusta's fur-lined cloak, nor Allen's overcoat were molested, and the ten trunks were chalked and deposited in the express wagons, and the Rossiter-Brownes, with Lord Hardy and Daisy, were driven to the Windsor.

Meantime Daisy had cried a good deal, and leaned her head against Augusta and once against Lord Hardy's arm, and sobbed:

"Oh, Teddy, you knew my Archie, and know just how good and patient he was, and how lonely I shall be without him. Oh, what shall I do?"

Teddy did not suggest anything she could do, though he naturally thought she would go home at

once; and Mrs. Browne thought so, too, when she had recovered from her encounter with the custom-house officers and could think of anything. But she would not be the first to suggest it outright. She merely said it was a pity that Mrs. McPherson could not see anything of America except New York, which was much like any great city.

"Yes," Daisy sobbed, "such a pity, and I had anticipated so much. Oh, Mrs. Browne, I do want to do right, and you must advise me. Now that I am here, and poor, dear Archie is dead and buried, and I can do him no good by going back at once, do you think it would look very bad and heartless in me if I stay a little while—just long enough to see your lovely country home, and rest? I am so tired!" and as Allen happened to be the nearest to her, she leaned her head against him and cried aloud.

Before Mrs. Browne could reply, Augusta asked:

"What of Bessie? Will she not be very lonely without you?"

"Nasty cat! She is as jealous as she can be, and I will stay to spite her," Daisy thought, but she said: "Oh, yes, I ought to go home to Bessie, though she would bid me stay now that I am here; she is so unselfish, and I shall never come again. Her cousin's family in London will take her directly home, so she will not be alone. Poor Bessie!"

Daisy knew that the London family would not take Bessie to their home, but it answered her purpose to say so, and seemed some excuse for her remaining, as she finally decided to do, greatly to Allen's delight and somewhat to Mrs. Browne's surprise. Yet the glamour of Daisy's beauty, and style, and position was over her still, and she was not sorry to show her off to the people in the hotel, and anticipated in no small degree what would be said by her friends at home when she showed them a live lord and an English lady like Daisy. She was going to Ridgeville in a day or two, but Daisy's mourning must first be bought, and in the excitement of shopping, and trying on dresses and bonnets, and deciding which shape was the most becoming, Daisy came near forgetting "poor, dear, dead Archie," of whom she talked so pathetically when she spoke of him at all.

"Don't, I beg of you, think that I ever for a moment forget my loss," she said to Mrs. Browne, when she had with a hand-glass studied the hang of her crape vail for at least fifteen minutes. "It hurts me to speak of him, but there is a moan in my heart for him all the time."

And Mrs. Browne believed her, and thought she was bearing it bravely, and paid all the bills, and thought her the most beautiful creature in her weeds that she had ever seen. And truly she was a lovely little widow, with just enough pallor in her face to be interesting and show that her sorrow had robbed her of some of her roses, or, as Lord Hardy suspected, that she had purposely omitted the roses, when making her toilet, for the sake of effect.

Lord Hardy knew the lady perfectly, and knew there was not a real thing about her except, indeed, her hair, which was wavy and abundant still, and of which she was very proud, often allowing it to fall on her neck, and always arranging it in the most negligent and girlish manner. Once her complexion had been her own, but the life she had led was not conducive to bloom, and much of her bright color and the pearly tint of her skin was now the work of art, so skillfully done, however, that few could detect it. Mrs. Browne did not. She never suspected anything, and took Daisy for what she seemed, and was glad Allen was so fond of her as in her society he was safe, she said, "and could not help getting kind of refined and cultivated up."

Daisy wrote to Bessie, telling her how prostrated with grief she was, and that she should have taken the first ship home if the Rossiter-Brownes had not insisted that she should stay and see a little of America.

"But it will not be for long," she wrote. "I shall soon return, and I send you thirty pounds, absolutely my own. This will last till I am with you, and then we will contrive together how to live respectably and happily."

The day after the letter was sent, the Browne party started for Ridgeville, reaching the Allington station about three in the afternoon of a lovely July day.

The news of their coming had preceded them, and the Ridge House, which was a large, imposing mansion, had for days been the scene of much bustle and excitement, for it was known that an Irish lord was to accompany the family, and an English lady, who, if not titled, was connected with some of the best families in England.

There was a great deal of talk and gossip among the neighbors, who had known the Rossiter-Brownes with out an "e" or a hyphen, when he was simply Ike and she was Angeline, Miss Lucy Grey's hired girl. But they were rich people now; they owned the finest house in Ridgeville, and every room was covered with what Mrs. Browne called a Mocha carpet, and they kept negroes instead of white servants, and the barn was full of boxes of all sizes, which had arrived, from time to time, bearing foreign marks upon them, thus impressing the lower class with a species of awe as they thought how far they had come, and how much they had probably cost.

Then, the family had traveled and consorted with nobility, and seen the Queen and the Pope, and in consequence of all this there was quite a crowd of people at the station when the New York express stopped then and deposited upon the platform twelve trunks, three hat boxes, an English terrier, a Dongola cat, with innumeral satchels and port-manteaus, and seven people—Mr. and Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, Augusta Browne, Allen Browne, Daisy McPherson, a French maid, and

Lord Hardy. *He*, plainly dressed in a gray suit, which did not fit him at all, but with a decidedly aristocratic look upon his face as he glanced curiously at the crowd gathering around the Brownes, and greeting them with noisy demonstrations: Daisy, in deep black, with her vail thrown back from her lovely lace and a gleam of ridicule and contempt in her blue eyes as they flashed upon Lord Hardy as if for sympathy; the French maid, in white apron and cap, tired, homesick and bewildered with Mrs. Browne's repeated calls to know if she was sure she had all the bags, and shawls, and fans, and umbrellas, and the shrill voice of a little boy who shouted to her as the train moved off, "I say, hain't you left your bunnet in the cars; 'tain't on your head;" Allen, stunning in his long, light overcoat, tight pants, pointed shoes, cane, and eye-glasses, which he found very necessary as he pointed out his luggage, and in reply to the baggage-master's hearty "How are you, my boy?" drawled out, "Quite well—thanks—but awful tired, you know;" Augusta, in a Jersey jacket, with gloves buttoned to her elbows, and an immense hat, with two feathers on the back; Mr. Browne in a long ulster, and soft hat, with gloves, which his wife made him wear; and Mrs. Browne, in a Paris dress, fearfully and wonderfully made, and a poke bonnet, so long and so pokey that to see her face was like looking down a narrow lane.

No wonder the plain people of Ridgeville, to whom poke bonnets, and jersey jackets, and long gloves, and pointed toes, were then new, were startled, and a little abashed at so much foreign style, especially as it was accompanied by nobility in the person of Lord Hardy. At him the people stared curiously, deciding that he was not much to look at if he was a lord, and wondering if he was after Augusta.

"Her mother will bust, if he is. She has about as much as she can do to keep herself together now. I wonder if she has forgot that she was once a hired girl, and worked like the rest of us?" was whispered by some of the envious ones.

But this was before they had received Mrs. Browne's greeting, which was just as cordial as of old, and her voice was just as loud and hearty. She didn't mean to be stuck up because she'd been abroad; she was a democrat to her back-bone, she had frequently asserted, and she carried out her principles, and shook hands with everybody, and kissed a great many, and thanked them for coming to meet her; and then, with her husband, Augusta, and Lord Hardy, entered her handsome carriage and was driven toward home.

The French maid went in the omnibus, while Allen drove Daisy himself in the pony phaeton, not a little proud of the honor, and the attention he was attracting as he took his seat beside the beautiful woman, whose face had never looked fairer or sweeter than it did under the widow's bonnet.

"What a lovely pony! Is he gentle? and do you think I might venture to drive him?" Daisy asked, with a pretty affectation of girlishness, as they left the station; and Allen instantly put the reins in her hands, and leaning languidly back, watched her admiringly, with a strange thrill of something undefinable in his heart.

"Do we pass Miss McPherson's house?" Daisy asked and he replied:

"Yes, at a little distance; and we can go very near to it by taking the road across the common," and he indicated the direction. "That is the place, with all those cherry trees," he continued, pointing toward the unpretentious house where Miss Betsey McPherson had lived for so many years, and where she now sat upon the piazza, with Hannah Jerrold at her side.

Miss Betsey had been in Boston for two weeks, and had only returned home that morning, finding Bessie's letter of thanks, written so long ago and not forwarded to her until one of the firm in London heard of Archie's death. This letter she had read with a great feeling of pity for and yearning toward the young girl who had written it.

"I wish I had sent her more, and I will by and by," she thought, never dreaming that Archie was dead, or that his wife was so near.

She had not even heard of the arrival in New York of the Brownes, and was talking with Hannah Jerrold, who had come over to see her, when the carriage containing Mr. and Mrs. Browne, Augusta and Lord Hardy, came into view across the common.

"Why, that's the Brownes!" she exclaimed. "Are they home? and who is that tow-headed chap with them? Not Allen, surely?"

Hannah explained that the Brownes were expected that afternoon, and that an Irish lord was coming with them, and that half Ridgeville had gone to the station to meet them.

"Irish fiddlesticks! After Augusta's money, of course," Miss Betsey returned, with a snort, but whatever else she might have said was cut short by the appearance of the phaeton with Allen and Daisy in it.

"I wonder who she is. I hope she stares well. Seems to me I have seen her before," Miss Betsey said, adding, as Daisy half inclined her head, and smiled upon her, "Who can she be? Somebody they have picked up to make a splurge with. A widow, at any rate."

"Oh, yes, I remember now to have heard from the cook at Ridge House that an English lady was to accompany the family home, and—yes, her name was McPherson, too—Lady McPherson, the cook called her. This is she, no doubt."

"Lady McPherson," Miss Betsey repeated "There is no Lady McPherson except my brother's wife, Lady Jane, and she is almost as dried up and yellow by this time as I am, while this lady is young, and—good gracious! It is she! The Jezebel! Lady McPherson indeed!" and Miss Betsey sprang to her feet so energetically as to startle her visitor, who had no idea what she meant.

The face seen on the terrace at Aberystwyth years ago had come back to Miss Betsey, and she felt sure that she had just seen it again, smiling upon Allen Browne as it had then smiled upon Lord Hardy. But why in widow's weeds? Was Archie dead? she asked herself, as she resumed her seat and tried to seem natural.

Hannah saw that something ailed her; but she was too well bred to ask any questions, and soon took her leave.

Alone with her own thoughts, Miss Betsey fell to soliloquizing:

"That letter was written long ago; Archie may be dead, and this painted gambler has gulled the Brownes and come to America as their guest, with the snipper-snapper of a Hardy. I must find out if Archie is dead, and what has become of the girl."

After she had had her tea. Miss Betsey ordered her old white horse and old-fashioned buggy to be brought round, and started for a drive, taking the Ridgeville road and passing the house of the Brownes, where the family were assembled upon the wide piazza, enjoying the evening breeze. At a glance she singled out Daisy, who was reclining gracefully in an arm-chair, with a pond-lily at her throat, relieving the blackness of her dress, and Allen Browne leaning over and evidently talking to her.

As Miss McPherson drove very slowly, and looked earnestly toward the house, which was at a little distance from the road, Mrs. Browne, who was watching her, ventured down the walk, bowing half hesitatingly, for she had never been on terms of intimacy with Miss Betsey, of whom she stood a little in awe.

Reining up old Whitey, the lady stopped and waited until Mrs. Browne came to her. Then, extending her hand, she said:

"You are welcome home again. I did not know you had come until I saw your carriage go by, and the phaetons with Allen and a lady in it," and she glanced toward Daisy, who, having heard from Allen that the stiff, queer-looking woman in the buggy was her aunt, had arisen to her feet for the purpose of getting a better view of her.

"Yes," Mrs. Browne began, "we got home to-day, and a more tuckered out lot you never saw. Home is home, if it's ever so homely, I tell 'em. By the way, I'm glad you happened this way. I was goin' to send you word, I've brought home with me one of your relations, Mrs. Archibald McPherson, your nephew's wife, and I hope you'll call and see her. She is very nice, and so pretty, too. That's her in black."

"Ahem!" and Miss Betsey's thin lips were firmly compressed. "Ahem! yes—Mrs. Archibald McPherson. Why is she in black?"

Then followed the story of the telegram received on the Celtic, and the terrible shock it was to Daisy, who was for a time wholly overcome.

"Seems pretty brisk now," Miss Betsey said, glancing sharply toward the airy figure now walking up and down the piazza with Allen at its side. "Why didn't she go home at once to her daughter?"

"She did talk of it," Mrs. Browne replied, uneasily for she detected disapprobation of her guest in Miss McPherson's tone. "I think she would of went, but it seemed a pity not to see a little of America first. She will not stay long, and I hope you'll call soon. I b'lieve you have never been in my new house."

"No, I have not. Who, may I ask, is that tow-headed man, with his hair parted in the middle?"

"Oh, excuse me," and Mrs. Browne brightened at once. "That is Lord Hardy. We met him in Nice. He is going West, and we persuaded him to stop here first. He is very nice, and not at all stuck up."

"Yes, an Irishman. I've seen him before. If he is poor, my advice is, look out for Augusta, and, anyway, have a care for your boy. Good-night. It's growing late. Get up, Whitey," and with a jerk at the reins the old lady drove on, while Mrs. Browne, rather crestfallen and disappointed, went slowly back to the house, wondering why she was to have a care for her *boy*, her Allen, still walking up and down at Daisy's side, and talking eagerly to her.

"I suppose I am meaner than dirt, but I cannot help it, I will not notice that woman—no, not a woman, but a gambler, an adventuress, a flirt, who, if she cannot capture that Irishman, will try her luck with Allen! I hate her, but I pity the girl, and I'll send her a hundred pounds at once," Miss Betsey soliloquized, as she went home through the gathering twilight.

And before she slept she wrote to her bankers in London, bidding them forward to Bessie's address another hundred pounds, and charge it to her account.

The next morning Miss Betsey was sitting in her hop-vine-covered porch, shelling peas for her early dinner, and thinking of Archie and the painted Jezebel, as she designated Daisy, when a shadow fell upon the floor, and looking up she saw the subject of her thoughts standing before

her, with her yellow hair arranged low in her neck, and a round black hat set coquettishly upon her head. Miss Betsey did not manifest the least surprise, but adjusting her spectacles from her forehead to her eyes, looked up inquiringly at her visitor, who, seating herself upon the threshold of the door, took off her hat, and in the silvery tones she could assume so well, said:

"You must excuse me, dear auntie. I could not wait for you to call, I wanted to see you so badly, and, as Allen Browne was going to the post-office, I rode down with him, I am Daisy—Archie's wife, or widow, for Archie is dead, you know."

She said this very sadly and low, and there were great tears in the blue eyes lifted timidly and appealingly to the little sharp, bead like eyes confronting her so steadily through the spectacles. How very lovely and youthful-looking she was as she sat there in the doorway, and Miss Betsey acknowledged the youth and the loveliness, but did not unbend one whit.

"Ahem!" she began, and the tone was not very reassuring "I knew you were here. Mrs. Browne told me, and I saw you there with Allen yesterday. I saw you years ago on the terrace at Aberystwyth, and remembered you well. Was Archie very sick when you left him?"

"Yes—no," Daisy said, stammeringly; "that is, he had been sick a long time, but I did not think him so bad or I should never have left him. Oh, auntie, it almost killed me when I heard he was dead, and there is a moan for him in my heart all the time."

She adopted this form of speech because it had sounded prettily to herself when she said it to Mrs. Browne, who had believed in the moan, but Miss Betsey did not.

"Ahem!" she said; "how much time have you spent with Archie the last ten years or so?"

"Not as much as I wish I had now. I was obliged to be away from him," Daisy replied, and the spinster continued:

"Why?"

"My health was poor, and I was so much better out of England; and so, when people invited me, I went with them—it saved expense at home, and we are so poor, oh! you cannot know how poor;" and Daisy clasped her hands together despairingly as she gazed up at the stern face above her, which did not relax in its sternness, but remained so hard and stony that Daisy burst out impetuously: "Oh, auntie, why are you so cold to me. Why do you hate me so? I have never harmed you. I want you for my friend—mine and Bessie's; and we need a friend so much in our loneliness and poverty. Bessie is the sweetest, truest girl you ever knew."

For a moment Miss Betsey's hands moved rapidly among the pea-pods; then removing her spectacles and wiping them with the corner of her apron, she began:

"I mean to treat everybody civilly in my own house, but if I say anything I must tell the naked truth. I believe Bessie is a true girl, as you say; but I have my doubts of you. I have heard much of your career; have talked with those who have seen you in that hell at Monte Carlo, bandying jests with young profligates and blear-eyed old men, more dangerous than the younger ones because better skilled in evil. I saw you myself on the terrace at Aberystwyth, flirting as no married woman should flirt with that whiffet, Lord Hardy, who, it seems, is here with you, and whom perhaps you think to capture now that you are free. But let me tell you that men seldom pick up and wear a soiled garment, particularly when they have helped to soil it. Lord Hardy will never marry you, and my advice is that you go home, as you ought to have done at once. Go back to your child and be a mother to her; but, as you hope for heaven, never try to drag her down where you are. You talk of poverty. You do not show it. Those diamonds in your ears never cost a small sum, nor that solitaire upon your finger."

"They were given to me," Daisy sobbed, as she rose to her feet and put on her hat preparatory to leaving, while Miss Betsey continued:

"Given to you! The more shame for you to take them. Better throw them away than wear them as a badge of degradation. Yes, throw them away, or send them back whence they came. Wash that paint off your face. Get rid of that made-up smirk around your mouth. Remember that you are going on toward forty."

"Oh-h!" Daisy groaned; "I am not quite thirty-six."

"Well, thirty-six, then," the spinster rejoined. "There's a wide difference between thirty-six and sixteen. You are a widow; you have a grown-up daughter. You are no longer young, though you are good enough looking, but good looks will not support you honestly. Go home and go to work, if it is only to be a bar-maid at the George Hotel; and when I see you have reformed, I do not say I will not do something for you, but just so long as you go round sponging your living and making eyes at men—and boys, too, for that matter—not a penny of my money shall you ever touch. I've said my say, and there comes the boy Allen for you. Good-morning."

She arose to take her peas to the kitchen. The conference was ended, and with a flushed face and wet eyes Daisy went out to the phaeton, into which Allen handed her very carefully, and then took his seat beside her. He noticed her agitation, but did not guess its cause, until she said, with a little gasping sob:

"I was never so insulted in my life as by that horrid old woman. Had I been the vilest creature in the world she could not have talked worse to me. She said I was living upon your people—

sponging she called it; that I was after Lord Hardy—and—and—oh, Allen—even you—the *boy* she called you, and she bade me go home and hire out as bar-maid at the George Hotel in Bangor."

"The wretch! Boy, indeed!" Allen said, bristling with indignation at this fling at his youth, but feeling a strange stir in his young blood at the thought of this fair creature being after him.

Arrived at the Ridge House, Daisy went directly to her room and had the headache all day; and gave Mrs. Browne a most exaggerated account of her interview with her aunt, but omitted the part pertaining to Lord Hardy and Allen, the latter of whom hovered disconsolately near the door of her room and sent her messages and a bouquet, and was radiant with delight when after tea-time she was so far restored as to be able to join the family upon the piazza. It was Allen who brought a pillow for her, and a footstool, and asked if she was in a draught, and when she said she was, moved her chair at her request nearer to Lord Hardy, who scarcely looked at her, and did not manifest the slightest interest in her headache, or in her. Nothing which Daisy could do was of any avail to attract him to her, and she tried every wile and art upon him during the next few days, but to no purpose. At last, when she had been at the Ridge House a week, and she had an opportunity of seeing him alone, she said, in a half playful, half complaining voice:

"What is it, Teddy? What has come between us that you are so cold to me? Has the fair Gusty, as her mother calls her, driven from your mind all thoughts of your old friend? You used to care for me, Teddy, in the good old days when we were all so happy together. Don't you like me a little now, and I so lonely and sad, and all the more so that I have to keep up and smile before these people, who, kind as they are, bore me with their vulgarities? Say, Teddy, are you angry with me?"

As she talked Daisy had put her hand on that of Lord Hardy, who once would have thrilled at its touch, but who now shrank from it as something poisonous. He knew the woman so thoroughly that nothing she could do or say would in the least affect him now, and when she asked if he were angry with her, he replied:

"Not angry, no—but, Mrs. McPherson—"

"Oh, Teddy, now I know you hate me when you call me Mrs. McPherson," Daisy sobbed, and he continued:

"Well, Daisy, then, if that suits you better, I am not angry, but you must know that we can never again be to each other what we were in the days when I was foolish enough to follow where you led, even to my ruin. All that is past, and I will not reproach you more; but, Daisy, I must speak one word of warning. I owe so much to these kind people, whose vulgarities bore you, but do not prevent you from accepting their hospitality. I am not blind to what you are doing."

"And what am I doing?" Daisy asked, and he replied: "Making a fool of a boy, for mercenary purposes of your own. I have seen it ever since we left Liverpool and I tell you I will not allow it, and if you persist in luring Allen to your side on all occasions, and throw over him the glamour of your charms, the family shall know all I know of your past life, even if it compromises me with you. They think you pure and good. What would they say if they knew you to be a professional gambler, an adventuress about whom men jest and smile derisively, even while they flatter and admire you in a certain way? Bad, in the common acceptation of the word, you may not be, but your womanhood is certainly soiled, and you are not a fit associate for a young, susceptible man, or for an innocent girl. If you were a true woman you would have gone home at once, to your daughter, who, rumor says, is as sweet and lovely as an angel. Go back now to her, and by fulfilling the duties of a mother try to retrieve the past. It is not impossible. I do not mean to be harsh, and hardly know why I have said all this to you, except it were to save Allen Browne, who is each day becoming more and more in love with you."

"In love with me! A woman old enough to be his mother! Absurd!" Daisy exclaimed, adding scornfully: "Thanks for your lecture, which shall not be lost on me. I have no wish to prolong my stay in this stupid place, and only wish I had never come here; and since my presence is so distastful to you, I will go at once and leave you to prosecute your suit with the fair Augusta, wishing you joy with your Yankee bride and her refined family. Shall you invite them to your home in Ireland? If so, may I be there to see! *Addio!*" and with a mocking courtsey she left the room, and going to her chamber wrote to Bessie that she was coming home immediately. Daisy had lost her game, and she knew it. She had nothing to expect from Miss McPherson, nothing from Lord Hardy, and as her deep mourning prevented Mrs. Browne from giving the party she had talked about so much, she might better be in Europe, she thought, and accordingly she acquainted her hostess with her decision. There was a faint protest on the part of Mrs. Browne, but only a faint one, for she was beginning to be a little afraid of her fair visitor, whom Augusta disliked thoroughly. Only Allen was sorry, for the wily woman had stirred his boyish heart to its very depths, and when at last he said good-by to her, and stood until the train which bore her away was out of sight, he felt, perhaps, as keen a pang of regret as a young man of twenty-two ever felt for a woman many years his senior.

Mr. Browne accompanied her to New York, and saw her on board the ship, and on his return home reported that he had left her in the cabin "a smellin' of and admirin' a basket of flowers most as big as herself, which she said a very dear friend had ordered sent to her with his love."

"She didn't say who 'twas," he continued, "and I didn't ask her, but I thought 'fool and his money soon parted,' for they'd smell awful in a day or two, and be flung into the sea. She giv' me one of the posies for Allen. I guess it's pretty well jammed, for I chucked it into my vest pocket; here it

is," and he handed a faded rosebud to Allen, whose face was very red, and whose eyes, as they met those of Lord Hardy, betrayed the fact that he was the very dear friend who had ordered the flowers as his farewell to Daisy.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

IN ROME.

The carnival was raging through the streets of Rome, and the Corso was thronged with masqueraders and lined with spectators—Italians, English, and Americans—all eager for the sight. Upon the balcony of a private dwelling, for which an enormous price had been paid because it commanded a fine view of the street below, sat Miss Lucy Grey, with Grey Jerrold and a party of friends. Lucy had been in Rome three or four weeks, staying at a pension, in the Via Nazzionale, which she preferred to the fashionable and noisy hotels.

Grey, who had taken the trip to Egypt, had only been in Rome a few days, and as there was no room for him at the pension, he was stopping at the Quirinal, near by. He had seen the carnival twice before, and cared but little for it; but it was new to his Aunt Lucy, and for her sake he was there, standing at her side and apparently watching the gay pageant as it moved by, though in reality he was scarcely thinking of it at all, for all his thoughts and interest were centered in the white, worn face he had seen that morning in a close, dark room at the hotel, where Bessie McPherson lay dying, he verily believed.

On the night of his arrival at the hotel, which was very full, he had been given a room on the fourth floor looking into a court, and his rest had been disturbed by the murmur of voices in the room adjoining his own.

An Italian voice, which he was sure was a doctor's—a clear, decided, youthful voice, with a slight Irish brogue, which he knew must belong to a young girl, and an older, softer voice, often choked with tears, and occasionally a moaning sound, and wild snatches of song, which affected him strangely, for this voice, broken and weak as it was, had in it something familiar, and he tried in vain to recall where he had heard it before and under what circumstances. Once he thought he heard his own name, as if the sick girl (he felt intuitively that it was a girl) were calling for him, and, starting up, he listened intently, but caught only the tones of the tearful, sobbing voice which said:

"Hush, darling, hush! We are all here; try to be quiet and sleep."

At last, worn out with wakefulness and the fatigue of his long journey from Naples, Grey fell into a deep sleep, from which he did not waken until nearly ten the next morning. Dressing himself hastily he went at once to the office and asked who occupied the room adjoining his own.

"An English lady and her daughter," was the reply; and the clerk, who was not noted for suavity of manner, turned to a little bright-eyed, black haired girl, who came up, evidently with the intention of preferring some request.

There was something in the toss of the curly head, and the saucy look in the eyes, and the slightly upward turn of the nose, which always commanded attention from the rudest of porters and clerks: and this one at the Quirinal bowed respectfully to her, and was about to ask what he could do for her, when Grey interrupted him with another question, or rather assertion and question both:

"The young lady is sick. What is the matter with her?"

A flush of annoyance passed over the clerk's face, as he replied:

"A severe cold, taken in Naples. What can I do for you, Miss Meredith?"

And he loftily bowed Grey aside to make room for the young girl, whose black eyes flashed upon Grey with a half-comical expression, and whose shoulders shrugged involuntarily as she heard the clerk's explanation.

"I will ask the names of the English lady and her daughter another time," Grey thought, as he moved away to make room for the young lady.

He had finished his breakfast, an hour later, and was making his way from the winter garden into the parlor, when he again encountered the young girl with the bright, laughing black eyes.

"Excuse me," she said, flashing upon him a bright, bewildering smile. "I looked on the register, and found that you are Mr. Grey Jerrold, of whom I have heard Sir Jack Trevellian speak. Sir Hal, from whom Sir Jack inherited Trevellian Castle, was my cousin, and I used to live there before

poor Hal was killed. I am Flossie Meredith, and live now with my grandmother, at Port Rush, in Ireland."

Grey bowed low to the vivacious little lady, who went on rapidly, gesticulating as she talked, and emphasizing what she said with most expressive shrugs and elevations of her eyelids and nose:

"I heard what that horrid clerk at the bureau told you ailed the young lady in No.——. A severe cold, indeed! I should think it was. It is the typhoid fever of the very worst form, and if you are afraid of it you had better change your room. There are awful big cracks over and under the door. I have stopped them up with paper as well as I can, but the air can get through, and you might take the fever. The gentleman who occupied the room before you came, left it in a hurry when he heard of the fever, but I don't know where he went to escape it, for it's all over the hotel. There is an American girl on the same floor, whom they think is dying this morning, and a young man down stairs, and two or three more somewhere else; and yet the clerks will tell you there is not a single case of fever in the hotel. What liars they are, to be sure! Grandma is frightened almost to death, and burns sugar, and camphor, and brimstone, as disinfectants, and keeps chloride of lime under her bed, till her room smells worse, if possible, than the hotel itself. But I am not afraid. My room adjoins Bessie's, and I am with her half the time."

"What did you say? What did you call the young lady?" Grey asked, excitedly, and Flossie replied:

"Bessie—Bessie McPherson, from Wales. I remember now, you must know her, for Sir Jack told me that he once spent a Christmas at Stoneleigh, and you were there with him."

"Yes, I know her," Grey said, with a tremor in his voice, and a pallor about his lips. "Tell me how long she has been sick, and who is with her."

Then Flossie told him that immediately on her return home from America, Daisy had taken Bessie with her to Switzerland, where they spent the remainder of the summer and a part of the autumn, making their way to Paris in October, and going on to Italy sometime in November; that she, Flossie, had come abroad with her grandmother and had fallen in with the McPhersons at the Italian lakes, and kept with them ever since; that Bessie had not seemed well or happy for some weeks; and that almost immediately after her arrival in Rome she had taken her bed and had been rapidly growing worse until now, when the doctor gave little hope of her recovery.

"She does not know us," Flossie said, "and she talks so piteously of her old home, and wants us to take her back to the garden where the birds are singing in the yews, and where she says there is just one place between her father and the wall, and that is for her. Oh, Mr. Jerrold, what if she should die!"

"She must not—she shall not," Grey answered her, energetically, and by the sense of bitter pain in his heart he knew that Bessie McPherson was more to him than any other girl could ever be, and if she died the world would lose much of its brightness for him.

He had never forgotten her, and over and over again in both his sleeping and waking hours there had arisen before him a vision of her face, as he had seen it when first he went to Stoneleigh, and as he saw it there last, pale and worn and sad, but inexpressibly lovely and sweet. And now, Flossie told him, she was dying, and for a moment he grew cold and faint; then he rallied, and saying, "I will go and see Mrs. McPherson," bade Flossie good-morning, and started for No.——, fourth floor.

His knock was answered by Daisy herself, whose face was very pale, and whose eyes were swollen and red with watching and tears. All her better nature had been aroused; the mother love was in the ascendant now, and in her anxiety for her child she had forgotten much of her coquetry and was almost womanly in her grief.

"You are Mrs. McPherson?" Grey said to her, as she stepped out into the hall and closed the door of the sick-room.

She bowed in the affirmative, and he continued:

"I am Grey Jerrold, I knew your husband; I was with him when he died. I have just heard from Miss Meredith of your daughter's illness, and have come to offer you my services. Is there anything I can do for you?"

Daisy's tears fell like rain as she replied:

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Jerrold; it will be something to know I have a friend, for we are all alone. Neil is in Cairo, and there is no one beside him on whom we have any claim. I have heard Bessie speak of you; only last night she called you by name in her delirium."

"Yes, I heard her," Grey said, explaining that he occupied the adjoining room, and thus had learned that there was some one sick near him.

In an instant Daisy's face brightened as something of her old managing nature asserted itself, and in a few moments she adroitly contrived to let Grey know how very much alone she felt with no male friend to counsel her; how bitterly disappointed she was that the last mail from England did not bring her the expected funds which she so sorely needed; how exorbitant the proprietor of the hotel was in his charges, taking every possible advantage of her helpless condition; and how much she had desired an adjoining room, in order that Bessie might have better air, and those who took care of her more space.

"Not that it matters so very much, except for the air," she added; "for I cannot afford a nurse, so there is one less breath in the room. Oh, Mr. Jerrold, it is dreadful to be sick in Rome, with no friends and very little money. If Neil were here, or my remittances from England would come, it would be all right."

"No nurse," Grey exclaimed. "Have you no nurse for your daughter? Who, then, takes care of her?"

"I do, with Miss Meredith's help. She is very kind, and occasionally one of the servants in the hotel stays with us during the night; but I hear Bessie moving, and I must go. I am so glad that you are here. Good-morning."

It is needless to say that within two hours' time Grey's room was at Daisy's disposal, and the proprietor had orders to charge the same to Mr. Jerrold's account instead of Mrs. McPherson's, while Grey's own luggage was transported to a little, close, eight-by-twelve apartment, which smelled worse than old Mrs. Meredith's could possibly have smelled with all her burnt brimstone and camphor and chloride of lime. The physician, an Italian, was also interviewed, and a competent nurse secured and introduced into the sick-room, and when Daisy protested that she could not meet the expense, Grey said to her:

"Give yourself no uneasiness on that score; that is my business. We cannot let Bessie die."

And then he asked to see her. Very cautiously he entered the room, and with a great throb of pain in his heart stood looking upon the pallid face and the bright blue eyes which met his inquiringly, but had in them no sign of recognition. Taking one of her hands in his and bending over her, Grey said, very softly:

"Do you know me, Bessie?"

There was tenderness and pity in the tone of his voice as he said the name Bessie, and the sick girl looked at him curiously, as if struggling to recall something in the far past; then a smile broke over her face and the lip quivered a little as she replied:

"Yes, you are Neil. I have waited for you, I am so glad you have come."

Still holding the feverish hand which clung to his, Grey hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I am not Neil; he will be here soon. I am Grey Jerrold; don't you remember I spent a Christmas with you once?"

Again she regarded him fixedly a moment, and then she said:

"Yes, I remember Grey Jerrold, the American: he was to have had my room, but said he preferred the cold and the rats! Ugh!" and she shivered a little, as she continued, "Where is he, Neil? He was with me when father died, and was so very kind. Thank him for me, when you see him, and now I am so tired. I cannot talk any more, but stay by me, Neil, and hold my hand I am better with you here."

She persisted in thinking him Neil, and Grey humored the fancy. He had never heard of her engagement, for Jack had not betrayed her confidence; but he knew that she and Neil were greatly attached to each other, and were, as he thought, more like brother and sister than cousins, and, believing as he did with the world in general, that Neil was pledged to Blanche Trevellian, he had no suspicion of the real state of affairs, though he wondered that all Bessie's thoughts should be concentrated upon her absent cousin. How sick she was, and how high the fever ran, and how strangely she talked, as he sat there watching her with a terrible fear in his heart, and a constant prayer for the dear life which seemed balancing so evenly in the scale for the next two or three days, during which he was with her all the time he could spare from his Aunt Lucy, who never suspected why he seemed so abstracted and sad, or that the fever was in the hotel where he was staying. He knew how much afraid she was of it, and how anxious she would be for him if she knew where he spent the hours not given to her. So he did not tell her of poor little Bessie, who grew weaker and weaker every day, until at last the old doctor shook his head, and between the pinches of snuff which he blew about vigorously, said there was one chance in a hundred for her, and if she had any friends who wished to see her, they should be sent for at once. But there was no one save Neil, whom Daisy expected every day, and Grey filled his place altogether with Bessie. She always called him Neil, and once, with a most grieved expression on her face, she said to him:

"Why don't you kiss me, Neil? You have not since you came."

Daisy and Flossie had gone to dinner, and the nurse was resting a few moments in the adjoining room, while Grey sat by her patient; thus he was alone with Bessie, when she startled him with the question, "Why don't you kiss me, Neil?"

Bending over her, he said:

"Would you like me to kiss you Bessie?"

"Ye-es," she answered, faintly, and then Grey pressed his lips to hers in a long, passionate kiss, with no thought that there was danger and possible death in the hot breath which he felt upon his cheek as he laid it against hers.

He thought of nothing but the sick girl before him, whom he had kissed, and whom he now knew

that he loved better than anything it life; ay, whom he had loved since the Christmas-time when he first looked into her blue eyes and played for the knot of ribbon she wore at her throat.

Grey had seen much of the world, and many bright eyes had flashed upon him glances which mean so much, but which had never affected him. Nothing, in fact, had touched him until he saw Bessie McPherson, whom he had remembered always, and sometimes to himself he had said:

"I will see her again. I will know her better, and if—"

He never got farther than that "if," though he was conscious that in all his pictures of a future home there was a face like hers as he had seen it in the old stone house at Stoneleigh. He had not sought her again, but he had found her unsought—sick, helpless, dying perhaps, and he knew how much he loved her, and how dark would be the future if she were snatched from him.

"Oh, Heaven, I can't let her die!" he cried; and, falling on his knees by the bedside, he prayed long and earnestly that she might live for him, who loved her so devotedly.

This was the night before the second day of the carnival, when Grey felt obliged to leave her for a few hours and do duty at his Aunt Lucy's side. Miss Grey had that morning heard rumors of fever in Rome, and with her fears aroused she signified to Grey her wish to leave the city the following Monday.

"You are looking very thin," she said, regarding him anxiously as he bent over her chair, "and I am not feeling very well myself. It is time we were out of Rome I am sure it is not healthy here."

She did look pale, Grey noticed, and, as his first duty was to her, he signified his readiness to leave with her on Monday.

"I shall know the worst by that time," he thought "If she is better, I can go with a good heart; if she is dead, it matters little where I am. All places will be the same to me."

And so it was settled that with his Aunt Lucy he should leave for Florence on the following Monday, and with a heavy heart he said good-by to her when the festivities of the day were over, and went back to his hotel.

CHAPTER II.

FAREWELL.

It was Sunday, and the gay pageant of the carnival was moving through the Via Nazzionale, on which the Hotel du Quirinal stands. This was the grandest, gayest day of all, and the spectacle which the long street presented, as carriage after carriage, and company after company pressed on, had in it nothing of the calm, quiet repose which we are wont to associate with Sunday. It was not Sunday to the throng of masqueraders filling the streets, or the multitude of spectators crowding the balconies and windows of the tall houses on either side of the way. But to the little group of friends gathered in the room where Bessie lay it was the holy Sabbath time, and, save when by the opening of some door across the hall a strain of music or shout of merriment was borne to their ears, they would never have guessed what was passing. The fever had burned itself out on Bessie's cheeks and left them colorless as marble; while in her eyes, so large and heavy with restlessness and pain, there was a look of recognition, and on the pale lips a smile for those around her. She had known them all since the early morning, when, awaking from a heavy sleep, she called her mother by name, and asked where she was and what had happened to her.

The last three weeks had been a blank, and they broke it to her gradually, and told her of Grey Jerrold's presence, and how she had mistaken him for Neil, from whom they had that day heard, and who would be with them on Monday. It was Flossie who told Bessie this last, as she kissed the white forehead, and said through her tears:

"I am so glad to see you better; it nearly broke my heart when I thought that you might die—and Mr. Jerrold, too, I am sure would have died if you had. Oh, Bessie, I never saw this Neil, but he can not be as nice as Mr. Jerrold, who, next to Sir Jack, is the best man in the world."

"Hush, Flossie!" Bessie whispered, for she had not strength to speak aloud, "such things are over with me now. I shall never see Sir Jack again; never see Neil, for when he comes to-morrow I shall not be here."

"Oh, Bessie," Flossie cried, with a great gush of tears; but Bessie motioned her to be silent, and went on:

"Tell Sir Jack that I might have loved him had I seen him first, but it will not matter soon whom I have loved, or who has loved me. Tell Neil, when he comes and stands beside me, and I cannot speak to him, that I loved him to the last, and if I had lived I would have been his wife whenever he wished it; but it is better to die, for perhaps I could not have borne the burden and the care again. I am so tired, and the rest beyond the grave looks very sweet to me. You say Mr. Jerrold is here. I should like to see him and thank him for his kindness."

Grey had not been to the room that morning, but he soon came and was admitted to Bessie's presence. Smiling sweetly upon him as he came in, Bessie said:

"I cannot offer you my hand, for I have no power to move it; the life has all gone from me—see," and she tried in vain to lift one of the thin, transparent hands which lay so helplessly just where Flossie had put them.

"Don't try," Grey said, sitting down beside her, and placing one of his own broad, warm palms upon the little hands, as if he would thus communicate to them some of his own strength and vitality. "I am glad to find you better," he continued; but Bessie shook her head and answered him:

"Sane, but not better. I shall never be that; but I want to thank you for all you have done for us—for mother and me. You were with me when father died I remember all you did for me then, and I prayed God to bless you for it many a time; and now, I am going where father has gone, and shall sleep by him in the little yard at home, for they will take me back; mother has promised—I could not rest here in Rome, lovely as the grave-yard is. Flossie told me you were to leave to-morrow, and I wanted to say good-by, and tell you how much good you have done me, though you do not know it. Neil told me once of your resolve to make somebody happy every day, and I have never forgotten it, and have in my poor way tried to do so, too, in imitation of you, but have failed so miserably; while you—oh, Mr. Jerrold, you are so noble and good. You have made so many happy. God bless you, and give you everything which you desire most."

She was too much exhausted to talk any more, and closing her eyes, she lay as if asleep, while Grey watched her with the bitterest pain in his heart he had ever known. Would she die? Must he give her up? Was there yet no brightness, no happiness in the world for her, whose life had been one of sacrifice and toil? He could not think so, and all his soul went out in one continuous prayer: "Don't let Bessie die."

All day she lay motionless as the dead, scarcely lifting even an eyelid, or showing that she was conscious of what was passing around her, save when her mother's low, moaning cry, "Bessie, oh, Bessie, I cannot give you up," sounded through the room. Then she moved uneasily, and said:

"Don't, mother, please; God knows best. He will care for you—and you—you—will keep your promise?"

"Yes, child; so help me God!" Daisy answered, excitedly. "I promised you to be a better woman, and I will; but oh, my Heavenly Father, don't let Bessie die."

It was the echo of Grey's prayer, and Flossie took it up and made it hers, and so the day wore on and the night stole into the quiet room, and it was time for Grey to say good-by, for he was to leave on the early train, and he had yet much to do in settling bills both for himself and Daisy, and providing for her needs in case Neil did not come.

"If I thought he would not be with you to-morrow I would stay, though to do so would greatly disappoint my Aunt Lucy," he said to Daisy, who was unselfish enough to bid him go, though she knew how she should miss him, and fell intuitively that twenty Neils could not fill his place.

"I cannot ask you to stay longer. May God bless you for all you have been to us," she said, as she took his hand at parting, and then turned away with a feeling of utter desolation in her heart.

Only Flossie was with Bessie, who was sleeping quietly, when Grey entered the room to say farewell to the young girl, whose face looked so small and thin, and white as it rested upon the pillows. When her fever was at its height and her heavy hair seemed to trouble her, her physician had commanded it to be cut off.

"It will all come out anyway if she lives," he said, and so the cruel scissors had severed the long, bright tresses which had been Bessie's crowning glory.

But the hair, which had only been cut short, grew rapidly and lay in little curls all over her head making her look more like a child than a girl of nineteen.

Flossie knew it was Grey's farewell, and guessed that he would rather be alone with Bessie, even though she were sleeping. So she arose, and offering him her chair, stole softly out and closed the door behind her.

For a few moments Grey sat gazing intently upon the beautiful face as if he would stamp its image upon his heart, so that whatever came, whether for weal or woe, he should never forget it; and then he prayed fervently, that, if possible, God would give back the life now ebbing so low, and that he yet might win the prize he longed for so ardently.

"Oh, Bessie, poor, little tired Bessie," he whispered, as he gently touched one of the hands near him; "if I might call you mine, might take you to my home across the sea, how happy I would make you. I cannot let you die just as I know how much I love you, and something tells me you will yet be mine. We should all love you so much, my mother, Aunt Lucy, Aunt Hannah, and all."

And then suddenly, as his mind leaped to the future, Grey seemed to see the old farm-house in the rocky pasture-land far away, and Bessie was there with him, sitting just where he had so often sat when a child, on the little bench in the wood-shed close against the wall, beyond which was that hidden grave whose shadow had, in a way, darkened his whole life. And it fell upon him now with an added blackness as he thought:

"Could I take Bessie and not tell her of that grave? I don't know; but God will help me to do right, and all things will seem possible if He gives Bessie to me."

She was breathing a little more heavily now; she might be waking; he must kiss her good-by before she was conscious of the act, and bending over her he kissed her forehead and lips and cheeks, on which his hot tears fell fast.

"Good-by, my darling," he whispered. "In this world you may never know how much I love you, but in the next, perhaps, I may be permitted to tell you how it broke my heart to see you lying so low and to know that I must leave you. Darling Bessie, good-by;" and with another kiss upon her lips he lifted up his head to meet the wondering gaze of the blue eyes, in which for an instant there was a puzzled, startled expression, then they filled with tears, and Bessie's lips quivered as she said:

"Don't, Mr. Jerrold, such words are not for me. I—don't you know?"

She hesitated a moment, and he said:

"I know nothing except that I love you with my whole heart and soul, and whether you live or die you will be the sweetest memory of my life. Don't talk; it is not necessary," he continued rapidly, as he saw her about to speak. "I am not going to trouble you now; you are too weak for that. I am here to say good-by, for I must leave to-morrow; but in the future, when you are well, as something tells me you will be—"

"Oh, Mr. Jerrold, listen," Bessie began, just as the door opened and Flossie came in.

"Time's up," she said, smilingly, as she glanced at Bessie's flushed cheek and Grey's white face, and guessed that something exciting had taken place.

When Jack Trevellian returned from his unsuccessful wooing the previous summer, he had in strict confidence told Flossie *why* he failed, so that she knew of Bessie's engagement to Neil, but did not feel at liberty to communicate what she knew to Grey, even though she guessed the nature of his feelings for Bessie. And so he was ignorant that he had a rival, and did not in the least suspect the truth, as he once more said farewell and followed Flossie out into the hall.

"Wait a minute, I have something for you," she said to him, and, putting her hand into her pocket, she drew out a piece of soft white paper in which was carefully wrapped one of the curls she had cut from Bessie's head. "I brought this to you, thinking you might like it when you were far away and she was dead," she said, in a choking voice.

"Thank you, Flossie," he said, taking the package from her, "God bless you for all you are to her. Write me at Venice, Hotel New York, and tell me how she is. We shall stay there a day or two before going on to Vienna and Berlin."

He wrung her hands and walked away down the broad flight of stairs, and Flossie saw him no more.

CHAPTER III.

DEAD.

That was what Adolph, a messenger boy from the Quirinal, said to Grey three days later, when the latter accidentally met him in Florence and inquired for the young English girl who was so sick with the fever. Adolph had left the Quirinal for Florence, his home, on the evening of the same day of Grey's departure from Rome. The next afternoon the two met accidentally on one of the bridges which cross the river Arno.

"Dead!" Grey repeated, turning white to his lips and staggering as if he had been smitten with a heavy blow. "How can she be dead? They told me she was better the morning I left. When did she die?"

"A little after twelve," the boy replied, and Grey continued:

"Did her cousin come—a young man from Naples?"

"Yes," the boy answered, "Some gentleman was there—a big swell, who swore awfully at the clerk about the bills; there was no end of a row."

"The bills! What does it mean?" Grey thought, for he had paid them all up to the time of his leaving.

Then, remembering to have heard what exorbitant sums were demanded by the proprietors of hotels when a person died in their house, he concluded that this must be the bill which Neil was disputing so hotly, and bidding good-day to the boy, he walked on across the river, with a feeling that life could never be to him again just what it had been before. On the morning when he left the hotel he had seen the nurse, and inquired after the patient, who, she reported, had slept well and seemed a little better. And now she was dead! the girl he loved so much. Dead, in all her soft

beauty, with only the suns of nineteen summers upon her head. Dead in Rome, and he not there with her to take a last look at the fair face which, as he walked rapidly on through street after street, seemed close beside him, sometimes touching his own and making him shiver, it was so cold and dead.

"Dead and gone! Dead and gone!" he kept repeating to himself, as he tried to fancy what was passing in the room where he had spent so many hours and where he had kissed the girl now dead and gone forever.

"If I were only there," he thought. "If I could but kiss her again and hold her hand in mine," and for a moment he felt that he must go back and take the matter away from Neil, who could swear at the expense, however great it was.

He must go back and himself carry Bessie to the old home in Wales and bury her in the nook between the father and the wall—the spot which, when he saw it last, he little dreamed would be her grave, and she so young and fair. But to go back would necessitate his telling his Aunt Lucy of the fever, and to excite in her alarm and anxiety for his safety. So he gave it up, but walked on mile after mile, until the night shades were beginning to fall, and be realized how late it was, and that his aunt must be getting anxious about him. Hailing a carriage, he was driven back to his hotel, and found, as he expected, his aunt alarmed at his protracted absence, and still more alarmed at the whiteness of his face and the strange look in his eyes. He had never told her a word of Bessie, or the fever, and he would not do so now. So he merely said he had walked too far and was tired. He should be all right in the morning, and he asked permission to retire early to his room where he could be alone with his sorrow.

They left Florence the next day, for Miss Grey, who had made a long stop there early in the winter, when on her way to Rome, was anxious to leave Italy as soon as possible, fancying that the climate did not agree with Grey, who had not seemed himself since he came from Egypt and joined her in Rome. Arrived in Venice, Grey's first act was to inquire for letters, but there was nothing from Rome, nothing from Flossie, who had promised him to write. They were too busy with their preparations for taking Bessie home. They must be on their way by this time, he thought, and with a heavy heart he journeyed on from Venice until Vienna was reached, and there, at the Hotel Métropole, he found Jack Trevellian's name registered. It would be a relief to talk to him, Grey thought. He had known Bessie, too; and Grey must speak to some one of the sorrow weighing so heavily upon him, or the burden would break him down.

That night in Jack Trevellian's room two young men sat opposite each other with only a small table between them, and on it a single wax candle, which threw a faint, glimmering light upon the white faces which looked so sadly at each other, as in dumb silence the two sat motionless for a few moments after Grey had told his news.

"What is it, old fellow?" Jack had said, cheerily, as, after expressing his joy and surprise at meeting his friend so unexpectedly, and motioning him to a seat, he noticed the care-worn look upon his face and the set expression upon his mouth. "What makes you look so like a grave-yard? Crossed in love, hey? I thought it would come to that sometime, and knew you would be hard hit when hit at all. Tell me about it, do! Maybe I, too, know how it feels," and Jack laughed a little meaning laugh as he remembered the time when Bessie's blue eyes had looked at him and Bessie's voice had said, "I cannot be your wife."

"Hush, Jack!" and Grey put up his hand deprecatingly. "You don't know how you hurt me. Bessie is dead!"

"Dead! Bessie dead! Oh, Grey!" and Jack nearly leaped from his chair in his first surprise and horror; then he sat down again, and there was silence between the two for a moment, when he said, in a voice Grey would never have known as his: "When did she die? Tell me all about it, please, but tell it very slowly, word by word, or I shall not understand you. I seem to be terribly unstrung, it is so sudden and awful. Bessie dead!" and he stared at Grey with eyes which did not seem to see anything before them, but rather to be looking at something far away in the past.

And Grey, who was regarding him curiously, knew that mere friendship, however strong, never wore such semblance of grief as this, and there flashed upon him the conviction that, like himself, Jack too had loved the beautiful girl now lost forever to them both, while a chill ran through his veins as he thought that possibly Jack was an accepted lover, and that was why Bessie had shrunk from his words of love, as something she must not listen to. She was engaged to Jack Trevellian; nothing could be plainer, and with this conviction, which each moment gathered strength in his mind, he resolved to conceal his own heart-wound from his rival, and talk of the dead girl as if he had only been her friend. Slowly, as Jack had bidden him, he told the story of her sickness, dwelling long on Flossie Meredith's untiring devotion, but saying nothing of the services he had rendered, saying only that he was so glad he was there, as a gentleman friend was necessary at such a time and in such a place, where greed is the rule and not the exception.

"They were expecting Neil from Naples the day I left, or I should have staid," he said, and then into Jack's eyes there crept a strange, hard expression, and he wiped the perspiration from his forehead and lips, as he said:

"Neil; yes. It was his place, not yours, or mine, but, oh, Grey, if I might have seen her; if I could have held her dead hand but for a moment and kissed her dear face—"

Here Jack stopped, for his voice was choked with sobs, and ere he knew what he was doing, Grey

said to him:

"Jack, you loved Bessie McPherson!"

"Yes," Jack answered him, unhesitatingly. "I do not mind telling it to you. I think I have loved her since I first saw her, a demure, old-fashioned little thing, in the funniest bonnet and dress you ever saw, sitting with her father, in Hyde Park, and looking at the passers-by. I watched her for some time, wondering who she was, and then, at last, I ventured to speak to her, and standing by her chair told her who the people were, and found out who she was, and called upon her in Abingdon Road, and then she went away, but her face haunted me continually, and even the remembrance of it and of her helped me to a better life than I had lead before. You knew her mother, or rather you knew of her. Not the woman whom you saw in Rome, full of anxiety for her child, but a vain, selfish, intriguing woman, whom no good man could respect, much as he might admire her dazzling beauty. Well, she had me on her string, when I met her daughter, but something Bessie said to me made me strong to resist coils and arts which Satan himself would find it hard to withstand. I used to ride with her, and flirt with her, and bet with her, and play at her side in Monte Carlo, and let her fleece me out of money, just as she did every one with whom she came in contact; but after I knew Bessie, I broke with her mother entirely, and have never played with her or any one since for money. You remember the Christmas we spent together at Stoneleigh. You did not guess, perhaps, how much I loved her then, or that I would have asked her to be my wife if I had not been so poor. Then her father died, and you were there before me, and I was horribly jealous, for I meant she should be mine. There was nothing in the way, I thought. Poor Hal was dead, and had left me his title and estate. I could pour some brightness into her weary life, and two weeks after the funeral I went again to Stoneleigh and asked her to marry me."

Jack paused a moment, and leaning forward eagerly, Grey said:

"Yes, you asked her to marry you, and she consented?"

"No; oh, no" Jack groaned, "If she had, she might not now have been dead; my Bessie, whom I loved so much. She refused me, and worst of all, she told me she was plighted to Neil, her cousin."

"To Neil! Bessie plighted to Neil! That is impossible, for he is to marry Blanche Trevellian, so everybody says," Grey exclaimed, conscious of a keener pang than he had experienced when he thought Jack his rival.

"And everybody is right," Jack replied: "he will marry Blanche, but he was engaged to Bessie under the promise of strictest secrecy until his mother, who had threatened to disinherit him, was reconciled, or he found something which would support him without any effort on his part, Neil McPherson would never exert himself, or deny himself either, even for the woman he loved, and, Grey, I speak the truth when I tell you that I would rather know that Bessie was dead than to see her Neil's wife."

Grey did not answer, but something in the pallor of his face and the expression of his eyes, struck Jack suddenly, and stretching his hand across the table he said, very low and very sadly:

"Jerrold, you loved her, too. I see it in your face."

"Yes," Grey answered him, "I loved her, too, and would have given years of my life to have saved her, though not for Neil. Better far as it is—better for her, I mean, though our lives are wrecked; at least, mine is; but for you there may still be a happy future, and on the ashes of the dead love a new one may arise to bless you."

"Never!" Jack answered, emphatically; then after a moment, as if his thoughts had followed Grey's, he asked:

"Do you know how long Mrs. Meredith intends remaining in Rome, or where she expects to go after leaving there?"

Grey replied that he did not, while a faint smile played round his mouth, as he looked at his friend, who detected the smile, and comprehending its meaning, said, with a heightened color:

"I know you are thinking of Flossie. Bessie thought of her, too, and asked why I did not marry her. But that will never be, though, she is as bright and beautiful an Irish lassie as ever gladdened the eyes of man and the castle is so lonesome without her buzzing about and stirring up things generally, that I have serious thoughts of inviting her grandmother, to take up her abode there, so I can have Flossie back. The servants adore her. But she will never be my wife. She would tire and worry me to death with her restlessness and activity. When I lost Bessie I lost everything, and have nothing left but her memory—not even a flower which she has worn."

Grey hesitated a moment, then taking from his pocket the package which Flossie had given him, he opened it, and holding to view the long silken curl, said to Jack:

"Flossie cut this from Bessie's head when the fever was at its height, and though there is not in the world gold enough to buy it from me, I will divide with you," and parting it carefully he laid one-half of it upon Jack's hand, around which it seemed to cling with a loving tenacity. It was strange how vividly that wavy hair brought Bessie back to the young men who had loved her so much, and who, at sight of it, broke down entirely, and laying their heads upon the table, cried

for a moment, as only strong men can cry, for the dear little girl who, they felt sure, was lying in her grave in far off Stoneleigh.

CHAPTER IV.

POOR DAISY.

Four weeks passed away, and Grey, with his Aunt Lucy, was journeying through Russia, bearing with him a sense of loss and pain. The mails were very irregular, and he had never heard a word either from Flossie or Neil, nor had he written to them. He could not yet bring himself to speak of Bessie, even upon paper, though he sometimes felt a little aggrieved that Neil did not write to him and tell him of his loss. And so the weeks went on, and one day, toward the middle of April, when the English skies were at their best and the hyacinths and crocuses were blooming in the yew-shaded garden at Stoneleigh, a little band of mourners went down the broad graveled walk to the inclosure, where in the narrow space between Archie's grave and the wall another grave was made, and there in silence and in tears they buried—not Bessie—but her mother, poor, weak, frivolous Daisy, who had succumbed to the fever and died after a three weeks' illness.

Bessie was not dead, as the messenger boy had reported to Grey in Florence, but the young girl from America, sick on the same floor, had died about noon on the day of Grey's departure, and with his rather limited knowledge of English the boy had mistaken her for Bessie. And as her brother had arrived that morning and had sworn roundly at the frightful bill presented to him, the boy had naturally confounded this party with the one for whom Grey inquired, and thus had been the cause of much needless pain and sorrow to both Jack Trevellian and Grey. Neil had come from Naples on the morning train, very tired and worn with his trip to Egypt, and a good deal out of sorts because of a letter received from his mother in Naples in which she rated him soundly for his extravagance, telling him he must economize, and that the check she sent him—a very small one—must suffice until his return to England, where she confidently expected him to marry Cousin Blanche before the season was over.

"I hear," she wrote in conclusion, "that the widow of Archibald McPherson is in Rome with her daughter, but I trust you will not allow them to entangle you in any way. The mother will fleece you out of every farthing you have, while the daughter—well I do not know her, so will not say what she may do; only keep clear of them both and shun that crafty woman as you would the plague."

With this letter in his pocket and barely enough money to defray his own expenses for a few weeks longer, it is not to be wondered at, if Neil was not in a very jubilant state of mind when he reached the Quirinal, and found matters as they were—Bessie very low with the fever, of which he had a mortal terror and her mother destitute of funds except as Grey Jerrold had supplied them, or as she had borrowed from Mrs. Meredith, to whom she owed twenty pounds, with no possible means of paying. All this and more, she tearfully explained to Neil, who listened to her with a great sinking at his heart and a feeling that he had plunged into something dreadful, from which he could not escape. There was manliness enough in his nature to make him wince a little, when he heard what Grey had done, while at the same time he was conscious of a pang of jealousy as he reflected that only a stronger sentiment than mere friendship for Bessie could have actuated Grey, generous and noble as he knew him to be.

"Oh, if I were rich," he sighed, as with a conviction that he was about the most abused person in the world, he went into the room where Bessie lay, white, and worn, and motionless almost as the dead, for though the fever had left her she was very weak, and could only whisper her welcome, while the great tears rolled down her cheeks.

Neil was awfully afraid of her. There might still be infection in her breath and infection in the room. He fancied he smelled it, and involuntarily put his hands to his mouth and nose, as he drew near the bed. Bessie saw the motion, and interpreted it aright.

"Oh, Neil," she said, with a sob, "you are not afraid of me?"

"No, certainly not; only this fever is a confounded thing when it takes hold of a great hulking fellow like myself, and just now I am very tired," he said; then, heartily ashamed of himself as he saw the look of distress on Bessie's face, he bent and kissed her forehead, and told her how sorry he was to find her so sick, and that he would not leave her till she was strong again.

But all the time he talked he fidgeted in his chair, and kept looking at the door as if anxious to escape into the fresher air.

"Do you think there is any danger?" he said to Flossie, whom he encountered in the adjoining room.

Flossie knew he was afraid, and there was mischief in the merry Irish lassie's heart, as she replied:

"Danger, oh, no, if she is kept quiet and carefully nursed, the doctor says she will soon get well enough to be moved."

"Yes, I know that, of course," Neil stammered. "I mean, is there any danger of my taking it from her—from the room—from the air, you know?

"Are you afraid of it?" Flossie asked him, very demurely, and he replied:

"N—no; yes—I believe I am. Does that make any difference?"

"I should say it did, very decidedly," Flossie answered, with great earnestness and evident concern. "Mr. Jerrold was not one bit afraid, and he was in there all the time;" this, with a saucy twinkle in her black eyes, as she saw the flush in Neil's face and guessed its cause. "You did not kiss her, of course?" she continued, with the utmost gravity.

"Yes, I did," he answered promptly. "Do you think—do you think—"

"Yes I do," she said, decidedly, adding to herself: "I think you are a fool!" To him she continued: "I'll tell you what to do. Grandma is afraid, like you, so I know all the preventives. Let me burn a match or two under your nose so that the fumes will saturate your face; that will counteract any bad effects from the kiss, and to prevent contagion hereafter, get a good sized leek. You can find one at any grocer's: put it in a bit of cloth, with a piece of camphor-gum, and wear it over the pit of your stomach. You may even brave the small-pox with that about your person."

"But won't it smell awfully?" Neil asked, with a shudder, as he thought of wearing about his person an obnoxious leek, whose odor he abominated.

"It will smell some, but what of that? You can endure a great deal in order to feel safe," Flossie replied.

Neil could endure a great deal where his personal safety was concerned, and wholly deceived by Flossie's manner, he submitted to the burnt matches, which nearly strangled him, and brought on so violent a fit of coughing as made him fear lest he should burst a blood-vessel.

"I guess you are all right as far as the kiss is concerned," Flossie said, nearly bursting with merriment. "And now for the leek and camphor. I'll fix it for you."

He found the leek and the camphor and Flossie tied them up for him in a bit of linen and bade him be quite easy in his mind, as with these disinfectants he was impervious to the plague itself.

"What a coward he is, to be sure!" she said, as she watched him hurrying down the hall to his room with his disinfectants. "Sir Jack told me he was a milksop and not half worthy of Bessie, and he was right. I think him an idiot. Leeks, indeed! Won't he smell, though, when the leek gets warmed through and begins to fume! Phew!" and the little nose went up higher than its wont as Flossie returned to the sick-room.

That night Neil wrote to his mother the exact condition of affairs, telling her how he had found his aunt and cousin, whom he could not leave without being stigmatized as a brute; telling her what Grey had done for them; telling her that they owed old Mrs. Meredith twenty pounds, and that unless she wished a subscription paper to be started for them in the hotel, among the English, many of whom were her acquaintances, she must send money to relieve their necessities, and pay their bills. Neil felt almost sure that this last would touch his mother, when nothing else could reach her, and he was right. Neither she nor her husband cared to have their friends contribute to the needs of any one who bore their name, and the letter which Lady Jane sent to her son contained sixty pounds, which she bade him use to the best possible advantage, adding that he was to leave Rome as soon as he could, with any show of decency. This, Neil would gladly have done if he could, but when his mother's letter arrived it found him plunged into a complication of difficulties from which he could not extricate himself. Daisy had suddenly been stricken down with the fever, which developed so rapidly and assumed so violent a form that Neil's strength, and courage, and patience were taxed to the utmost, and he might have succumbed entirely, if it had not been for Flossie, who was equal to any emergency, and who resisted all her grandmother's efforts to get her out of the fever-hole, as she designated the hotel.

Flossie would not go so long as Bessie needed her. She was not afraid, she said, and every morning her eyes were just as saucy and mirthful, and the roses on her cheek just as bright, as if she had not been up half the night, soothing the wildly delirious Daisy, and encouraging Neil, who, as the days went by, rose a little in her estimation. He threw the obnoxious leek from his window, when, as Flossie had predicted, its fumes became intolerable, and he gave up the large, sunny room which he had occupied at first, and took a smaller, less expensive one, and he learned to deny himself many things before that terrible fever had burned itself out. He gave up *table d'hote* and lunch, and took to the restaurants outside. He gave up driving on the Pincian Hill, or having carriages at all, and patronized the street-cars and omnibuses when he went out for an airing, as Flossie insisted that he should do each day.

"I do believe I could make something of him in time," the energetic little lady thought. "But, dear me! Bessie would humor all his fancies, and be a perfect slave to his caprices; even now she will not let him wait upon her much, for fear of tiring him."

And so the days went on until two weeks were gone, and then one April morning it was whispered among the few guests remaining in the hotel, that death was again in the house, and more trunks were packed in haste, and more people left, until the fourth floor was almost as silent as the room in which Daisy lay dead, with a strange beauty in her face, to which had returned, as it sometimes does, all the freshness and loveliness of youth, so that she looked like

some fair young girl as she lay upon her pillow, with her hands upon her bosom, just as she had folded them, when at the last she said to those around her:

"It is growing late. I think I will retire; good-night;" then, clasping her hands together, she began the prayer of her childhood: "Now I lay me down to sleep," repeating the whole distinctly, while, with the words, "I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take," she went to meet the God who is so pitiful and kind, and who knew all the good that was in her, and knew, too, what thoughts of remorse for the past and prayers for forgiveness had been in her heart during the few lucid intervals which had been given to her. She had been delirious most of the time, and in her delirium had talked of things which made poor Bessie shudder, they revealed to her so much more of her mother's past than she had ever known.

Monte Carlo was the field to which her fancy oftenest took flight, and there, at the gaming-table she sat again, going through the excitement of the olden time, losing and winning—winning and losing—sometimes with Teddy at her side, and sometimes with men of a baser, lower type, with whom she bandied jests, until the scene was too horrible even for the iron-nerved Flossie to endure. Then, there were moments of perfect consciousness, when she knew and spoke rationally to those about her, and tried to comfort Bessie, who insisted upon having a lounge taken into the room so that she might see her mother, if she could not minister to her.

Once, startled by the expression of the faces around her, Daisy said:

"Why do you all look so sorry? Am I very sick? Am I going to die? Oh, *am* I going to die? I cannot die. I cannot! Don't let me die! Don't; don't."

It was like the cry of a frightened child begging a reprieve from punishment, and that piteous "Don't! don't!" rang in Bessie's ears long after the lips which uttered the words were silent in death.

During their journeyings together, Daisy had shown the best there was in her and had really seemed trying to reform. When, on her return from America, she had suggested that they go abroad, saying she would sell her diamonds to defray the expenses, Bessie had refused at first, and had only consented on condition that her mother abandoned all her old habits of life, and neither played nor bet, nor practiced any of her wiles upon the opposite sex for the purpose of extorting money from them. And all this Daisy promised.

"I'll be as circumspect as a Methodist parson's wife," she said; and she kept her word as well as it was possible for her to do.

She neither played, nor bet, nor coaxed money from her acquaintances by pretty tales of poverty, and if she sometimes bandied familiar jests with her gentlemen friends, Bessie did not know it, and there was springing up in her heart a strong feeling of respect for her mother who, just as the new life was beginning, was to be taken from her.

"Oh, mamma," she sobbed, putting her poor, pale, face close to that of the dying woman, for Neil had taken her in his arms and laid her beside her mother "oh, mamma, how can I give you up." Then, as the greater fear for her mother's future overmastered every other feeling, she said: "Speak to me, mother; tell me you are not afraid; tell me you are sorry; tell me, oh, my Heavenly Father, if mother must die, forgive her all the past and take her to Thyself."

"Yes," Daisy murmured, moving a little uneasily, "Forgive me all the past—and there is so much to forgive. I am sorry, and most of all for Archie and Bessie, whom I neglected so long. Oh, how pleasant the old home at Stoneleigh looks to me now. Bury me by Archie in the grass, it is so quiet there; and now it is getting late. I think I will retire. Good-night!"

And then, folding her hands together, she said the "Now I lay me," and Flossie, who was bending over her, knew that she was dead, and motioning to Neil, bade him take Bessie away.

Neil was very tender and very kind and loving to the poor little girl quivering with pain, but uttering no sound and shedding no tear as she lay passive in his arms, but he felt that he was badly abused, and that the burden laid upon him was heavier than he could bear. Could he have had his way, Daisy would have been buried in the Protestant cemetery, in Rome. This would have been far less expensive and have saved him no end of trouble. But when he suggested it to Bessie, she said "No" so decidedly that he gave it up and nerved himself to meet what he never could have met but for Flossie, who, as far as she could, managed everything, even to battling fiercely with the proprietor, whose bill she compelled him to lessen by several hundred francs, and when he demanded payment for four dozen towels which he said had been ruined, she insisted upon taking the towels, which she said were hers, if she paid for them. Never had portier or clerk encountered such a tempest as she proved to be, and they finally surrendered the field and let her have her own way, shrugging their shoulders significantly, as they called her "*la petite diable Irelandaise*."

It was old Mrs. Meredith who furnished the necessary funds, for there was no time to send to England. Neil telegraphed to his father, asking him to go down to Stoneleigh and meet them on their arrival with the body. But the Hon. John was suffering with the gout, and only Anthony and Dorothy were there, when Neil and Flossie and Bessie came, the latter utterly exhausted and unable to sit up a moment after entering the house. So they took her to her old room, which Dorothy had made as comfortable and pleasant as she could; and there Bessie lay, weak as a little child, while the kind neighbors came again and stood in the yew-shaded cemetery where Daisy

was buried and where there was room for no more of the McPhersons.

"Now what?" Flossie said to Neil, when the burial was over and they sat alone in the parlor; "now what are you going to do?" and when he answered, gloomily, "I am sure I don't know," she flashed her black eyes upon him and replied: "You don't know? Then let me tell you; marry Bessie at once. What else can you do? Surely you will not leave her here alone?"

"I know I ought not to leave her here," Neil said, despondingly. "But I cannot marry her now."

"Why not?" Flossie asked him sharply, and he replied:

"I cannot marry her and starve, as we surely should do. I have no means of my own, and mother would turn me from her door if I brought her Bessie as my wife. As it is, I dread going to her with all these heavy bills. It was a foolish thing to bring Mrs. McPherson home, and I said so at the time. That woman has been a curse to every one with whom she ever came in contact."

"Oh, mamma, poor mamma, I wish I, too, were dead, as you are," moaned, or rather gasped a little white-faced girl who was standing just outside the door, and had heard all Neil was saying.

Bessie had remained upstairs as long as she could endure it, and when she heard voices in the parlor and knew that Neil and Flossie were there, she arose, and, putting on a dressing-gown and shawl, crept down stairs to go to them. But Flossie's question arrested her steps, and leaning against the side of the door, she heard all their conversation, and knew the bitterness there was in Neil's heart toward her mother, less by what he said, than by the tone of his voice as he said it, for there was in it a cold, hard ring which made her shiver and sent her back to the bed she had quitted, where she lay for hours, until she had thought it out and knew what she meant to do. But she said nothing of her decision either to Neil or Flossie, the latter of whom left her the next day to join her grandmother, in London.

Neil waited a few days longer, loath to leave Bessie and dreading to go home and meet what he knew he must meet when he told his mother the amount of her indebtedness to Mrs. Meredith, who had signified her wish to be paid as soon as possible.

Naturally dull of perception as he was, Neil was vaguely conscious of a change in Bessie's manner, but he attributed it to grief for the loss of her mother, wondering a little that she could mourn so deeply, a death, which, to him, seemed a relief, for Daisy was not a person whom he would care to acknowledge as his mother-in-law.

Bessie could not forget the words she had overheard, and though they might be true, she knew Neil ought not to have spoken them to a comparative stranger, and she began to realize, as she never had before, that in Neil's nature there was much which did not accord with hers. Many and many a time thoughts of Grey Jerrold filled her mind, and in her half-waking hours at night, she heard again his voice, so full of sympathy, and felt an inexpressible longing to see him again, and hear him speak to her. Still, she meant to be loyal to Neil, and on the morning of his departure, when he was deploring his inability to marry her at once, she lifted her sad eyes to him and said:

"Is there nothing you can do to help yourself? I will do my part gladly, and it cannot cost us much to live—just us two."

The next moment her face was crimson, as she reflected that what she had said, seemed like begging Neil to marry her, and his answer was not very reassuring.

"There is *nothing* for me to do; absolutely nothing."

"Don't other men find employment if they want it?" Bessie asked, and he replied:

"Yes, if they want it; but I do not. You know as well as I the prejudice among people of my rank against clerkships, and trade, and the like. As a rule the McPhersons do not work."

"But I am not ashamed to work, and I am as much a McPherson as you," Bessie answered him, emboldened for once to say what she thought.

"Yes," he answered, slowly, "and I am sorry for it. You told me at one time you thought of going out as governess. Never harbor that idea again, if you care for me. I cannot have people pointing out my wife as one who had taught their children."

Bessie bowed her head silently as if in acquiescence, and Neil never suspected what was passing in her mind, nor dreamed that a tide was set in motion which would take Bessie away from him forever.

CHAPTER V.

BESSIE'S DECISION.

"And so you have determined to go to America?" Neil said to Bessie about four weeks later, when he came to Stoneleigh in obedience to a letter from Bessie telling him she wished to see him on a matter of importance.

"Yes," she replied, "I am going to America. My passage is engaged, and I sail in two weeks, in company with a Mrs. Goodnough, of Bangor, a nice old lady, who will take good care of me."

"Well," and Neil stroked his mustache thoughtfully, "I am not sure but that it is a good idea to beard the old woman in her den. You will be likely to succeed where others would fail, and when you are sure of her fortune send for me."

There was a levity in his manner which Bessie resented, and she said to him, quickly:

"If by the 'old woman' you mean my Aunt Betsey, I would rather you did not speak of her thus. She has been kind to father and me—very kind. But it is not her fortune I am going after. It is my own! I have always thought I had one somewhere, and as it does not seem to be here, it may be in America. But, jesting aside. I am going to find something to do. It is no disgrace to work there, and your friends will never know."

"I am not sure of that," Neil said. "But what do you mean to do?"

"Anything I can find," Bessie answered, decidedly.

Neil only smiled and thought how sure it was that once with her aunt she would become a favorite, and eventually, an heiress to the fortune he so greatly coveted.

He should miss her, he knew, and still it would be a relief not to have her on his mind, as she would be, if left alone at Stoneleigh. So, on the whole, she had done wisely when she planned to go to America, and he did not oppose her, but said he would be in Liverpool the 25th, to see her off. He did not ask if she had the necessary funds for the voyage; he had trouble enough on that score, and was not likely soon to forget the scene, or rather succession of scenes, enacted at Trevellian House, when Mrs. Meredith's bills were presented to his mother, who, but for shame's sake, would have repudiated them at once as something she was not lawfully obliged to pay.

Neither did he inquire who Mrs. Goodnough was, and did not know that she was a poor woman who had worked in the fields, and was going out to New York, not as first-class passenger nor even second, but as steerage, and Bessie's ticket was of the same nature. She had but little money, and when she heard from Mrs. Goodnough, who was a friend of Dorothy's, and who had once been in America, that a steerage passage was oftentimes very comfortable, and that many respectable people took it because of its cheapness, she put aside all feelings of pride, and said to Mrs. Goodnough:

"I will go steerage with you," and from this plan she never swerved.

But she would not tell Neil then; time enough at the last when he came to see her off, and must, of course, know the truth.

She knew he would be very angry, and probably insist upon paying the difference, but she could take no more money from him, and her blood was hot whenever she reflected what she had heard him say to Flossie of the bills incurred in Rome, and which she meant to pay to the uttermost farthing, if her life was spared and she found something to do in the new world, where to work was not degrading. But she must know the amount, and she timidly asked Neil to tell her how much it was.

"Enough! I assure you. Those Italians are rascals and cheats—the whole of them; but it need not trouble you, the debt is paid," he said, a little bitterly. But Bessie insisted upon knowing, and finally wrung from him that two hundred and fifty pounds would probably cover the whole indebtedness.

"Bringing mother home and all?" Bessie asked, and he replied:

"Yes, bringing her home and all; that was a useless expense."

He spoke before he thought, and when he saw how quickly the tears came to Bessie's eyes, he repented the act, and stooping down to kiss her, said:

"Forgive me, Bessie, I did not mean to wound you; but mother did fret so about the bills. You know she did not like your mother."

"Tell her I shall pay them all," Bessie answered, as she withdrew herself from the arm he had thrown round her. "My mother was my own, and with all her faults I loved her, and I believe she was a good woman at the last. I should die if I did not."

"Yes, oh yes, of course," Neil said, feeling very awkward and uncertain what to say next.

At last he asked, rather abruptly, if Bessie knew where Jack Trevellian and Grey Jerrold were, saying he had never heard from either of them since he was in Rome.

Bessie replied that Flossie had written that Sir Jack was somewhere in the Bavarian Alps leading a kind of Bohemian life, and that he had written to his steward at Trevellian Castle that he should not be home until he had seen the Passion Play, then in process of presentation at Oberammergau.

"He never writes Flossie," Bessie said; "neither does she know where Mr. Jerrold is. She wrote to him at Venice, but he did net answer her letter. Perhaps he has gone home."

Neil said it was possible, adding, that she would probably see him in America, as his Aunt Lucy

lived in Allington.

"But you are not to fall in love with him," he continued, laughingly. "You are mine, and I shall come to claim you as soon as you write me you have found that fortune you are going after. Do your best, little Bess, and if you cannot untie the old maid's purse strings nobody can."

Bessie made no reply, but in her heart there was a feeling which boded no good to Neil, who left her the next day, promising to come down to Liverpool and see her off.

CHAPTER VI.

IN LIVERPOOL.

It was a steady down-pour, and the streets of Liverpool, always black and dirty, looked dirtier and blacker than ever on the day when Neil McPherson walked restlessly up and down the entrance hall of the North-western Hotel, now scanning the piles of baggage waiting to be taken to the Germanic, and then looking ruefully out upon the rain falling so steadily.

"It is a dreary day for her to start, poor little girl. I wish I had money of my own, and I would never let her go," he said to himself, as he began to realize what it would be to have Bessie separated from him the breadth of the great ocean.

Selfish and weak as we have shown Neil to be, he loved Bessie better than he loved anything except himself, and there was a load on his heart and a lump in his throat every time he thought of her. She was to sail that afternoon at three, and he had come from London on the night express to meet her and say good-by. His father, and mother, and Blanche were staying at a gentleman's house, a few miles from the city, and he was to join them there in the evening, and make one of a large dinner-party given in honor of Lady Jane. He had told his mother that Bessie was going to America, and in her delight at the good news she did not oppose his going to see her off, and actually handed him a five-pound note, which he was to give to Bessie with her best wishes for a pleasant voyage and happiness in the new world.

Thus armed and equipped, Neil waited until a whiz and a shriek outside told him the train from Chester was in, and, going out, he stood at the gate when Bessie came through, accompanied by Mrs. Goodnough, who carried her bag and waterproof, and who courtesied very low to Neil. Never had the latter seen Bessie look as lovely, as she did to him then in her simple traveling-dress of black, which brought out so clearly the dazzling purity of her complexion, and seemed to intensify the deep blue of her large, sad eyes.

"Oh, Bessie!" he exclaimed, taking her hand and putting it under his arm, "how can I let you go? Where is Mrs. Goodnough? and who is this woman bobbing up and down and staring so at me?"

Neil had a great contempt for people like Mrs. Goodnough, and when Bessie said to him, in a low tone, "It is my *compagnon du voyage*. She is rough-looking, but kind and good. I wish you would speak to her," he answered, quickly:

"That woman! You going out with her! Why, she looks like a fish-woman! She is only fit to be a steerage passenger!"

"She is a steerage passenger, and I am steerage, too," Bessie said, very quietly, while Neil dropped her hand as if it had burned him.

"Bessie, what do you mean?" he exclaimed, glancing down upon her and stopping suddenly.

"Let us go inside. Do not make a scene here, please," Bessie answered him, in a low, firm voice, while her cheek grew a shade paler and something shone in her eyes which Neil had never seen there before.

"A private parlor, please; a small one will answer," he said to the clerk at the bureau; and in a few moments he was sitting with Bessie at his side, asking her to tell him what she meant by saying she was steerage, too.

"It means," she began, unfalteringly, "that I have no money for a first class ticket, which costs more than three times as much as steerage. Many respectable people go out that way, and it is very comfortable. The Germanic is a new boat, and all the apartments are clean and nice, I am not ashamed of it. I am ashamed of nothing, except the debt I owe your mother, and that I had to borrow five pounds of Anthony, who insisted upon giving it to me but I would not take it. Why do you look at me so strangely, Neil? Do you think I have committed the unpardonable sin?"

"Bessie," Neil began, huskily, and in a voice choked with passion, "this is the drop too much. I knew you had some low instincts, but never dreamed you could stoop to this degradation, which affects me as much as it does you. But it is not too late to change, and you must do it."

"No, Neil, I cannot. I have barely enough to get there as it is," she replied, and he continued:

"Mother sent you five pounds with her compliments. Will that do? Here it is," and he offered her the note, which she put aside quickly, as she said:

"I cannot take that from your mother. Give it back to her, and, if you think she meant it well, thank her for me, and tell her I shall pay the whole some day when I earn it."

She emphasized the last words, and, more angry than before, Neil exclaimed:

"Earn it! Why will you persist in such nonsense, as if you were a common char-woman? You know as well as I that you are going to Aunt Betsey with the hope to get some of her money, as you unquestionably will."

"Neil, I am not," Bessie answered, firmly. "I am going to America, because there I can work and be respected, too, while here, according to your code, I cannot."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, go decently, and not herd with a lot of cattle, for emigrants are little better; and do not make yourself a spectacle for the other passengers to gaze upon and wonder about, as they will be sure to do. If you have no pride for yourself, you have no right to disgrace me. How do you think it will sound, some day, that Neil McPherson's wife went out as steerage? Have you no feeling about it?"

"Not in that way—no," Bessie replied. "It seems to me I have been in the steerage all my life, and this can be no worse. Lady Bothwaite went thus to Australia to see how it fared with the passengers."

"Yes, and got herself well laughed at as a lunatic," Neil rejoined. Then, after a pause, he continued, excitedly: "But to come to the point—you must either give up this crazy plan or me. I can have no share in this disgrace, which the world would never forget, and which mother would never forgive. My wife must not come from the steerage."

He spoke with great decision, for he was very angry, and for a moment there was perfect silence between them, while Bessie regarded him fixedly, with an expression on her face which made him uneasy, for he did not quite mean all he had said to her, and there was a strong clinging of his heart to this fragile little girl, who said at last, very softly and low:

"You mean it, Neil?—mean what you say?"

"Yes," he answered her. "You must choose steerage or me!"

"Then, Neil," she continued, taking off her engagement-ring and putting it into his hand, "I am afraid it must be steerage. There is your ring; it is all ended between us. And it is better that it is so. I have thought for some time that we could not be happy together with our dissimilar tastes. I should always be doing something you did not like, and which I could not think was wrong. Besides this, we need not deceive ourselves longer with the hope that your mother will ever give her consent to our marriage, for she will not, and as we cannot marry without it, I think it better that we should part; not in anger, Neil," and she laid her hand caressingly upon his arm. "We have loved each other too well for that. We will be friends always, as we are cousins, but never man and wife. We are free, both of us;" and as she spoke there kept coming over her a most delicious sense of relief, as if some burden were being rolled from her, and the expression of her face was not that of a young girl who has just broken with the man she loved.

And Neil felt the change in her, and rebelled against it, saying that he would not give her up though she went steerage a hundred times, and in his excitement he offered to marry her that day, if she were willing, and take her at once to his mother, who would not shut the door against them, when she knew the deed was done.

But Bessie was resolute, and Neil was obliged to abide with her decision, but his face was very gloomy, and there was a sense of pain and loss in his heart when at last he entered the carriage which was to take Bessie to the wharf.

Mrs. Goodnough was to attend to the luggage and see that it was on board, consequently Neil was spared all trouble, as Bessie meant he should be. The rain was still falling, and there were many cabs and hansoms crowding the dock when Neil and Bessie reached it.

"Where will you go? With the steerage gang? If so, for Heaven's sake keep your veil over your face. I should not like to have any friend of mine, who might chance to be here, see you," Neil said, impatiently, and Bessie replied:

"I shall stay by Mrs. Goodnough till the tug takes us out. There she is now, in the distance, I can make my way to her very well alone, and as it is raining hard, we had better say good-by here in the carriage. You cannot help me any, and—" she hesitated an instant, and then added: "You might be recognized."

Neil hated himself cordially, and called himself a sneak and a coward, but he followed Bessie's advice, and drawing up the window of the carriage, clasped her to his bosom as he said farewell, telling her it was not forever, that she was his still, and he should come for her some day, and claim her promise to him.

Bessie did not contradict him. She knew he was suffering greatly, and she pitied him, while all the time there was in her heart a little song of gladness that she was free. Taking his face between her hand, she kissed it tenderly, and said:

"Good-by, Neil, and may God bless you and make you a good and noble man. I know you will never forget me. Too much has passed between us for that; but you will learn to be very happy

without me. Good-by."

She touched his lips again; then, opening the door herself, she sprang to the ground before he could stop her.

"Don't get out; good-by," she said, waving him back as he was about to alight, and opening her umbrella and pulling the hood of her waterproof over her head, she started in the direction of Mrs. Goodnough, leaving Neil with such a tumult of thought crowding his brain as nearly drove him wild.

If he had not fancied that he saw one of his London acquaintances in the distance, he might have followed Bessie, but he could not be seen, for fear that the reason for his being there should come out, and it become known that a McPherson was allowed to go to America as a steerage passenger; so he sat a moment and watched the little figure with the waterproof hood over its head making its way to where a rough-looking woman was standing, with an immense cotton umbrella over her sun-bonnet and evidently waiting for some one. And so Bessie vanished from Neil's sight, and he saw her no more.

"Back to the hotel," he said to the cabman, who obeyed willingly, while Neil, always on the alert, closed the windows lest he should he seen and recognized.

But the air was close and hot, and when he thought himself out of danger he drew the window down and looked out just in time to meet the eyes of Grey Jerrold who was driving in an opposite direction. There was an exclamation from Grey, a call for both cabmen to stop, and before Neil could collect his senses the two carriages were drawn up side by side and he was shaking hands with Grey through the window.

"So glad I happened to meet you," Grey said. "I wanted to say good-by, for I am off for America."

"America!" Neil repeated, and his lower jaw dropped suddenly, as if he had been seized with paralysis.

"Yes," Grey rejoined. "I sail in the Germanic with my Aunt Lucy. She came down to Liverpool yesterday with some friends. I shall find her at the wharf. I have just arrived in the train from Chester. I was only in London for a day, but I called at your house to see you, and learned that you were out of town, so I left a little note for you. Neil"—and Grey spoke very low, as we do when we speak of the dead—"I have been in Prussia, Austria, and Russia since I left Italy, but I know I ought to have written and told you how sorry I was for—for what happened in Rome. If it had not been for my aunt, I believe I should have gone back and helped you. I—"

Here Grey stopped, for since his interview with Jack Trevellian he had never mentioned Bessie's name to any one, and he could not do so now even to Neil, who, having no idea of the mistake under which Grey was laboring, and supposing he, of course, was referring to Daisy, replied with an indifference which made Grey's flesh creep:

"Yes, thanks; they told me how kind you were, and I ought to have written you, but I had so much to see to. I trust I may never go through the like again. Those landlords are perfect swindlers, the whole of them, and ought to be indicted."

He spoke excitedly, and Grey gazed at him in blank astonishment. Was he perfectly heartless that he could speak thus of an event, the mere remembrance of which made Grey's heart throb with anguish? Had he really no abiding love for Bessie, that he could speak thus of the trouble and expense her death had caused him? Grey could not tell, but he was never as near hating Neil McPherson, as he was that moment, and he felt a greater desire to thrash him than he had done at Melrose when the star-spangled banner was insulted.

He could not pursue the subject further, and he changed the conversation by speaking of Jack Trevellian, from whom he had not heard since he left him in Vienna, weeks before.

"I have written to him," he said, "but have received no answer. I have also written to Miss Meredith, with a like result, and conclude I have no friends this side the water, so I am going home."

"You can count on me for a friend always," Neil said, with a sudden gush of warmth, as he extended his hand, adding hurriedly: "And now I must say good-by, as I have an engagement. *Au revoir* and *bon voyage*."

"Good-by," Grey answered, a little coldly, and the carriages moved on, greatly to the relief of Neil, who had been in a tremor of fear lest Bessie should be inquired for and he be obliged to tell where she was.

During his interview with Grey his conscience and his pride had been waging a fierce battle the latter bidding him say nothing of Bessie, who possibly might not be seen during the voyage, as she had promised to keep strictly out of the sight of the saloon passengers, and, unless necessary, not to tell any one except her aunt that she had crossed as steerage. Thus the disgrace might never be known. But his conscience bade him tell Grey the truth, and ask him to find Bessie on shipboard, and do what he could to lighten the dreariness of her situation. Why he did not do this Neil could not tell, and when the opportunity was passed he cursed himself for a miserable coward, and actually put his head from the window to bid the cabman turn back and overtake the carriage they had met.

"Ten chances to one if I find him now. I'll write and confess the whole thing," he finally decided, and so went back to the hotel, where he passed a miserable three hours, until it was time to dress for the dinner at the house where his mother was visiting.

It was quite a large dinner-party, consisting mostly of matrons and elderly men, so that Neil's presence was hailed with delight, and he was the center of attraction for at least four young ladies, among whom Blanche was conspicuous. But Neil had no heart for anything, and seemed so silent and absent-minded that his mother whispered to him in an aside:

"What ails you, Neil? Surely you are not fretting after that girl?"

She knew Bessie was to sail that afternoon, and that Neil was to see her off, but she was not prepared for the white face which he turned to her, or the bitter tones in which he said:

"Yes, I am fretting for that girl, as you call her. And I would give half my life to be with her this minute. But she is gone. She is lost to me forever, and I wish I were dead."

To this outburst Lady Jane made no reply, but, as she looked into her son's face, there flashed upon her a doubt as to the result of her opposition to Bessie, and the question as to whether it would not be better to withdraw it and let him have his way. The girl was well enough, or would be if she had money, and this she would unquestionably get from the old-maid aunt. She would wait and see, and meantime she would give Neil a grain of comfort, so she said to him:

"I had no idea you loved her so much. Perhaps that aunt may make her rich, and then she would not be so bad a match. You *must* marry money."

Yes, Neil must marry money if possible, but he must marry Bessie, too; and as he looked upon the broken engagement as something which could easily be taken up again, he felt greatly consoled by his mother's words, and for the remainder of the evening was as gay and agreeable as Lady Jane could wish. But still there was always in his mind the picture of a forlorn little girl, wrapped in a blue waterproof, with the hood over her head, disappearing from his sight through the rain, and he was constantly wondering what she was doing, and if Grey Jerrold would find her.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE SHIP.

Never in her life had Bessie felt so utterly desolate and friendless as when she said good-by to Neil and threaded her way through the crowd of drays, and cabs, and express-wagons to where Mrs. Goodnough was waiting for her. All her former life, with the dear old home, lay behind her, while before her was the broad ocean and the uncertainty as to what she should find in far-off America. Added to this there was a clinging in her heart to Neil, whom she had loved too long to forget at once, and although she felt it was far better to be free, she was conscious of a sense of loss, and loneliness, and inexpressible homesickness when she at last took her seat in the tug which was to take her and her fellow-companions to the steamer moored in the river.

Oh, how damp and close it was on the boat, especially in the dark corner where Bessie crouched as if to hide herself from view! She had promised Neil to avoid observation as much as possible, and, keeping her hood over her head, she tied over it a dark blue vail, which hid her face from sight, and hid, too, the tears, which fell like rain, as she sat with clasped hands leaning her aching head against Mrs. Goodnough, who, though a rough, uncultivated woman, had a kind, motherly heart, and pitied the young girl, who, she knew, was so sadly out of place.

There were not many cabin passengers on the ship, and these were too much absorbed in finding their state-rooms and settling their luggage to pay any attention to, or even to think of, the few German and English emigrants, who went to their own quarters on the middle deck. And so no one noticed the girl, who clung so timidly to the Welsh woman, and who shook with cold and nervousness as she sat down upon the berth allotted to her and glanced furtively around at the people and the appointments of the place. Everything was scrupulously clean, but of the plainest kind, and "steerage" seemed written everywhere. There was nothing aristocratic in Bessie's nature, and, if necessary, she would have broken stone upon the highway, and still Neil himself could not have rebelled more hotly against her surroundings than she did for a few moments, feeling as if she could not endure it, and that if she staid there she must throw herself into the sea.

"Oh, I cannot bear it—I cannot. Why did I come?" she said, as she felt the trembling of the vessel and knew they were in motion. "Oh, can't I go back? Won't they stop and let me off?" she cried convulsively, clutching the arm of Mrs. Goodnough, who tried to comfort her.

"There! there, darling! Don't take it so hard," she said, tenderly caressing the fair head lying in her lap. "They'll not stop now till we are off Queenstown, when there will be a chance to go back if you like, but I don't think you will. America is better than Wales. You will be happy there."

Bessie did not think she should ever be happy again, but with her usual sweet unselfishness, and thoughtfulness for others, she tried to dry her tears, so as not to distress her companion, and

when the latter suggested that she go out and look at the docks of Liverpool and the shores as they passed, she pulled up her hood and tied on her vail, and with her back to anyone who might see her from the upper deck, where the first-class passengers were congregated, she stood gazing at the land she was leaving, until a chilly sensation in her bones and the violent pain in her head sent her to her berth, which she did not leave again for three days and more.

She knew when they stopped at Queenstown, and was glad for a little respite from the rolling motion, which nearly drove her wild and made her so deadly sick. But she did not see the tug when it came out laden with Irish emigrants, of whom there was a large number. Of these the young girls and single women were sent to the rear of the ship, where Bessie lay, half unconscious of what was passing around her, until she heard the sound of suppressed weeping, so close to her that it seemed almost in her ear.

Opening her eyes, she saw a young girl sitting on the floor, with her head upon the berth next to her own, sobbing convulsively and whispering to herself:

"Oh, me father, me father; me heart is breaking for you. What'll ye do without yer Jennie, when the nights are dark and long. Oh, me poor old father, I wish I had niver come. We might have starved together."

"Poor girl," Bessie said, pityingly, as she stretched out her hand and touched the bowed head, "I am so sorry for you. Is your father old, and why did you leave him?"

At the sound of the sweet voice, so full of sympathy, the girl started quickly, and turning to Bessie, looked at her wonderingly; then, as if by some subtle intuition she recognized the difference there was between herself and the stranger whose beautiful face fascinated her so strongly, she said:

"Oh, lady—an' sure you be a lady, even if you are here with the likes of me—I had to lave me father, we was so poor and the taxes is so high, and the rint so big intirely, and the landlord a-threatenin' of us to set us in the road any foine mornin'; and so I'm goin' to Ameriky to take a place; me cousin left to be married, and if I does well—an' sure I'll try me best—I gets two pounds a month, and ivery penny I'll save to bring the old father over. But you cannot be going out to work, and have you left your father?"

"My father is dead, and mother, too," Bessie answered, with a sob. "I have left them both in their graves. I *am* going out to work, but I have no place waiting for me like you, and I do not know of a friend in the world who can help me."

"An' faith, then, you can just count on me, Jennie Mahoney," the impulsive Irish girl exclaimed, stretching out her hand to Bessie. "You spoke kind like to me when me heart was fit to break, and it's meself will stand by you and take care of ye, too, as if ye was the greatest lady in the land, as ye might be, for I knows very well that the likes of ye has nought to do with the likes of me; an' if them spalpeens dares to come round a speerin' at ye, it's meself will shovel out their eyes with me nails. I know 'em. They are on every ship, and they are on this. I heard one of 'em say when I come aboard, 'By Jove, Hank, that's a neat Biddy, I think I'll cultivate her.' Cultivate me, indade! I'll Hank him. Let him come anigh you or me, the bla'guard!"

Bessie had no definite idea what the girl meant by spalpeens and bla'guards, whose eyes she was to shovel out, but she remembered what Neil had said about her attracting the notice of the upper deck passengers, and resolved more fully than ever to keep herself from sight as much as possible. She had a friend in Jennie, to whom she put numberless questions as to where she was going, and so forth. But Jennie could not remember the name of the lady or place. Her cousin, who had married lately, and lived in New York, was to tell her everything on her arrival.

"It is a good place," she said, "and if it's companion or the like of that ye are wishin' to be, I'll spake a good word to the lady, who, me cousin says, is mighty quare, but very good and kind when she takes a fancy."

Bessie smiled as she thought of an offer of help coming from this poor girl, but she did not resent the offer. On the contrary, she felt comforted because of it, and because of Jennie, whose faithfulness and devotion knew no stint or cessation during the next twenty-four hours, when it seemed to Bessie that she must die, both from the terrible sea-sickness and the close atmosphere of the cabin, where so many were congregated.

The fourth day out Mrs. Goodnough said Bessie must be taken into the fresh air, as nothing else would avail to help her, and a stool was placed for her on the deck, and then Jennie took her in her strong arms, and carrying her out put her down as gently as if she had been a baby.

"An', faith ye must be covered," she said, as, faint and sick, Bessie leaned back against the door, thus fully disclosing to view her white, beautiful face, which made such a striking picture among the steerage passengers, and began to attract attention from the upper deck.

It had already been rumored through the ship that there was a young lady in the steerage, and as it takes but little to interest a ship's company, much curiosity was felt concerning her, and when it was known that she had come out from the cabin, quite a little group gathered in the part of the boat nearest to her, and stood looking down at her.

"Och, me honeys," Jennie said, frowning savagely at them, "I'll spile yer fun for you, an' it's not her blessed face ye shall stare at, though the sight of it might do ye good," and rushing to her

berth she brought out Mrs. Goodnough's big sun-bonnet, which she tied on Bessie's head, thus effectually hiding her features from sight. "There!" Jennie continued, as she contemplated the disfiguring head-gear with great satisfaction, "them spalpeens can't see ye now, and if they heave you down anything it's meself will heave it back, for what business have they to be takin' things from the table without the captain's lave, and throwin' 'em to us as if we was a lot of pigs. It's just stalin', and nothin' else."

The fresh air and change did Bessie good, and, protected by the sun-bonnet and Jennie, she sat outside until sunset, and was then carried to her berth. That night the wind changed, causing the ship to roll in a most unsatisfactory manner; and Bessie, who was exceedingly sensitive to every motion, was not able to go outside again, but lay on her bed, whiter a great deal than the pillow under her head, and with a look of suffering on her face which touched the kind-hearted Jennie to the quick.

"An' sure she'll be throwin' up ivery blessed thing she'll ate for the next year," she said. "If I could only right side up her stomach. I wonder if an orange would do it;" and counting her little stock of money—six shillings in all—she took a few pennies, and going to the stewardess, bade her buy two of the finest and swatest oranges in the butler's pantry."

"Here, honey! Here's what will turn that nasty, creepin' sickness, an' make ye feet like the top of the mornin'," she said to Bessie, as she sat down beside her and held a piece of the juicy fruit to her lips.

And Bessie was trying to take it when a voice outside said to Mrs. Goodnough:

"I heard there was some one very sick, and have come to see if I can do anything for her."

The next moment a middle-aged lady, with grayish hair and a sweet, sad face, came in, and going up to Jennie, said:

"Is this the sick girl?"

For a moment Bessie's face was scarlet, and there was a frightened look in her blue eyes as she regarded her visitor, who continued, very gently:

"I am sorry to find you suffering so much. My nephew Grey has been sick all the voyage, or I should have been down here before. What can I do for you?"

"Her nephew Grey!" Bessie repeated the words to herself, us she stared in bewilderment at the face bending over her, recognizing in it, or fancying that she did, a resemblance to the face which had looked so pityingly at her by her dead father's bedside, and which, whether waking or sleeping, haunted her continually. Was this woman Grey's Aunt Lucy, of whom she had heard so much? and was he there on the ship with her, and would he know by and by that she was there and come to see her? Then she remembered Neil, and her promise to let no one know who she was, lest he should be disgraced. So when Miss Grey sat down beside her, and taking the hot hands in hers, said to her, "Please tell me what I can do for you, and pardon me if I ask your name," she sobbed piteously:

"No, no—oh, no! I promised never to let it be known that I was here, *I* am not ashamed, but he is, and I can tell only this—I am very poor and am going to America to earn my living. I had no money for a first-class ticket, and so I came in here. They are very kind to me, Jennie and Mrs. Goodnough. I am going out with her. Are you an American?"

"Yes; I am Miss Grey, from Allington, I will help you if I can," was the reply, and then Bessie's tears fell faster, as she cried:

"Thank you, no. You must not talk to me. You must not come again. Please go away, or I shall break my promise to Neil."

The name dropped from her lips unwittingly, and Miss Grey repeated it to herself, trying to remember why it seemed so familiar to her, and as she thought and looked wonderingly at the tear-stained face, the impulsive Jennie broke in:

"An' plaze yer ladyship, if you'll go away now and lave Miss Bessie to be aisy for a little, I'm sure she'll see you again."

"Bessie! Neil!" Miss Grey repeated aloud, and then she thought of Grey's friend, Neil McPherson, and remembered there was a cousin Bessie of whom she, too, had heard. Could this be she? Impossible; and yet so strong an impression had been made upon her that as she passed out and met Mrs. Goodnough, who, she knew, had the young lady in charge, she said to her:

"I hope you will let me know if I can do anything for Miss McPherson."

"Did she tell you her name?" Mrs. Goodnough asked, in surprise, for Bessie had confided to her the fact that, as far as possible, she wished to be strictly incognito on the ship.

Miss Lucy was sure now, and with her thoughts in a tumult of perplexity and wonder, she hurried away to the state-room of her nephew.

CHAPTER VIII.

GREY AND HIS AUNT.

Grey had been very sick the entire voyage. Since the day when he heard that Bessie was dead he had lost all interest in everything, and though he went wherever his aunt wished to go, it was only to please her, and not because he cared in the least for anything he saw. From Flossie he had never heard, for her letter did not reach him, and he had no thought that Bessie was alive, and everywhere he went he saw always the dear face, white and still, as he knew it must have looked when it lay in the coffin. Sometimes the pain in his heart was so hard to bear that he was half tempted to tell his aunt of his sorrow and crave her sympathy. But this he had not done, and Bessie's name had never passed his lips since he heard she was dead.

At last, alarmed by the pallor of his face, and the tired, listless manner, so unlike himself, Lucy suggested that they go home, and to this Grey readily assented. But first he must see Bessie's grave, and at London he left his aunt in charge of some friends who were going home in the same ship and would see her to Liverpool. He was going to Wales on business, he said, and as she knew he had been there two or three times before, Lucy asked no questions, and had no suspicion of the nature of the business which took him first to Carnarvon, where a last fruitless search was made for Elizabeth Rogers or some of her kin, and then to Stoneleigh, which he reached on an early morning train, the same which took Bessie to Liverpool! Thus near do the wheels of fate oftentimes come to each other.

In her hurry to secure a compartment, Bessie did not see the young man alighting from a carriage only the fourth from the one she was entering, and as both Anthony and Dorothy, who were at the station with her, went across the bridge to do some errands before returning home, no one observed Grey as he hurried along the road to Stoneleigh, and entering the grounds, stood at last by the new grave in the corner close to the fence, where he believed Bessie was lying.

Bearing his head to the falling rain, which seemed to cool his burning brow, he said aloud:

"Darling Bessie, can you see me now? Do you know that I am here, standing by your grave, and do you know how much I love you? Surely it is no wrong to Neil for me to whisper to your dead ears the story of my love. Oh, Bessie, I have come to say good-by, and my heart is breaking as I say it. If you could only answer me—could give me some token that you know, it would be some comfort to me when I am far away, for I am going home, Bessie, to the home over the sea, where I once hoped I might take you as my wife, before I knew of Neil's prior claim, but so long as life lasts I shall remember the dear little girl who was so much to me; and here I pledge my word that no other love shall ever come between us. I have loved you; I have lost you; but thank God, I have not lost your memory. Good-by, darling; good-by."

He stooped and kissed the rain-wet sod above the grave, then walked swiftly away in the direction of Bangor, and took the first through train to Liverpool. On arriving at the hotel he learned that his aunt had already gone to the wharf with her friends, and taking a cab, he, too, was driven there, meeting with Neil, who confounded and disgusted him with his apparent indifferences and heartlessness.

Absorbed in his own sad refection, Grey had no thought for any of his fellow passengers, whether steerage or cabin, and disguised by her hood and vail, Bessie might have brushed against him without recognition.

So he had no idea how near she was to him, and as the motion of the ship soon began to affect him, he went to his state-room, which he scarcely left again for several days. Once, when the doctor was visiting him, his aunt, who was present, asked if there were many sick among the steerage passengers, and if they were comfortable?

There was but one who was very sick, the doctor replied, and her case puzzled him, she seemed so superior to her class, and so reticent with regard to herself.

"I will go and see her," Lucy said, and that afternoon she made her visit to Bessie, with the result we have seen.

Puzzled and curious, she went next to her nephew, whom she found dressed and in his sea-chair, which had been brought into his state-room. He was better, and was going on deck as soon as the steward could come and help him. Sitting down beside him, Lucy began rather abruptly:

"I have heard you talk a great deal of Neil McPherson, whose father is brother to Miss Betsey McPherson, of Allington, and I have heard you speak of a Bessie McPherson. Do you know where she is?"

Grey's face was white as marble, while a spasm of pain passed over his features as he said: "Oh, Aunt Lucy, you do not know how you hurt me Why did you speak of her?"

"Because I have a suspicion that she is on the ship," Lucy replied; but Grey shook his head mournfully as he said to her:

"That is impossible; Bessie is dead. She died in Rome last spring. She was sick with the fever all the time we were there, and I was with her every day, but did not tell you, as I knew you would

be so anxious for me. And when she died I could not talk of her to any one. Poor little Bessie! She was so young, and sweet, and pure. You would have loved her so much."

"Yes," Lucy said, taking one of Grey's hands, and holding it caressingly, for she guessed what was in his heart. "Tell me about her if you can. You say she is dead, and you are sure?"

"Yes, sure," he answered. "I did not see her die, it is true, but I know she is dead, and I have stood by her grave at Stoneleigh. When I left you in London I went to her grave, and I believe I left all my life and soul there with her. I never thought I could talk to any one of her, but it seems to me now it would be a relief to tell you about her. Shall I?"

"Yes, tell me," Lucy said, and closing his eyes, and leaning back wearily in his chair, Grey told her everything he knew with regard to Bessie McPherson, who had died in Rome, and whose grave he had stood beside in the yard at Stoneleigh; told her, too, of Bessie's engagement to Neil, of which he had heard from Jack Trevellian, and of Neil's apparent heartlessness and indifference when he met him in the streets of Liverpool.

"Poor little Bessie," he said in conclusion. "You don't know what a weary life she led, or how bravely she bore it; but she is dead, and perhaps it is better so than if she were the wife of Neil."

"Poor boy," Lucy said, very gently, when he had finished his story, "you loved Bessie very much."

"Yes, I loved her so much that just to have her mine for one brief month I believe I would give twenty years of my life," Grey replied, and every word was a sob, for he was moved as he had never before been moved, even when he first heard that Bessie was dead.

All thoughts of going on deck were given up for that day, and when the steward came to help him up the stairs, he helped him instead to his berth, where he lay with his eyes closed, though Lucy, who sat beside him, knew he was not asleep, for occasionally a tear gathered on his long lashes and dropped upon his cheek.

Late in the afternoon Lucy made her way again to the steerage quarters, for thoughts of the sick girl had haunted her continually, though she did not now believe her to be the Bessie whom Grey had loved and lost. But who was she, and who was the Neil of whom she had inadvertently spoken? and why was she so like the Bessie, Grey had described?

"Blue eyed, golden-haired, with a face like an angel," she repeated to herself, as she descended the stairs to the lower deck and walked to the door, around which several women were gathered with anxious concern upon their faces.

CHAPTER IX.

BESSIE IS PROMOTED.

"She is took very bad, mum," one of the women said to Lucy, as she stood aside to let her pass into the close, hot cabin, where Bessie was talking wildly and incessantly of her father and mother, and of Grey, while Mrs. Goodnough and Jennie tried in vain to quiet her.

"What is it? How long has she been this way?" Lucy asked, and the voluble Jennie replied:

"An' sure, mum, just afther ye left it sthruck to her head, and she wint out of herself intirely, and goes on awful about her father and mother, who died in Rome with the faver and is buried in some stonehape or the likes of it, and of Grey Jerry, who, she says, is on the ship and won't come to her. An' sure, would ye be so kind as to try yerself what ye can do?"

"Talking of Grey!" Lucy repeated, ten times more perplexed than she had been before. "How does she know my nephew, and who is she?" Then, turning to Mrs. Goodnough, she continued: "There is some mystery here which I must solve, I fancied this morning that she might be Bessie McPherson, of Stoneleigh Park, Bangor, but my nephew tells me that she died in Rome—and if so, who is this young girl?"

"Oh, madam," Mrs. Goodnough began, "there can be no harm in telling you now, though she didn't want anybody to know; not for herself—she ain't a bit ashamed, but some of her high friends is, and made her promise to keep to herself who she was; but you are bound to know, and she *is* Miss Bessie McPherson, of Stoneleigh, and she is not dead at all, and never has been. She had the fever in Rome, but she got well, and it was her mother who died there; this is the truth, and may God forgive me if I have done harm by my tattling."

"You have done no harm," Lucy replied, "but on the contrary a great good to Miss McPherson, whom I shall at once have removed to my state-room. Fortunately I am alone, and can share it with her as well as not."

What Lucy Grey willed to do she went about at once, and in less than an hour she had interviewed the captain, the purser, and the doctor, and, while the passengers were at dinner, Bessie was lifted carefully in Jennie's strong arms and taken to Miss Grey's state-room, where she was laid upon the lounge under the window, as the place where she would have more room and

better air. The change seemed to revive her at once, and when, after her dinner, Miss Grey returned to her state room, she found Bessie sleeping quietly, with the faithful Jennie keeping watch beside her. The next morning she was still better, and Jennie, who had insisted upon sitting beside her during the night, was delighted to find her fever gone and her reason restored.

Very wonderingly Bessie looked around her when she first awoke from a sleep which had lasted several hours, and then, as her eyes fell upon Jennie, she asked:

"What is it, Jennie? What has happened? This is not the steerage! Where am I?"

"And indade ye are in heaven, an' that's the angel who brought you here," Jennie replied, nodding toward Miss Grey, who came at once to Bessie's couch.

Bending over her, and kissing her gently, she said:

"I am glad you are better."

"Yes," Bessie answered, falteringly; "but what is it? How came I here?"

In as few words as possible Lucy explained to her that she had discovered her identity, and could not allow her to remain where she was.

"It was not right for me to have this large room all to myself, and leave you in that cramped, crowded place," she said, and Bessie answered her:

"Yes, it was kind in you, but I am sorry you found me out, I promised no one should know me. Neil will be so angry and disgraced."

"Drat that Neil, whoever he is!" Jennie exclaimed, energetically. "Disgraced, indade, I only wish I had him by the scruff of his neck, if he thinks anything can disgrace you, or make you less a lady. Them smells, and they are awful sometimes, when half the folks is sick, can't do it."

At this speech Bessie laughed aloud, the first real laugh since her mother died, but it did her good; and when Jennie had washed her face and brushed her hair and given her her breakfast she declared herself able to get up. But this Lucy would not allow.

"You must be quiet to-day, and to-morrow you can go on deck," she said; and then, as Jennie had gone out, she sat down by Bessie's side, and taking one of her hands, continued: "Do you think you are strong enough to see an old friend by and by?"

Bessie knew she meant Grey, and the hot blood surged into her face as she answered, eagerly:

"Yes, oh, yes. He will bring Stoneleigh back to me; he was so kind when father died, and in Rome, and everywhere. Can I see him now?"

"Not just yet," Miss Grey said, smiling at the young girl's eagerness, which showed itself in every feature. "I doubt if Grey is yet up. He has been sick all the voyage, and is very weak, and I must prepare him first. He thinks you are dead."

"Dead!" Bessie repeated. "How can he think so? I do not understand."

As briefly as possible Miss Grey explained all she knew of the mistake which the messenger boy must have made when he told Grey, in Florence, that Bessie had died the very day he left Rome.

"Oh, yes, I see," Bessie rejoined. "It was the American girl on the same floor with me. Flossie told me of her, and I heard them taking her away that night. Oh, it was so sad; and Mr. Jerrold thought it was I! Was he sorry, Miss Grey?"

She asked the question timidly, and into her eyes there came a look of great gladness when her friend replied:

"Yes, very, very sorry."

"Will you tell him I am not dead? It was poor mamma who died. Tell him I am here," Bessie continued; and Miss Grey looked curiously at the girl, who, being, as she supposed, engaged to Neil, could be so glad that Grey was sorry, and so eager to see him.

"Yes, I will tell him and bring him to you after a little; but you must be quiet, and not excite yourself too much. I must have you well when we reach New York, and we have only three days more," Miss Grey replied, and then, with a kiss, she went away to Grey's state-room at the other end of the ship.

But he was not there, and upon inquiry she learned that he had gone up on deck, where she found him in his chair, sitting by himself, and gazing out upon the sea, with that sad, troubled look on his face, which had of late become habitual, and of which she now knew the reason.

"Grey," she said, drawing an unoccupied chair close to him, and speaking very low, "you are better this morning. Do you think you can bear some very good news?"

"Yes," he answered her. "What is it? Are we nearer New York than we supposed?"

"No; it has nothing to do with New York, or the ship, but somebody in it. Grey"—and Lucy spoke hurriedly now—"did it never occur to you that possibly you were mistaken with regard to Bessie's death—that it might be some one else who died in Rome and was buried at Stoneleigh—her

mother, perhaps?"

"What!" and Grey drew a long, gasping breath, as he stared wonderingly at her. "Go on," he added: "tell me what you mean."

"I mean," his aunt replied, "that Bessie is not dead. I have seen her. I have spoken with her. She is on the ship. She is in my state-room, waiting for you. She is the sick girl I told you about."

Grey made an effort to spring from his chair, but had not the power to do so. The shock had been too great, and he sank back half fainting, whispering as he did so:

"Tell me everything—now—at once. It will not harm me; joy seldom kills. Tell me the whole."

So she told him all she knew, and the particulars of her finding Bessie among the steerage passengers, and having her removed to her room.

"Yes, I see—I understand how the mistake occurred." Grey said. "But why did not Neil tell me he had been to see her off?"

"He was probably ashamed to let you know that she was in the steerage. He hoped you would not find her," Miss Grey replied; and Grey exclaimed:

"The coward! If it were not wrong, I should have him;" while a fierce pang shot through his heart that Bessie was bound to Neil, and that, though living, she was no nearer to him than if she were dead and in that grave by which he had so lately stood.

Still it would be something to see her again, to hear her voice, to look into her eyes, and have her all to himself for the remainder of the voyage, which he now wished had just commenced.

"Thank God she lives, even though she does not live for me," he said to himself; and then, at his aunt's suggestion, he tried to control his nerves and bring himself into a quieter, calmer condition before going down to see her.

It was nearly an hour before he felt himself strong enough to do it, and when at last he reached the narrow passage, and knew there was but a step between him and Bessie, he trembled so that his aunt was obliged to support him as he steadied himself against the door of the state-room. Glancing in for an instant, Miss Grey put her finger upon her lip, saying to him:

"She is asleep; sit quietly down till she wakens."

There was a buzzing in Grey's ears and a blur before his eyes, so that he did not at once see distinctly the face which lay upon the pillow resting on one hand, with the bright hair clinging about the neck and brow. Bessie had fallen asleep while waiting for him, and there was a smile upon her lips and a flush upon her cheek, which made her more like the Bessie he knew at Stoneleigh than like the white-faced girl he had left in Rome, and whom he had never thought to see again.

"It is Bessie and she is alive," he said, under his breath, and bending over her he softly kissed her forehead saying as he did so, "My darling! just for the moment *mine*, if Neil's by and by."

For an instant Bessie moved uneasily, then slept again, while Grey watched her with a great hunger in his heart and a longing to take her in his arms, and, in spite of a hundred Neils, tell her of his love. How beautiful she was in that calm sleep, and Grey noted every point of beauty, from the sheen of her golden hair to the dimpled hand which was just within his reach.

"Poor little hand," he said, laying his own carefully upon it; "how much it has done for others. Oh, if I could only call it mine, it should never know toil again."

He might have raised it to his lips if just then the eyes had not unclosed, as with a start Bessie awoke and looked wonderingly at him for an instant; then, instead of withdrawing her hand from his, she held the other towards him, and raising herself up, cried out:

"Oh, Mr. Jerrold, I am so glad! Nothing is half so dreary now that I know you are on the ship, and you will tell Neil it was not my fault that you found me. He may be very angry."

At the mention of Neil a feeling of constraint crept over Grey, and he quietly released his hands from Bessie's lest he should say to her words he ought not to say to one who was plighted to another. And Bessie noticed the change in him, and her lip quivered in a grieved kind of way, as she said:

"You thought me dead, and you were sorry just a little?"

"Oh, Bessie," and with a mighty effort Grey managed to control himself, "you will never know how sorry, or how glad I am to find you still alive; but you must not talk to me now. You must rest, so as to go on deck and get some strength and some color back to your cheeks. I promised auntie not to stay long. I will come again by and by."

Drawing the covering around her as deftly as a woman could have done, he went out and left her alone to wonder at his manner. Bessie had never forgotten the words spoken to her in Rome, and which she had said he must never repeat.

Over and over again, at intervals, had sounded in her ears, "I love you with my whole heart and soul, and whether you live or die you will be the sweetest memory of my life." She had not died—

she had lived; she had seen him again and found him changed. Perhaps it was better so, she reasoned, and yet she was conscious of a feeling of disappointment or loss, though it was such joy to know he was near her, and that, by and by he would come to her again. And he came after lunch, and the steward carried her on deck and wrapped her in Miss Grey's warm rug, and Grey himself sat down beside her and talked to her of America, and she told him that she was not going to be a burden to her aunt, or even a guest very long, but to work and earn money with which to pay her debts. And Grey let her do most of the talking, and even promised, if he did not succeed in Allington, to see if he could find something for her to do in in Boston.

"I am very sure that I could find you a situation there if I tried," he said, with a merry look in his eyes which was lost on Bessie, whose thick vail was over her face, and who was gazing off upon the waves bearing her so fast toward the strange land to which she was going.

The next day she was able to walk the deck for some hours with Grey as her attendant; and when, at last, land was in sight, she seemed almost as well and bright as ever as she stood looking eagerly upon either shore, and declaring America beautiful as a picture. It had been arranged that she should stop for a few hours at the hotel with Miss Lucy and Grey, and then go on with them to Allington. But their plans were changed when they reached the wharf, for there they were met by a messenger who had been sent from Mr. Burton Jerrold with the intelligence that Grey's mother was very ill, and that Lucy must come at once with Grey without stopping at her own home.

"I am sorry, for I wished to take you to your aunt myself," Lucy said to Bessie, adding after a moment, "but I will give you a letter of introduction, if you like."

"No, thank you," Bessie replied; "I would rather go to her alone, so that if she is kind I shall know it is to me, and not to you, or because she thinks it will please you."

"No danger of that," Grey said, laughingly; "she is a great stickler for the naked truth, as she expresses it, and all the Aunt Lucys in the world could not make her say she liked you if she did not. She is a singular specimen, but she is sure to like you, and if she does not, go to my Aunt Hannah; she would welcome you as a Godsend. She is the auntie who lives in the pasture-land. I shall soon come to Allington and see you," he added, as he bade her good-by, for he and his aunt were to take the express, which did not stop at Allington, and she was to take the accommodation, which did.

He had made all the arrangements for her, and seen that her baggage was checked and her ticket bought; but still she felt very desolate and helpless when he left her and she was alone with Jennie, who staid by her to the last, promising to let her know if she heard of any situation either as governess or companion.

Mrs. Goodnough had gone at once with her daughter who had met her at the wharf, but Jennie's cousin, who lived out of the city, had sent her husband to the ship, and, as he was porter in one of the large warehouses, and did not go home till night, Jennie had leisure to attend to Bessie, whom she saw to the train, and to whom she said at parting:

"Keep yer vail down, honey, for there's spalpeens an' bla'guards everywhere, and they might be for spakin to ye. Good-by; God bless ye."

CHAPTER X.

BESSIE MEETS HER AUNT.

The accommodation train from New York to Boston was late that day. There was a detention at Hartford and another at Springfield, so that the clock on Miss Betsey McPherson's mantel struck seven when she heard the whistle of the locomotive as the cars stopped at the Allington station. As Miss Betsey was when we last saw her so she was now—tall, and angular, and severe, and looking, as she sat in her hard, straight-back chair, like the very embodiment of the *naked truth*, from the fit of her dress to the scanty handful of hair, twisted in a knot at the back of her head.

She had heard of Daisy's death from her brother only a few days before, and had felt a pang of regret that she had treated her quite so harshly on the occasion of her visit to her.

"I might, at least, have been civil to her, though it did make me so mad to see her smirking up into my face, with all those diamonds on her, and to know that she was even trying to fool young Allen Browne."

And then her thoughts went after Bessie, for whom her brother had asked help, saying she was left entirely alone in the world, and was, for aught he knew, a very nice girl.

"It is impossible for me to care for her," he wrote, "and as my wife paid all the expenses of her sickness in Rome and for bringing the body home, she will do no more. So it rests with you to care for Bessie, I should think you would like some young person with you in your old age."

"In my old age!" Miss Betsey repeated to herself, as she sat thinking of John's letter, "Yes, I suppose it has come to that, for I am in my sixties, and the boys call me the old woman when I

order them out of the cherry tree, and still I feel almost as young as I did forty years ago when Charlie died. Oh, Charlie, my life would have been so different had you lived;" and in the eyes usually so stern and uncompromising there were great tears, as the lonely woman's thoughts went back to the long ago, and the awful tragedy which had darkened all her life.

And then it was that, in the midst of her softened mood, a little girlish figure, dressed in black, came up the steps and knocked timidly at the open door. Bessie had left her luggage at the station, and walked to the house which was pointed out to her as Miss McPherson's by a boy who volunteered to show her the way, and who said to her:

"She's a queer old cove, and if you don't mind your p's and q's she will take your head off. She's game, she is."

This was not very reassuring, and Bessie's heart beat rapidly as she went up the steps to the door. She saw the square, straight figure in the chair, and was prepared for the quick, sharp "Come in!" which answered her knock.

Adjusting her spectacles to the right focus, Miss Betsey looked up at her visitor in that scrutinizing, inquisitive manner usual with her, and which made Bessie's knees shake under her as she advanced into the room.

"Who are you?" the look seemed to say, and without waiting to have it put into words Bessie went straight to the woman, and stretching out her hands said, imploringly:

"Oh, Aunt Betsey, do you remember a little girl who came to you on the Terrace at Aberystwyth years ago? Little Bessie McPherson, to whom you sent a ring? Here it is," and she pointed to it upon her finger, "and I am she—Bessie, and mother is dead—and I—I am all alone, and I have come to America—to you—not to have you keep me—not to live upon you, but to earn my living—to work for money with which to pay my debts. Two hundred and fifty pounds to Lady Jane for mother's sickness and burial, and five pounds to Anthony. That is the sum—two hundred and fifty-five pounds. Will you let me stay to-night? Can you find me something to do?"

Bessie had told her whole story, and as she told it her face was a study, with its look of eagerness and fear and the bright color which came and went so rapidly, but as she finished speaking left it white as ashes. Miss Betsey's face was a study, too, as she regarded the girl fixedly until she stopped talking; then, motioning her to a chair, she said:

"Sit down, child, before you faint away; you are pale as a cloth. Take off your bonnet and have some tea. I suppose you are hungry."

She rang the bell for Susan to bring hot tea and toast, which she made Bessie eat, pressing it upon her until she could take no more.

"Now, then," she said, when the tray had been removed, "one can always talk better on a full stomach. So tell me what you want, and what you expect me to do. But sit over there, where I can see you better; and don't get excited. I shall not eat you; at least, not to-night."

She wanted Bessie in a good light, where she could see her face, from which she never took her eyes, as the girl repeated in substance what she had said at first, making some additions to her story, and speaking of the ship in which she had come, but not of Miss Lucy or Grey.

"Where did you get the money? It costs something to cross the ocean," Miss Betsey asked, a little sharply, and Bessie replied:

"It did not cost me much, for I came out as a steerage passenger. I had just enough for that and my ticket here."

"You came in the steerage?" and in her surprise Miss Betsey arose from her chair and walked once or twice across the floor, while Bessie looked at her wistfully, wondering if she, too, were ashamed like Neil.

But shame had no part in Miss Betsey's feelings, which were stirred by a far different emotion. Resuming her seat after a moment, she said:

"And you have come here to work—to earn money? What can you do?"

"I thought I might teach French, perhaps; and German, I am a pretty good scholar in both," Bessie replied, and her aunt rejoined:

"French and German! Fiddlesticks! There are more fools teaching those languages now than there are idiots to learn them. Why, my washerwoman's daughter is teaching French at twenty-five cents a lesson, though she can no more speak it than a jackdaw. French, indeed! You must try something else, or you will never earn that two hundred and fifty-five pounds."

This was not very encouraging, and Bessie felt the color dyeing her face, and her heart sinking, as she said:

"I might sew. I am handy with my needle, I have made all my own dresses, and Dorothy's, too."

"Yes, you might sew, and twist your spine all out of shape, and get the liver complaint," Miss Betsey interposed; and then, poor Bessie, fearing that everything was slipping from her, said, with a choking sob:

"I might be a housemaid to some one. Surely there are such situations to be had, and I would try so hard to please, and even work for less than other girls of more experience. Oh, Aunt Betsey, you must know of some place for me! You will help me to find one! You do not know how greatly I desire it, or how poor I am. These are the only boots I have," and she put out a much worn boot, which had been blacked until the leather was nearly cracked apart. "And this my only decent dress, except a dark calico. But I do not care so much for that. It is not clothes I want. It is to pay that money to Lady Jane."

The tears were falling like rain from Bessie's eyes, and starting again from her chair Miss McPherson went to an open window and shut it as if she were cold; then returning to her seat, she said, abruptly:

"I thought you were engaged to Neil—he wrote me to that effect."

Bessie's face was scarlet as she answered:

"I was engaged to him then; I am not now."

"Did he break it, or you?" was the next question.

"I broke it," was the low response.

"Why?" came next from Miss McPherson, and Bessie replied:

"He did not wish me to come as steerage, and bade me choose between that and him; and as I must come, and had no money for a first-class ticket, I gave him back the ring, and he was free."

"Are you sorry?"

This was spoken sharply, and Miss McPherson's little round, black eyes rested curiously upon Bessie, who answered promptly:

"No, oh, no. I am very glad. It is better so. We were not suited to each other."

"I should think not!" and again the strange woman arose, and going to the window, opened it, as if in sudden heat.

Then, returning to her niece, she continued:

"Were you in earnest when you said you would take a position as housemaid?"

"Yes," was the reply; and Miss McPherson went on:

"Do you think you could fill it?"

"I know I could, I have been housemaid at home all my life. We never kept any female servant but Dorothy."

There was a moment's silence, while Miss McPherson seemed to be thinking, and then she said:

"Will you take that place with me?"

"With you?" Bessie repeated, a little bewildered; and her aunt replied:

"Yes, with me. Why not? Better serve me than a stranger. My second girl, Sarah, was married a few weeks ago!—more fool she!—and I have no one as yet in her place. If you will like it, and fill it as well as she did, I will give you what I gave her, two dollars and a half a week, and more if you earn it. What do you say?"

"I will take the place," Bessie answered, unhesitatingly, feeling that, singular as it might seem to serve her aunt, she would rather do that than go to a stranger. "I will take the place, and do the best I can, and if I fail in some things at first, you will tell me what to do. How long will it take to earn two hundred and fifty-five pounds at two dollars and a half a week?"

Miss Betsey must have felt cold again, for she rushed to the open window and shut it with a bang, while for an instant she wavered in her determination. Then, thinking to herself, "I may as well see what stuff she really is made of," she returned to Bessie, who, if she had not been quite so anxious and nervous, would have felt amused at her eccentric behavior.

Without telling how long it would take to earn two hundred and fifty-five pounds at two dollars and a half a week, Miss Betsey said:

"Then it is a bargain, and you are my housemaid really, and willing to do a housemaid's duties, and take a house maid's place. Do you understand all that means?"

"I think so," Bessie answered, wondering if she should have to share the cook's bed.

As if divining her thoughts, her aunt rejoined:

"One exception I shall make in your favor. You will occupy the little room next my own, at the head of the stairs. You can go up there at once if you like, and I will see that your trunks are brought from the station."

"Oh, thank you," Bessie said, and in her eyes there was a look of gratitude which nearly upset Miss McPherson's resolution again, and did make her open the window as she passed it on her

way up stairs with Bessie.

Just as the room had been fitted up years ago, when she was expecting the child Bessie, just so it was now when the girl Bessie entered it. The same single bed with its muslin hangings, the same little bureau, with its pretty toilet-set, now somewhat faded and *passee* in style, but showing what it had been, and in a corner the big doll with all its paraphernalia around it.

"Oh, auntie," Bessie cried, as she stepped across the threshold, "what a lovely little room! and it almost looks as if it had been intended for me when I was younger."

"It was meant for you years ago, when I wrote to your father and asked him to give you to me. Fool that I was, I thought he would let you come; but he did not, and so the room has waited."

"I never knew you sent for me," Bessie said, "but father could not have spared me; and oh, auntie, I cannot tell you how it makes me feel to know you have kept me in your mind all these years. Let me kiss you; please," and throwing her arms around her aunt's neck. Bessie sobbed hysterically for a few moments, while the Stern face bending over her relaxed in its severity, and Miss Betsey's voice was very kind and soothing, as she said:

"There, there, child; don't get up a headache. I am glad you like the room; glad you are here. You had better go to bed, and not come down again."

She did not kiss the girl, but she put her hand on her head and smoothed the curly hair, and Bessie felt that it was a benediction. When she was alone she sank upon her knees by the bedside, and burying her face in her hands, prayed earnestly that she might know what was right to do, and be a comfort and help to the woman whose peculiarities she began in part to understand. She was so glad to be there, so glad for the shelter, of a home, that the fact of being a housemaid did not trouble her at all, though she did wonder what Neil would say, and if he would not think it quite as bad as steerage, and wondered, too, if Grey would ever come to see her, and if he would recognize her in her new position.

"It will make no difference with Grey Jerrold what you are," something said to her, and comforted, with this assurance she fell asleep, in her new home.

CHAPTER XI.

MISS McPHERSON'S HOUSEMAID.

Bessie meant to be up with the sun, but she was so tired and the room so quiet, that she slept soundly until awakened by the long clock in the lower hall striking seven.

"This is a bad beginning," she thought, as she made her hasty toilet.

She found her trunks outside her door, and selecting from them her new calico dress, which she had bought just before leaving home, she put it on, together with one of the pretty white aprons which Neil had so detested and Grey had so admired.

"I ought to have a housemaid's cap," she thought, is she looked at herself in the glass and tried to smooth and straighten her hair, which would curl around her forehead in spite of all she could do.

A clean collar, with cuffs at her wrists, completed her costume, and it was a very neat, attractive little housemaid which entered the room where Miss McPherson was leisurely finishing her plain breakfast of toast, and tea, and eggs.

"Oh, auntie," Bessie began advancing to her side, "I am so sorry I overslept. I was very tired, and the bed was so nice. It shall not happen again. What can I do for you? Let me make you a fresh slice of toast."

"No, thanks. I am through. You can clear the table if you like," Miss Betsey replied, shoving back her chair and eyeing her niece curiously as she gathered up the dishes and carried them to the kitchen, where she took her own breakfast with the cook, who instructed her in her duties as well as she could.

"She is mighty queer and mighty particular, but if you get the soft side of her you are all right," she said to Bessie, who moved about the house almost as handily as if she had lived there all her life.

Never had the china been washed more carefully or quickly, or the furniture better dusted, or the table better arranged for dinner, and had Bessie been a trained servant from the queen's household she could not have waited upon her aunt more deftly or respectfully than she did. But the strain upon her nerves began to tell upon her, and after her dishes were washed, and she was assured by the cook that there was nothing more for her to do until tea-time, she went to her room for a little rest, just as a carriage dashed up to the door, and the bell rang fiercely. Scarcely, however, had Bessie reached the hall on her way to answer the ring, when her aunt, who, it seemed to her, was everywhere present, darted out from some quarter, and seizing her by

the shoulder said, quickly:

"Go back to your room. I'll let her in myself."

Was she angry, and if so, at what? Bessie wondered, as she returned to her room, and sitting down by the bed laid her tired head upon the pillow, while a few tears rolled down her cheeks as she recalled her aunt's sharp tones. Was this to be all the commendation she was to receive for the pains she had taken to please? It was hard, and there began to steal over her a feeling of utter hopelessness and homesickness, when suddenly a sound came up to her from the parlor below, which made her start and listen as to something familiar. Surely she had heard that loud, uncultivated voice before, and after a moment it came to her—the tea party in the dear old garden at home when Mrs. Rossiter-Browne was the guest, and had so disgusted her with her vulgarity. And this was Mrs. Browne, who had come in state to call, and who, after declaring the weather hot enough to kill cattle, and saying that Gusty was in Saratogy, and had had twelve new dresses made to take with her, spoke next of Allen and Lord Hardy, who were in Idaho, or Omaho, or some other *ho*, Mrs. Browne could not remember which. At the mention of Lord Hardy's name all Bessie's old life seemed to come back to her, and she lived again through the dreary days at the crowded hotels, and ate her dinner of dry bread and shriveled grapes in the back room of the fourth floor, and saw her mother radiant with smiles bandying jests with the young Irish lord, while her father looked on with a sorry expression on his face, the very memory of which brought a rain of tears to Bessie's eyes. Allen had just written to his mother a description of his travels, and she was giving Miss McPherson her version of it. Another lord had joined them, she said, a regular English swell, and they attracted so much attention, and the people were so curious to see them, that they were actually obliged to travel in a *cognito*, though what under the sun that was she was sure she didn't know. She thought she had been in most everything there was goin, but she'd never seen a *cognito*, which must be some Western contrivance or other. At this ludicrous mistake, so characteristic of Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, Bessie forgot her tears and laughed hysterically until she heard her mother's name, when she instinctively grew quiet and rigid as a piece of marble, for what Mrs. Browne said was this:

"And so the poor little critter is dead! Well, I must say she was about the prettiest woman I ever saw, but I guess she wasn't just what I s'posed she was when I took such a shine to her. She was a born flirt, and mebbe couldn't help it, but she might have let Allen alone—a mere boy. Why, he was that bewitched after her that he fairly lost flesh, and told me to my face that he should never see another woman he liked as he did her, and he'd never got over it neither if Lord Hardy hadn't taken him in hand and told him something—I've no idea what, for Allen would never tell me, only it did the business, and there was no more whimperin' for that woman."

"Oh, mother! poor mother!" Bessie moaned, as she covered her face with her hands, feeling that her shame was greater than she could bear.

Going to the door she closed it, and so did not hear Mrs. Browne when she said next:

"She had a lovely daughter, though, with a face like an angel. I'd swear she was all right. Do you ever hear from her?"

For a moment Miss Betsey hesitated, for it was not a part of her plan to let Mrs. Browne or any one see Bessie just yet; but her love for the *naked truth* prevailed, and she replied:

"Yes, she is here. She came yesterday in the Germanic. I will call her."

"Crying? What's that for?" she said to Bessie as she entered the room, and feeling almost as guilty as if she had been caught in some wrong act, Bessie sobbed: "The door was open at first, and I knew it was Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, whom I have seen at Stoneleigh. I heard what she said of mamma, and oh, auntie, I am her daughter, and she is dead, and she *was* good at the last!"

In her sympathy for Bessie, Miss McPherson was even ready to do battle for Daisy, and she replied:

"Mrs. Browne is a fool, and Allen is a bigger one, and Lord Hardy biggest of all. Don't cry. She wants to see you. Wash your face, and take off your apron and come down."

Five minutes later Bessie was shaking hands with Mrs. Browne, who told her "she did not look very stubbed, that was a fact—that she guessed seasickness had not agreed with her, and she'd better keep herself swaddled up in flannel for a spell till she got used to the climate, which was not like England."

"You come in the Germanic, your aunt tells me," she continued, as Bessie took a seat beside her. "Then you must have seen Miss Lucy Grey and her nephew, for they were on that ship, and I hear were met by somebody sent from Boston to tell 'em to come right on, for Miss Jerrold was very sick."

Bessie felt rather than saw the questioning eyes which her aunt flashed upon her, and her face was scarlet as she answered:

"Yes, I saw Miss Grey. She was very kind to me when I was sick. She did go directly to Boston."

"What is the matter with Mrs. Jerrold?" Miss Betsey asked, and Mrs. Browne replied:

"The land only knows. Heart complaint, the last report, I believe. I saw Hannah at the depot this morning; she'd been sent for, too. Geraldine always wants her when she's sick; but the minit she

is better, the old maid sister is in the way, and not good enough for my lady's fine friends. I know Geraldine Jerrold pretty well, and if I's Hannah I wouldn't run to every beck and call, when nothing under the sun ails her but hypo. She has had everything, I do believe—malary, cancers, spinal cords, nervous prostration, and now it's her heart. Humbug! More like hysterics. Burton Jerrold has got his hands full, and I pity him. Why, he looks like an old, broken-down man, and his hair is as white as snow."

Here Mrs. Browne, who had the conversation all to herself, stopped to take breath. She was not an ill-natured woman, or one who often talked of her neighbors, and after a moment, as if ashamed of her tirade, she said:

"I've went it pretty glib against poor Miss Jerrold, hain't I? I dare say she is sick and nervous, and I have not charity enough for her." Then, rising from her chair preparatory to leaving, she said to Bessie: "I am glad you have come, and I hope we shall see you often, after Gusty comes home. I s'pose I shall lose her in October. 'Tain't no secret now, and so I may as well tell you that she is to be married to Lord Hardy, from Dublin. You've seen him, I b'lieve?"

"Yes, when I was a little girl," Bessie answered, with a pang of pain as she remembered the days when Lord Hardy was their constant companion.

"I never really b'lieved he wanted Gusty," Mrs. Browne continued, "till he said so in plain words; and there's folks now mean enough to say it's her money he's after, and I don't myself suppose he'd thought of her if she hadn't had money; but I think he likes her, and I know she likes him, and it's something to be Lady Hardy."

As she said this, Mrs. Browne drew herself up rather loftily, as if some of her daughter's honor had fallen upon her; and with a stately bow and good-afternoon, went out to where her handsome carriage and high-booted driver were waiting for her.

"There goes as nice a woman as ever lived made over into a fool by money and a little nincompoop of a lord," was Miss Betsey's comment, as she watched the carriage moving away across the common. Then turning suddenly to Bessie, she added: "Why didn't you tell me Miss Lucy was on the ship with Grey?"

Bessie hesitated a moment, and then answered frankly:

"Perhaps I ought to have done so, but I thought I would rather, if you liked me at all and were kind to me, that it should be for myself and not because I had met Miss Grey, who offered to give me a note to you. Did I do wrong?"

"No; perfectly right," Miss Betsey said: "and now tell me all about it. You said she was kind when you were sick. How did she find you in the steerage?"

In as few words as possible Bessie repeated the story of her acquaintance with Miss Lucy, dwelling at length upon her kindness, but saying little of Grey; indeed, a casual stranger listening to the recital would hardly have known that he was mentioned at all. But Miss Betsey was far-seeing; she knew the signs, for she had had her day and experience, and from the very fact that Bessie did not say more of Grey, she drew her own conclusions. But to be quite sure, she said:

"You had seen Grey, before you met him on the ship, had you not?"

"Yes," Bessie answered. "He once spent a day at Stoneleigh with Neil, and he came again when father died, and was so kind to me. I was alone, for mother, you know, was on the ocean, and he did everything a man could do. Then, when I was sick in Rome, he was there too, and gave up his room to mother, and took every care from her. Oh, auntie, he is the noblest man I ever knew. He told Neil once that he tried to make somebody happy every day, either by a pleasant word, or look, or act of kindness; and only think, if he lives to be old, how many, many people will have been happier because he has lived."

In the excitement, Bessie forgot everything but her enthusiasm for and her interest in Grey Jerrold; and her aunt, who was watching her closely, guessed the truth pretty accurately. But she made no remark except to say that from the garret window one could see Grey's Park, where Miss Lucy lived, and which Grey would probably one day inherit. Nor was she at all surprised when later in the afternoon she knew by certain sounds that Bessie was at the garret window looking at the park.

The next day was a hard and busy one, for there was sweeping to be done, and the silver to be cleaned, and the dining-room windows to be wiped; and Bessie went through it all patiently and uncomplainingly, serving her aunt at breakfast and dinner, taking her own meals with the cook, and never by a sign showing that she was other than the hired maid she had chosen to be. But when the last thing was done which belonged to her to do, the fatigue and the heat overcame her, and, sitting down in the shaded porch, by the kitchen door, she leaned her aching head against the back of her chair and fell asleep. And there Miss Betsey, who had scarcely lost sight of her during the day, found her, and for a few moments stood looking at her intently, noticing every curve, and line, and feature, and feeling a lump in her throat as she saw about the sweet mouth that patient, sorry expression which had come there years ago when Bessie was a child, and had deepened with every succeeding year.

"Poor little girl, you have had a hard time, I know," she said; and at the sound of her voice Bessie awoke and with a bright smile and blush, started up, saying:

"Excuse me; I was very tired and warm, and must have fallen asleep. My work is done, and now, if you have any sewing, please let me have it."

"Aren't you tired? You look pale," Miss Betsey asked so kindly that Bessie's lip quivered as she replied:

"Yes, a little; but I do not mind that. I should like to do something for you."

"Then go out into the garden in the fresh air and stay there till you are rested," Miss Betsey answered, abruptly, and, turning on her heel, she walked away to her own room, where she held communion with herself, wondering how much longer she could or ought to hold out, "I have tried her pretty well, and she has not flinched a hair; but I guess I will wait a day or two, till I have heard from Sarah," she thought, but this resolution she did not carry out for two reasons, one of which was found in the letter which she received that afternoon, and the other in the fact that at tea-time Bessie fainted dead away as she stood by her auntie's chair.

She had borne so much and suffered so much during the last few months that nature refused to bear any longer, and it was more than a headache which brought the faintness upon her. Taking her in her arms, Miss Betsey carried her to her room, and placing her upon the bed, sat down beside her.

"Why are you crying?" she asked, as she saw the great tears roll down Bessie's cheeks faster than she could wipe them away.

"Because," Bessie answered, with a choking sob, "I have tried so hard to do right, and have wanted work so much, and just as I have found it, I am afraid I am going to be sick, for I feel so strange and cold, as if all the life had gone from me, and I cannot work any more, and you will have to send me away, and I have nowhere to go, for Stoneleigh is very far away, and I have no money to get there. Oh, auntie, if I could die! Life has been so dreary to me!"

Here Bessie broke down entirely, and sobbed for a few moments convulsively, while Miss McPherson was scarcely less agitated.

Kneeling down by the low bed and laying her old face by the side of the young one upon the pillow, she, too, cried for a few moments like a child. Then, lifting up her head and brushing away her tears with an impatient movement, as if she were ashamed of them, she said:

"I cannot hold out any longer, and I must tell you that what I have been doing was never intended to last; I was only trying you, to see if you were true, and now that I know you are, do you think I will not take you to my heart as my child, my very own? I believe I have always loved you, Bessie, since the day your eyes looked at me on the sands of Aberystwyth, and I have wanted you so much, and tried so many times to get you, and right here where I am kneeling now, I have often knelt by this little bed prepared for you years ago, and prayed God to keep you innocent and pure, and send you to me some day. And he has done all this. He has kept you pure and good, and send you to me just when I want you most, I am a queer, crabbed old woman, but I believe I can make you happy, and by and by you may learn to love me a little. Few have ever done that; none in fact, since my mother died, but one, and he—oh, Bessie, I would give my life to have him back, and more than my life to know that it was well with him. Charlie, oh, Charlie, my love, my love!"

Bessie's tears were all dried now, and her arms were around the neck of this strange woman, weeping for her lost love as women never weep save when the memory of that love brings far more pain than joy.

"Dear auntie," Bessie said, "I do not quite under stand what you mean, but if I can comfort you I will, and work for you, too, I do not in the least mind that, and I must do something to pay—"

"Hush child!" Miss Betsey rejoined, almost impatiently, as she drew herself from Bessie's embrace and rose to her feet. "Never again trouble your head about your debts. I sent the two hundred and fifty pounds to my brother's wife yesterday, and told her what I was doing to you, and what I meant to do if you passed the ordeal unscathed, and any time you choose you can write to Anthony and send him twenty pounds, or more, if you like. What is mine is yours, so long as my opinion of you remains unchanged. I did not like your mother; I am free to tell you that. I was angry with your father for marrying her, and angrier still when I heard of the life she led—heard of her at Monte Carlo, of which I never think without a shudder."

Miss McPherson had seated herself in a chair by this time, and over her white face there came a rapt far-off look, and her hands were locked together as she continued:

"Bessie, I may as well tell you now why I hate that place, and hate all who frequent it. Charlie seems very near me to-night; my boy lover, with the soft brown eyes and hair, and the sweet voice which always spoke so tenderly to me, even when I was in my fitful moods. That was more than forty years ago when he walked with me along the rose-scented lanes and told me of his love, and talked of the happy future when I would be his wife. Alas, he little dreamed what the future had in store, or of the dreary, lonely life I should lead, while he—oh, Charlie, my love, my love!"

She paused a moment, while she seemed trying to repress some powerful emotion, and then resumed her story:

"When he was twenty-one, and I was twenty, we went abroad in company with some relatives of

mine, and found ourselves at last at Monte Carlo. Your grandfather was with us, and together we went into the gambling hall where men and women sell their souls for money, and there my brother played, and I—shame that I must tell it—I, too, tried my luck, while Charlie looked on reproachfully, and tried to get me away, but I only laughed at him, and bade him stay to keep me company. Then I called him a coward, and badgered him until one night he put down a five-franc piece and won, and then he put down another, and another—doubling and trebling sometimes, and always winning, as it is said Satan, who rules that den, lets the novices do. The next day Charlie played with a recklessness which half alarmed me, and made me remonstrate with him. But to no purpose.

"'You called me a coward,' he said, laughingly; 'and besides that, I rather like it, the gold comes so easily. I have scarcely lost a pound.'

"Soon, however, the tide turned, and he began to lose; not small, but large sums. But, as if that made him more determined than ever, he played on and on, always the first to enter and the last to leave, while I watched him with a dread foreboding at my heart which I could not define. Oh, how rashly he played and what heavy sums he staked! His fortune was not large, nor was mine then what it is now; but we had planned together to buy a lovely place we knew of on the Isle of Wight, and had furnished it in fancy many times.

"'I am bound to get back what I have lost, or we cannot have Rose Lawn,' he would say, with a smile; and once, when I begged him to desist, and told him I did not care for Rose Lawn he answered me:

"'But I do, and you must not complain. You made me play, you know.'

"After that I was silent and watched him sadly, as the infatuation increased. At last he said to me one night:

"'Betty,' that was the name he gave me, 'this evening will see the end. Something tells me I shall get back all I have lost, and I am resolved to stake everything I have. But whether I lose or win, it is my last chance. Don't look so reproachfully at me. Remember, you taught me to play, but you did not know how strong was the desire in me to do it. A love for the gaming-table is the besetting sin of my family, and I had sworn to conquer it in myself, but you were too strong for me; so, whatever happens, do not blame me too much. And now give me a kiss as a guaranty of success.'

"How handsome he was in the moonlight, for we were in the beautiful grounds around the Casino—were standing in a sheltered spot close to a bed of great white lilies, whose perfume even then made me faint, I cannot smell them now without a throb of pain, they are so associated with that awful night when I bade Charlie good-by, and went back to the hotel. I did not go with him, nor did he wish it, I disconcerted him, he said. And so I sat by my window and watched the full moon rising higher and higher, and listened to the moan and dash of the sea against the shore below, and saw the people going and coming, until at last it was twelve o'clock, the hour for closing, and I saw the crowds come out, men and women, young and old, those who had lost and those who had won, and leaning from the casement I tried to single out Charlie, but could not. I felt almost sure that if he had been successful he would stop at my door and tell me so. But he did not come.

"As I sat and waited, I cannot tell you the horror and dread which took possession of me. I knew that the moon was still shining—that patches of silvery light were falling upon the sea, and the shrubs and flowers outside, but to me all was black as midnight, and I actually groped my way to my bed, on which I threw myself at last, shivering with cold, for the October air was blowing up chill from the water. For a few moments I slept, and then started suddenly as I fancied I heard Charlie call my name.

"Oh-h, Betty," was what he said, and in his voice there was a note of agony and fear, which made me shiver in every limb, as I tottered to the window and looked out.

"Oh, what a glorious night it was, rich and sweet with tropical bloom and beauty, and the full moon in the sky now moving down to the west, for it was past two o'clock.

"Every thing was still, and after listening a moment I went back to bed, and slept heavily until morning, when my brother came to my door and spoke to me in a voice I did not at first recognize, it was so strange and unnatural.

"What is it?' I asked, as I opened the door and looked at his white face.

"'Sister,' he said, stepping into the room. 'Can you bear some dreadful news?'

"'Yes,' I answered with a sensation as if I were turning into stone. 'Charlie is dead! He has killed himself!'

"How I knew it I cannot tell, but know it I did. Charlie was dead. He had lost everything and gone from the scene of his ruin to the very spot where he had kissed and said good-by to me, and there had put a bullet through his brain—close by the clump of lilies which were wet with his blood when they found him lying on his back with his fair young face upturned to the moonlit sky, and a smile on his lips as if the death struggle had been a painless one.

"I knew then that at the last, when his soul was parting from his body, he had called my name, and I had heard him just as I often hear him now when I am all alone, and the night, like that one,

is full of moonlight and beauty.

"We took him to England and laid him in his grave, where I buried my heart, my life, and hope, and since then I have grown into the strange, unlovable woman you find me. But do you wonder that I shrink with horror from the gaming-table and those who frequent it, or that I could not respect your mother when I heard of her so often at Monte Carlo, where Charlie died and where your grandfather ruined himself for he, too, was possessed with a mania for play?"

"Oh, auntie, how sorry I am for you," Bessie said, throwing her arms around Miss McPherson's neck and kissing her through her tears. "I mean to love you so much," she continued, "and do so much for you, if you will let me I do not mind being your housemaid at all, only just now I feel so tired and sick, as if I could never work any more;" and, wholly exhausted, she sank back upon her pillow, where she lay for a few moments so white and still that her aunt felt a horrible pang of fear lest the prize she so much coveted might be slipping from her almost before she possessed it.

But after a little Bessie rallied, and, smiling upon her aunt, said to her:

"You cannot guess how happy I am to be here with you, but I do not think I quite understand what you meant by trying me."

"I meant," Miss McPherson replied, "to see if you were in earnest when you said you were willing to do anything to earn money, I knew the McPherson pride, and thought you might have some of it. But I know better now. I have tried you and proved you, and do not want you as housemaid any longer. Nor shall I need your services, for a new girl comes to-morrow—Sarah's cousin. She is in New York, and will be here on the morning train. A regular greenhorn I imagine; but if she is honest and willing, I can soon train her in my ways. And now I will leave you, for you must sleep to-night, so as to be well to-morrow;" and with a fond good-night, Miss McPherson left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

BESSIE'S SUCCESSOR.

With the morrow the new housemaid came, but Miss McPherson was too anxious about her niece to observe more than that the girl was fresh, and bright, and clean, with a wonderful brogue and a clear, ringing voice. Miss Betsey had called the village doctor, who, after carefully examining his patient, said she was suffering either from nervous prostration or malaria, he could not tell which, until he had seen her again; then, prescribing quinine for the latter, and perfect rest for the former, he left just as the new girl appeared and with her volubility and energy seemed to fill the house. As quickly as possible Miss Betsey got her into the kitchen, and then went to her niece's room.

"I must have been asleep," Bessie said, "for I dreamed that I heard Jennie's voice, and I was so glad that it woke me, and I thought I heard it again. She was the Irish girl who was so kind to me on the ship. You remember I told you of her."

"Yes," Miss Betsey replied, "I think you liked her very much."

"Oh, yes, very, very much, and I would give a great deal to see her again, I believe I should get well at once, there is something so strong and hearty about her."

To this Miss McPherson made no reply, but all the rest of the morning she seemed very restless and excited, and was constantly hushing the new girl, whom she once bade the cook *gag*, if she could not quiet her in any other way.

"I have a sick niece up stairs, and you will disturb her," she said to the girl, who replied:

"An' sure thin, mum, I'll *whisper*."

But her whisper seemed to penetrate everywhere, and Miss McPherson was glad when at last the toast and tea and jelly intended for Bessie's dinner were ready upon the tray which she bade the girl take up stairs to the young lady whose room was at the end of the hall.

"An' indade I'd take off me shoes and go in me stockin' feet to be quiet: an' it's niver a word I'll spake," the girl said, as she started on her errand, while her mistress listened at the foot of the stairs.

Miss McPherson was prepared for a demonstration if some sort, but did not quite expect what followed, for the moment the girl stepped into the room, Bessie sprang up with the loud glad cry: "Oh, Jennie, Jennie, where did you come from? I am so glad!"

There was an answering cry of surprise and joy, and then the tray, with everything upon it, went crashing to the floor, while Jennie exclaimed:

"An', be jabers, the plather an' the tay is all one smash together, in me fright at seem' you here before me, when it's meself was goin' to ask her to take you. May the saints be praised, if it's not the happiest day since I left Ireland," and bending over Bessie the impulsive Irish girl kissed her

again and again, talking, and laughing, and crying, until Bessie said to her:

"There, Jennie, please; I am very tired, and your sudden coming has taken my strength away."

She did look very white and faint, and Jennie saw it, and tried to be calm, though she kept whispering to herself as she gathered up the *debris* on the floor, and with a most rueful expression took it down stairs, saying to her mistress:

"An' faith it's a bad beginnin' I've made, mum, but sure an' I'll pay you every farthing with me first wages, and now, if you plase, I'll do up my fut, for it's blistered, that it is, with the bilin' tay."

The foot was cared for, and another tray of toast and tea prepared. This, Miss Betsey took herself to Bessie, explaining that Jennie was the cousin who had come to take her former housemaid's place.

"But I had no idea," she said, "that she was such a behemoth. I am afraid she will not answer my purpose at all."

But Bessie pleaded for the girl, whose kindness of heart she knew, and who, she felt sure, could be molded and softened by careful and judicious training, and that afternoon, when Jennie came up to her she told her that her aunt did not like a noise, and that she must be very quiet and gentle if she wished to please.

Jennie listened to her, open-eyed, and when she was through responded:

"Is it quiet she wants? I told her I would whasper, an' faith I wull; for I'm bound to stay with you, and get me tin shillings a week."

The case seemed hopeless, and Jennie might have lost her place but for the serious illness which came upon Bessie, taking away all her vitality, and making her weak and helpless as a child. It was then that Jennie showed her real value, and by her watchful tenderness and untiring devotion, more than made amends for all her awkwardness.

Day after day, and night after night, she staid in the sick room, ministering to Bessie as no one else could have done, lifting her tenderly in her strong arms, and sometimes walking with her up and down the large chamber into which she had been carried when the physician said her sickness might be of weeks' duration, for she was suffering from all the fatigue and worry of the last two years, when the strain upon her nerves had been so great.

All through the remaining weeks of summer, and the September days which followed, Bessie lay in her bed, scarcely noticing any thing which was passing around her, and saying to her aunt when she bent over her, asking how she felt:

"Tired, so tired, and it is nice to rest."

And so the days went by, and everybody in Allington became interested in the young girl whom few had seen, but of whom a great deal was told by Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, whose carriage often stood at Miss McPherson's door, bringing sometimes the lady herself, and sometimes Augusta, who had returned from Saratoga, and was busy with the preparations for her wedding, which was to take place in October.

Lord Hardy, who had come from the West, and established himself at the Ridge House, called several times and left his card, which Miss McPherson promptly burned.

She did not like Lord Hardy. He was just a fortune-hunter, she said, and cared no more for Augusta Browne than he did for her, except that Augusta was the younger of the two, and she could not forget how he had looked, smirking and mincing by the side of Archie's wife at Aberystwyth; poor, weak Daisy, who, but for him, might not have gone so far astray as she did.

For Bessie's sake Miss McPherson was almost ready to forgive poor Daisy, as she always called her now when thinking of her. For Bessie's sake she felt that she could do a great deal that was contrary to her nature, but she could not feel kindly disposed toward Neil, for immediately after the receipt of her letter to his mother, containing two hundred and fifty pounds, and the announcement that she intended to take Bessie as her own child, Neil had written her a long, penitent letter, blaming himself as a coward, and telling of his remorse and regret for the past, and saying that, unless he was forbidden to do so, he should come to America in September, and renew his offer to Bessie.

This letter Miss McPherson read with sundry expressions of disgust, and then, taking from its peg her sun-hat, almost as large as a small umbrella, she started for the telegraph office, and several hours later Neil McPherson, in London, was reading the following laconic dispatch from Allington:

> "Stay at home and mind your own business!
>
> "Betsey McPherson"

"Perhaps I did wrong to send it, for maybe the girl likes him after all," the spinster thought, as she walked back to her house.

But it was too late now, and for the next two or three days she was too anxious to think of anything except Bessie, who was much worse, and seemed so weak and unconscious of

everything, that the physician looked very grave, and the clergyman came at Miss McPherson's request, and said the prayers for the sick, but Bessie did not hear them, for she lay like one in a deep sleep, scarcely moving or seeming to breathe.

Before leaving the room the clergyman went softly to the bedside to look at the sick girl, wondering much at the likeness in her face to some one he had seen before, and wondering too why it should remind him of Hannah Jerrold, and the night when he went in the wintery storm to hear her father's confession.

"Poor Hannah!" he said to himself, as he left the house, and walking slowly across the common to the church-yard, sat down upon a bench near to a head-stone, which bore this inscription: "Sacred to the memory of Martha, beloved wife of the Rev. Charles Sanford, who died January 1st, 18—. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Since we last saw him, years ago, the Rev. Charles Sanford had grown an old man, though he was scarcely sixty-three, an age when many men are in their prime. There was a stoop in his shoulders as if the burden of life were heavy, and his hair was as white as snow, while upon his face was a look which only daily discipline, patiently borne, can ever write upon the human visage And patiently had he borne it, until he almost forgot that he was bearing it, and then one day it was removed and by the lightness and freedom he felt, he knew how heavy it had been.

"Poor Martha!" he said to himself, as he glanced at his shining coat-sleeves, and the spot on the knee of his pants, which was almost threadbare, and at his boots, which certainly had not been blacked that day. "Poor Martha! What would she say if she could see these clothes, which, though they may not look well, are very comfortable." Then, as his eye rested upon the word *beloved*, he continued: "Is that a lie, I wonder, which that marble is telling to the world? If so, it is Martha's fault, for she wrote her own epitaph, just as she ordered all the details of her funeral, and what preceded it. It was a strange fancy of hers to ask that Hannah should lay her out Poor Martha! *Devoted* would have been better than *beloved*, though God knows I tried to do my best by her," and with a sigh, both for what had been and what might have been, the rector arose and started for his home, meeting at the gate of Grey's Park with Grey himself, who was in Allington for the first time since his return from Europe.

Lucy had come up a few days before, and had been at once to see Bessie, of whose illness she had written to Grey, and that had brought him as soon as he could leave his mother.

"Grey, my boy, how are you?" the rector said, offering his hand, which Grey took, saying as he did so:

"How is she this morning?"

Mr. Sanford did not know that Grey had ever seen or heard of Bessie McPherson, but something told him that he meant her, and he replied:

"Very weak and sick. Poor girl! she is too young to die."

"Mr. Sanford," and Grey spoke with great vehemence, "you do not think Bessie will die? She must not die!" and in his voice and manner there was something which betrayed his secret to the older man, who said to him:

"I hope not, Grey, God knows. Pray for her, my boy; pray earnestly. Prayer can move a mountain, or at least make a way through it. Pray for the girl you call Bessie."

To one accustomed as Grey was to take everything, however small, to God, prayer was an easy thing, and every thought was a prayer as he walked rapidly toward Miss McPherson's house.

"She is sleeping now," Miss Betsey said to him. "We trust she will be better when she wakens. It is rest she needs more than anything else. She has had a hard life so far. You have seen a great deal of her, I believe?"

"I cannot say I have seen a great deal of her, though I feel as though I had known her always. Yes, she has had a hard life. You do not think she will die?" was Grey's reply; and in his face and voice Miss Betsey detected what the rector had discovered.

"No," she said; "I do not believe she will die. Sit down and wait till she is awake."

So Grey sat down, and waited three hours, during which time the train, which would have taken him back to Boston, went rushing by, and Bessie still slept as quietly as an infant. It was Jennie who came at last and told him that she was awake and better, though too weak to see any one.

"Thank God!" Grey exclaimed, and slipping a bill into the girl's hand, he continued: "Take good care of her, Jennie, and when she is able tell her I came to see her."

"An' sure I'll tell her ivery blessed word, and that you left your love."

"I did not say that," Grey answered her, laughingly, as he bade her good-by and walked away.

For a week or more Bessie scarcely spoke or moved, it was such happiness to rest, with every wish anticipated either by her aunt or Jennie, whose voice was a *whasper* most of the time, and who was learning to be more quiet and subdued. At last, however, Bessie began to talk, and said to Jennie one day:

"I believe I am getting better, and I am afraid I am not as glad as I ought to be—the world holds so little for me, and so few who care for me beside auntie and you."

"An', faith," Jennie began, "it's not for ye to be sayin' the likes of that. Nobody to care for you, indade, with the gentry comin' every day to inquire for you, the praste a readin' his prayers in this very room, and the foine gintleman who was on the ship a sittin' down stairs three mortal hours waitin' to know if you waked up dead or alive, and thankin' God when it was alive I told him you was."

"Who, Jennie? What gentleman?" Bessie asked.

"Mr. Grey, to be sure," Jennie replied; "and he left his compliments for ye, and thanked God when I told him you was better. Oh, but he's very fine, and Grey's Park is like them places in the old country where the grandees live."

Whether it was that Bessie was thoroughly rested, or that the fact that Grey had not forgotten her was in itself a restorative, her recovery was very rapid, though she still looked like some fragile flower which a breath might blow away, and Miss McPherson watched her with a tender solicitude, astonishing in one as cold and impassive as she had always seemed to be.

CHAPTER XIII.

BESSIE GOES TO GREY'S PARK.

It was a lovely day in early October when Bessie made her first visit to Grey's Park, of which she had heard such glowing descriptions from Jennie, who took her there in an invalid chair sent for the purpose by Miss Lucy.

The grass in the park was fresh and green from recent rains, and the late autumn flowers gave a brightness to the place scarcely equaled in summer.

"Oh, how lovely it is! pretty almost as the Kensington Gardens," Bessie exclaimed, as she entered the gate and looked around her. "I think I should like to live here," she continued; and then there came to her a thought of Grey, who would probably one day be master of the place, and she blushed guiltily, as if she had said some immodest thing.

Miss Lucy met her at the door, and, taking her to her room, made her lie down till they were joined, by Miss McPherson, who came to lunch, which was served in the breakfast-room, and was just the kind to tempt an invalid.

Bessie enjoyed it immensely, and felt herself growing stronger and better in the brightness and freshness of this beautiful home which was one day to be Grey's.

On the wall, beside Blind Robin's, there was a picture of Grey, taken in Europe when he was fourteen, and just before the great sorrow came upon him and robbed his face of a little of the assurance and boyish eagerness which the artist had depicted upon the canvas. But it was like him still—like him, as he was now, in his young manhood, when to do good to others, to make somebody happy every day, was the rule of his life. And Bessie's eyes were often fixed upon it, as, after lunch was over they still sat in the breakfast-room, because of the sunshine which came in so brightly at the windows. And while they sat there the elder women talked of Grey and what he would probably do, now that his travels in Europe were ended.

"He ought to marry and settle down. Is there any hope of his doing so?" Miss Betsey said, and Lucy replied:

"I think so, yes, I am quite sure of it, if everything goes well, as I think it will."

Bessie was sitting with her back partly turned to the ladies, who did not see the crimson spots which covered her face for a moment and then left it deathly pale, as she heard that Grey Jerrold was to be married. For an instant everything around her turned black, and when she came to herself she felt that she could not breathe in that room with Grey's picture on the wall, and his eyes looking at her as they had looked that day, in Rome, when he had said to her words she would almost give half her life to hear again. Bessie was no dissembler. She could not sit there in her pain and make no sign, and, turning to her aunt, she said:

"Please, auntie, let Jennie take me into the air, I am sick and faint; I—"

She could not say anything more lest she should break down entirely; and, glancing significantly at each other, the two ladies called Jennie, and bade her take her young mistress into the garden.

"Go to the rose-arbor. It is warmer there," Miss Lucy said; but only Jennie heard, for Bessie was too conscious of the blow which had fallen so suddenly upon her, to heed what was passing around her.

Grey was going to be married; *her Gray*, whom she now knew that she loved as she had never loved Neil McPherson even in the first days of her engagement, when he was all the world to her. Her Grey, who certainly had loved her once, or he would never have said to her what he did. Her

Grey, who had been so kind to her on the ship and looked the love he did not speak. Why had he changed so soon? Was it some love of his boyhood before he saw her, and had it again sprung into being, now that he had returned to its object? And oh, how dreary the world looked to the young girl with the certainty that Grey was lost to her forever. She did not notice the fanciful summer-house into which Jennie wheeled her; did not notice anything, or think of anything except her desolation and a desire to be alone, that she might cry just as she had never cried before.

"Please, Jennie, go away," she said; "I would rather be alone."

So Jennie left her, and, covering her face with her hands, Bessie sobbed, piteously:

"Oh, Father in heaven, is there never to be any joy for me? Must I always be so desolate and lonely, and is it wicked to wish that I were dead?"

For several minutes poor Bessie wept on, and then with a great effort she dried her tears, and, leaning her head back in her chair, began to live over again every incident of her life as connected with Grey Jerrold. And while she sat there thus, the Boston train stopped at the Allington station, and she heard the roar and the ring as it started on its way. Twenty minutes later she heard behind her the sound of a footstep, apparently hurrying toward her, and thought, if she thought at all, that it was Jennie coming for her. But surely Jennie's tread was never so rapid and eager as this, nor were Jennie's hands as soft and warm as the hands which encircled her face, nor Jennie's voice like this which said to her:

"Bessie, darling Bessie!"

Grey had come to Allington from Springfield, where he had been on business for his father, and both Lucy and Miss McPherson knew that he was coming, and had chosen that day for Bessie's visit to the park, and had purposely talked before her of his probable marriage, in order to test the nature of Bessie's feelings for him.

"We cannot be mistaken," Miss McPherson said to Lucy, after Bessie had left them; "but let me manage the young man."

And when, at last, Grey came, and, after greeting the ladies, asked after Bessie, Miss McPherson replied that she was better and had just left them for the garden; and then, as Grey made no move to go in search of her, she suddenly turned upon him with the exclamation:

"Grey Jerrold, you are a fool!"

"Ye-es?" he answered, interrogatively, as he regarded her with astonishment.

"I repeat it—you are either a fool or blind, or both!" she continued. "But I am neither, and I know you love my niece, and she loves you, and I know too that you think she is engaged to Neil McPherson, but she is not."

"What!" Grey exclaimed, starting to his feet. "What are you saying?"

"I am saying that Bessie's engagement was broken before she left England, and that she—"

"She—what?" Grey cried, almost pleadingly; and Miss McPherson rejoined:

"She is in the garden. You will find her in the rose-arbor."

Grey waited for no more, but went rapidly in the direction of the summer-house where Bessie sat with her back to him, and did not see him until his hands were upon her face and his voice said to her:

"Bessie, darling Bessie!"

Then she started suddenly, and when Grey came round in front of her, and taking her hands in his kissed her lips, she kissed him unhesitatingly, and then burst into a paroxysm of tears.

"What is it, Bessie? Why are you crying so?" Grey said, as he still held her hands and kept kissing her forehead and lips.

"They said you were going to be married," Bessie sobbed, as Grey knelt beside her, and laying her head upon his shoulder, tried to brush her tears away.

"Who said I was to be married?" he asked, in some surprise, and Bessie answered him:

"Your Aunt Lucy said she thought so, and I—oh, Grey, what must you think of me?" and lifting her head from his shoulder, Bessie covered her face with her hands, crying for very shame that she had betrayed what she ought to have kept to herself.

"What must I think of you?" Grey replied. "Why, this—that you are the dearest, sweetest little girl in all the world, and that I am the happiest man. I do not know what Aunt Lucy meant by saying I was going to be married; but I am, and very soon, too—just as soon as you are able to be present at the ceremony. Will that be at Christmas-time, do you think?"

He was taking everything for granted, and Bessie knew that he was, and knew what he meant, but she would scarcely have been a woman if she had not wished him to put his meaning in words which could not be mistaken, so she said to him amid her tears—glad, happy tears they were

now:

"Whom are you to marry?"

"Whom?" he repeated. "Whom but you, Bessie McPherson, whom I believe I have loved ever since that Christmas I spent at Stoneleigh two years ago. Do you remember the knot of plaid ribbon you wore that night and which I won at play? I have it still, as one of my choicest treasures, and the curl of hair which Flossie cut from your head, in Rome, when we thought you would die, I divided that tress with Jack Trevellian the night we talked together of you, with breaking hearts, because we believed you were dead. He told me then of his love for you, and I confessed mine to him, though we both supposed that, had you lived, Neil would have claimed you as his. Oh, Bessie, those were dreary months to me, when I thought you dead, and may you never know the anguish I endured when I stood by that grave in Stoneleigh and believed you lying there. But God has been very good to me, far better than I deserve. He has given you to me at last and nothing shall separate us again."

While Grey talked, he was caressing Bessie's face and hair, and stooping occasionally to kiss her, while she sat dumb and motionless, so full was she of the great joy which had come so suddenly upon her, and which, as yet, she could not realize.

"We will be married at Christmas," Grey said; "the anniversary of the time when I first saw you, little dreaming then, that you would one day be my wife. Shall it not be so?"

What Bessie might have said or how long the interview might have lasted, we have no means of knowing, for a shrill cry in the distance of "None of that, misther! for I'm comin' meself to take the hide of ye," startled them from their state of bliss, and looking up they saw Jennie bearing swiftly down upon them, with both arms extended ready for fight.

Jennie, who knew nothing of Grey's arrival, had visited with the servants, until she concluded it was time to return to her young mistress. As she came within sight of the summer-house what was her horror to see a tall young man with his arms around Bessie, and, as it seemed to her, trying to take her from the chair.

"Thaves and murther!" she cried, "if there isn't a spalpeen thryin' to run away with Miss Bessie, body and bones;" and at her utmost speed she dashed on to the fray.

But at sight of Grey she stopped short, and with wide-open eyes and mouth, surveyed him a moment in astonishment; then a broad smile illumined her face as she exclaimed:

"An' faith that's right. Kiss her again as many times as ye likes. It's not meself will interfere, though if you'd been a bla'guard, as I thought you was, I'd of had yer heart's blood," and turning on her heel Jennie walked rapidly away, leaving the lovers a very little upset and disconcerted.

It was Grey who wheeled Bessie back to the house, and taking her in his arms carried her to his Aunt Lucy, to whom he said, as he put her down upon the couch:

"This is my little wife, or, rather, she is to *be* my wife on Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day we are to spend here with you, who will make the old house brighter than ever it was before." Then, going up to Miss McPherson, he continued: "Kiss me, Aunt Betsey because I am to be your nephew, and because I am no longer a fool."

The kiss he asked for was given, and thus the engagement was sealed, and when next day Grey returned to Boston, he said to his Aunt Hannah, who was still with his mother:

"Bessie is to be my wife, and I must tell her our secret, and at your house, too, for, after she has seen you, I feel sure that she will forgive everything."

CHAPTER XIV.

TELLING BESSIE.

At last Mrs. Geraldine was better, and signified her willingness to let her sister-in-law return to her own home, from which she had been absent so long. She had received, with a good deal of equanimity, the news of her son's engagement with Bessie, whom she remembered as a lovely child, wholly unlike her mother.

"If that woman were living, I would never consent to the marriage," she said; "but as it is, I am willing, though I had hoped that in your travels abroad you might have found some high-born English girl with a title, but it is something to marry a niece of Lady Jane, and I dare say Miss McPherson will make the girl her heir; so I will welcome her as my daughter, and perhaps she will brighten up the house, which is at times insufferably dull, with your father growing more and more silent and gloomy every day. I should not wonder if he were to become crazy, like your grandfather."

Grey did not reply to this, or tell her that he could guess in part what it was which had made his father grow old so fast, and blanched his hair to a snowy white, unusual to one of his years. It

was the secret hidden under the bed-room floor which had affected his whole life, and affected it all the more because he had brooded over it in silence, and never spoken to any one upon the subject. Once Hannah attempted to say something to him, but he had repulsed her so fiercely that she never tried again, and he did not guess what efforts Grey had made to find the rightful heirs of Joel Rogers. Like his wife, he did not object to Grey's engagement. Bessie was a desirable *parti*, as she would, in all probability, inherit her aunt's large fortune, and he signified his approval; and in all Boston there was not a happier man than Grey, on the morning when, with his Aunt Hannah, he at last started for Allington, telling her when he bade her good-by at the station that he should bring Bessie to her early the following day.

It was a most lovely October morning when Grey drove Bessie through the rocky lane in the pasture land up to the old house, of which he had told her on Christmas Eve, at Stoneleigh, almost two years ago, and which seemed neither new nor strange to Bessie, so strong an impression had his description made upon her.

"There she is; that is Aunt Hannah," Grey said, as a tall, slender woman, in a plain black dress, came to the open door and stood waiting for them.

"And I should have known her, too. What a sad face it is, just as if there was a history hidden under it." Bessie said, and Grey replied, as be lifted her from the phaeton:

"There is a history hidden there, and sometime I will tell it to you."

Then leading her to his aunt he said:

"Auntie, I have brought you Bessie."

"Yes," Hannah answered, with a gasp, as her cold hands were clasped by the soft, warm ones of the young girl, who looked up at her curiously, wondering at her manner.

At sight of Bessie, Hannah had been startled by the likeness to the picture hidden away so many years, every feature of which was indelibly stamped upon her memory. Had that picture taken life and form, and was it confronting her now? It seemed so, and for an instant she grew cold and faint, and stood staring at the girl.

"Auntie, won't you kiss Bessie?" Grey said, and then the spell was broken, and taking the girl in her arms, Hannah kissed and cried over her as a fond mother cries over the child which has been lost and is restored to her again.

Hannah could not define to herself the feeling which took possession of her from the moment she saw Bessie standing there in the low, old-fashioned room, with the October sunshine falling on her golden hair and lighting up her beautiful face, still pale and worn from recent sickness. It was as if an angel had come suddenly to her, bringing the peace and rest she had never known since that awful night more than forty years ago, and she felt all her olden horror rolling away, as she watched Bessie going over the house, with Grey—; now up the crooked stairs to the room under the roof where Grey used to sleep when a boy, and where there were still the remains of a horse, and a boat which he had sailed in the big iron kettle by the well—; now down the cellar stairs to see the foundation of the big chimney which occupied the center of the house, and in which the swallows built their nests; now out to the well where the bucket hung, and then to the little bench where Grey used to sit and kick the side of the house, while the terror-stricken old man looked on trembling, lest the boards should give way and show what was hidden there! It was there yet, dust and ashes now, but still there, and Bessie sat down alone beside it, while Grey shivered as his grandfather had done, and drew her away as quickly as possible.

"Where does this lead to?" she asked, laying her hand upon the door which was always closed.

"That was grandfather's room. No one goes in there," Grey said, hurriedly, as he put his arm around her, and told her she had seen enough, and must rest until after dinner.

He took her to the pleasant south room, where the early dinner was served, with the tiny silver teaspoons, marked with the initials of Hannah's mother, and the bits of old china, which modern fashion has made so choice and rare now. And Bessie enjoyed it with the keen relish of a returning appetite. She had improved rapidly within the last week, and declared herself is well and strong as ever, when, after dinner was over and the dishes cleared away she nestled down among the cushions of the chintz-covered lounge.

"This is such a dear old place," she said, "that I should like to stay here always. People say there is a skeleton in every house, but I am sure there can be none here, everything seems so peaceful and quiet."

"Why did she make that remark, of all others?" Grey thought, as, with a face whiter even than that of his Aunt Hannah, he sat down beside her, and drawing her closely to him, laid her golden head upon his shoulder.

"Bessie," he said, and his voice shook a little, "I am going to tell you something which perhaps I ought to have told you before I asked you to be my wife, and which I should have told you had I thought the telling would make any difference in your love for me."

"Nothing could make any difference in that," Bessie said, lifting up her sweet face to be kissed, and then dropping her head again upon Grey's arm, just as Hannah came in and took a seat on the other side of her.

Hannah had been up stairs to her room, where she now kept the box in which lay the picture which was so like Bessie McPherson.

"More like her than I supposed," she whispered, as she gazed upon the face which seemed each moment to grow more and more like the young girl to whom Grey was to tell the story.

He was only waiting for her to come in before he commenced, she knew, and putting the picture back in its place, she went down to the south room, and taking her seat beside Bessie, as Grey motioned her to do, waited for him to begin.

"Bessie," he said, and his aim tightened its clasp around her waist, "there *is* a skeleton here, and it has darkened all my Aunt Hannah's life, and thrown its shadow over me as well. Can you bear to have a little of it fall upon you, too?"

"Yes," she answered, fearlessly, "I have always lived with skeletons until I knew you loved me; they cannot frighten me."

"But, darling, would you love me as well, think you you knew that, in a way, there was a disgrace clinging my name?" he asked, and Bessie replied:

"A disgrace! What do you mean? I cannot imagine you to be in disgrace; but if you are, I am quite ready to share it with you."

"Even if it be murder?"

Grey spoke the last word in a whisper, as if afraid the walls had ears, but Bessie heard him distinctly, and with a great start, she drew herself away from him, and sat rigid as a stone, while she repeated:

"Murder! Oh, Grey, you surely do not mean that!"

"No, not exactly; it was manslaughter, done in self-defense," Grey answered her, and, with a sigh of relief, Bessie asked:

"Who was the killed, and who the killer?"

"My grandfather did the deed, in the heat of passion, and the victim has lain under the floor of that room into which I would not let you enter, for more than forty years. Now you know the skeleton there is in this old house."

"Ye-es," Bessie said, while a look of terror and pain crept into her eyes; but she did not move nearer either to Grey or his aunt.

Indeed, it seemed to both that she drew herself into as small a compass as possible, so that she might not touch them, and her face was very white and still as Grey commenced the story, which he made as short as possible, though he dwelt at length upon the life-long remorse of his grandfather, and the heavy burden which his Aunt Hannah had carried for years.

At this part of the story, Bessie's face relaxed, and one of the hands, which had been clasped so tightly together at first, went over to Hannah's hand, which it took and held until Grey told of the lonely days and dreary nights passed by the young girl in the old horror-haunted house, with no one but Rover for her companion. Then the hand went up with a soft, caressing motion to the face which Grey had once said looked as if Christ had laid his hands hard upon it, and left their impress there. It was pallid now, as the face of a corpse, and there were hard lines about the mouth, which quivered with pain. But, at the touch of Bessie's soft fingers, the hardness relaxed, and, covering her eyes, Hannah burst into a paroxysm of weeping.

"Dear auntie," Bessie said, "my auntie, because you are Grey's, how you must have suffered, and how I wish I could have come to you. There would have been no terror here for me, because, you see, it was not premeditated; it was an accident, not a crime, and God, I am sure, forgave it long ago. No, Grey;" and now she turned to him, and, winding her arms around his neck, went on: "It is not a disgrace you ask me to share it is a misfortune, a trouble; and do you think I would shrink from it a moment—I, who have borne so much that *was* disgrace?"

He knew she was thinking of her mother, but he said nothing except to fold her in his arms and kiss her flushed, eager face, while she went on:

"But who was this man? Where did he live, and had he no friends to make inquiries for him?"

Grey remembered now that he had simply said, the *peddler*, without giving the name, and he hastened to say:

"He was Joel Rogers, a Welshman, from Carnarvon, and it was for his sister Elizabeth, or her heirs, that I was searching, when I first came to Stoneleigh."

"Oh, Grey!" and Bessie sprang up almost as quickly as she had done when he spoke to her of murder; "oh, Grey! what if it should be my great-uncle, whose grave is under the floor? You once told me you were hunting for Elizabeth Rogers, and I said I would ask Anthony, who knew everybody for fifty miles around and for a hundred years back. But I forgot it until after father died, when it came to me one day, and I went to Anthony and asked if he knew any one in Carnarvon or vicinity by the name of Elizabeth Rogers.

"'No,' he said, 'I never knew Elizabeth Rogers; but I knew your grandmother, Elizabeth Baldwin,

before she was married, and she had a half-brother, Joel Rogers, twenty years older than herself. A queer, roaming kind of chap, who went off to America, or Australia, or some such place, and never came back again. He was a good bit older than I am,' Anthony said, 'and would be over eighty if living now.'

"Then I remembered that when I was a child I once heard my grandmother Allen speak of a brother, who, she said, went to the States when she was a girl, and from whom she had not heard in many years. He must have been very fond of her, for she had several choice things he had given her, and among them a picture of herself, which, she said, was painted in London the only time she was ever there, and which was very beautiful."

"A picture, did you say? Would you know one like it if you were to see it?" Hannah asked, in a constrained voice and Bessie replied:

"Oh, yes; that portrait is still at Stoneleigh, for when grandma died, six or seven years ago, mother gave it to me, and I hung it in my room. It was like mother, only prettier, I think."

While Bessie was speaking Hannah had risen, and going from the room soon returned, bearing in her hand the box, which for so many years she had secreted, and which Grey had not seen since he was a boy, and Hannah told him the sad story which had blighted her life. He saw it now in his aunt's hands, and shuddered as if it were a long closed grave she was opening.

"Here is the watch," she said, with a strange calmness, as she laid in Bessie's lap the silver time-piece, whose white face seemed to Grey to assume a human shape, and look knowingly up at him. "You see it stopped at half-past eight. It has never been wound up since," Hannah continued, pointing to the hour and minute hands.

Without the slightest hesitancy Bessie took the watch, and examining it carefully, said, as she fitted the key attached to the old-fashioned fob to the key-hole:

"Do you think it would go if I were to wind it up?" Then, giving the key a turn or two, she continued: "It does. It ticks. Look, Grey," and she held it to his ear.

But he started away from it, as if it had been the heart beat of the dead man himself, and rising quickly began to pace up and down the room, while Bessie next took the picture to which she bore so striking a likeness.

"It is grandmother! *It is!*" she exclaimed. "He must have had two taken, one for himself and one for her. Is she not lovely?"

"She is like you," Hannah replied, "and it was this resemblance which started me so when I first saw you this morning. Oh, Bessie, my child, your coming to me has cleared away all the clouds, and I can make restitution at last, for *you* are the rightful heir of the money I have saved so carefully—heir of that and everything."

"I do not think I understand you," Bessie said, and then Hannah handed her the will, executed in Wales, about a year before Joel Rogers' death, and in which he gave all he had to his sister Elizabeth and her heirs forever.

"Still I do not quite see it. Explain it to me, Grey," Bessie said, with a perplexed look on her face.

Thus importuned, Grey sat down beside her, and, as well as he could, explained everything, and told her of the gold, to which his aunt had added interest every year, so that the heirs, when found, should have their own, and of the shares in the slate quarries in Wales, dividends on which must have amounted to quite a fortune by this time, and all of which was hers, when she was proven to be the lawful heir of Elizabeth Baldwin, sister of Joel Rogers.

"Yes, I understand now," she said, with a quivering lip, and the great tears rolling down her cheeks. "There is money for me somewhere, but, oh, I wish it had come in father's life-time. We were so poor then; but," she added, as a bright smile broke over her face, "I am glad for you, Grey, that I shall not be a penniless bride."

Did she not then appreciate the position, or see the gulf which her relationship to the dead man had built between them? If not, he must tell her, and rising again to his feet, and standing over her, Grey began with a choking voice:

"Bessie, you do not seem even to suspect that, in the eyes of the world, the fact that you are Joel Rogers' grand-niece ought to separate you from me. Don't you know that the blood of your kinsman is on my grandfather's hands, and does that make no difference with you?"

"Difference!" she repeated. "No, why should it? Oh, Grey, you are not going to give me up because of that? I was not to blame;" and in Bessie's voice there was such a pleading pathos, that when she stretched her hands toward him, Grey took her in his arms, feeling that all his doubts and fears were removed, and that Bessie might be his in spite of everything.

For a long time they talked together of the course to be pursued, deciding finally that the matter should be kept to themselves until Grey and Bessie were married, and with Hannah had been to Wales and proved the validity of Bessie's claim to the effects of Joel Rogers.

There was no longer any talk of waiting until Christmas Eve, for the marriage was to take place as soon as possible, and when Grey took Bessie home to Miss McPherson he startled that good woman with the announcement that he was to be married the last week in November and sail at

once for Europe, taking his Aunt Hannah with him.

CHAPTER XV.

WEDDING BELLS.

They rang first for Lord Hardy and Augusta Browne, who had intended to be married in October, but whose wedding was deferred until the second week in November, because, as Mrs. Rossiter-Browne expressed it, "Gusty's bridal trouses could not arrive in time from Paris." Everything pertaining to the young lady's wardrobe was ordered either from London or Paris, and could Mrs. Browne have done it she would have bought the Arch of Triumph, and, transporting it to Allington, would have set it up in front of her house and illuminated it for the occasion. She should never have another daughter marry an Irish lord, she said, and she meant "to make a splurge and astonish the natives," and she did.

She had a temporary ball-room built at one side of the house, and lighted it with a thousand wax candles. She had a brass band from Springfield and a string band from Worcester. She had a caterer from Boston, whom with her usual happy form of expression she called a "canterer." She had colored waiters in white gloves in such profusion that they stumbled over and against each other. She had an awning stretched from the front door to the gate, with yards and yards of carpeting under it.

"She had not been abroad for nothing, and she guessed she knew what was what," she said to Lord Hardy when he hinted that a plainer wedding would suit him quite as well, and that the money she was expending could be put to better purpose.

"I guess we can stand it, and still have a nice little sum for Gusty," she added, and patting her future son-in-law upon the back she bade him "keep cool and let her run the machine."

After that, Lord Hardy kept quiet, though he was never so near a fever as during the week which preceded his nuptials. For Augusta herself he did not care at all, as men are supposed to care for the girl they are about to marry. He did not dislike her, and he thought her rather pretty and lady-like, with a far better education than his own; but, strangely enough in these last days of his bachelorhood, he often found himself living over again those far-off times in Monte Carlo, when, as Cousin Sue from Bangor, he had laughed and talked and flirted with poor little Daisy, as he called her to himself, now that she was dead, and the grave had closed over all her faults and misdemeanors. She had been the cause of his ruin, and he had, at times, hated her for it, but she had been jolly company for all that, and he wondered what she would say if she could know that Mrs. Rossiter-Browne was to be his mother-in-law and Augusta Lady Hardy.

"She would turn over in her coffin, I do believe," he thought, and then he wondered how much Augusta's wedding portion would be, and how far it would go toward restoring his Irish home to something like its former condition. But on this point, *pere* Browne maintained a rigid silence, and he was obliged to be content with the hints which *mere* Browne dropped from time to time. She had made minute inquiries with regard to Hardy Manor, her daughter's future home, and at her request he had made a drawing of it, so that she knew just how many rooms there were, and how they were furnished.

"I shall h'ist them feather beds out double quick," she said, "and them high four-posters, with tops like a buggy. I'd as soon sleep in a hearse, and I shall put in some brass bedsteads and hair mattresses, and mabby I shall furnish Gusty's room with willer work. I'll show 'em what Uncle Sam can do."

Was she then going with him to Hardy Manor, and must he present her to his aristocratic friends as the mother of his bride? The very possibility of such a calamity made the perspiration ooze from the tips of Lord Hardy's fingers to the roots of his hair, and once he contemplated running away and taking the first ship which sailed for Liverpool. But when he remembered his debts he concluded to swallow everything, even the mother-in-law, if necessary. He was to sail the last week in November, and as, when he engaged his state-room, nothing had been said about a second one for Mrs. Browne, he comforted himself with the hope that she did not meditate going with him. She would, perhaps, come in the spring, by which time he might be glad for the brass bedsteads and hair mattresses which abounded at the Ridge House, and which were really more in accordance with his luxurious tastes than the feather beds and high four-posters which had done duty at Hardy Manor for more years than he could remember.

Over four hundred invitations were given to the wedding, as Mrs. Browne said she "didn't mean to make nobody mad." But she did offend more people than if her party had been more select, for when Mrs. Peter Stokes, the truckman's wife, heard that her next door neighbor, Mrs. Asa Noaks, the hackman's wife, had received an invitation and she had not, her indignation knew no bounds, and she wondered who *Miss Ike Browne* thought she was, and if she had forgotten that she once went out to work like any other hired girl; and when Susan Slocum, whose mother took in washing, heard that her friend Lucy Smith, who worked in the mill, was invited and she was not, she persuaded her mother to roll up the four dozen pieces which had been sent from the Ridge to be washed, and return them with the message that if she wa'n't good enough to go to the

wedding she wa'n't good enough to wash the weddin' finery. This so disturbed poor Mrs. Browne, who really wished to please every body, that but for the interference of Allen and Augusta she would have gone immediately to the offended washerwoman with an apology, and an earliest request to be present at the wedding.

"Don't for pity's sake, ask any more of the scum," Allen said, adding, that if she had not invited any of them no one would have been slighted.

"Well, I don't know," Mrs. Browne rejoined, with a sigh; "I can't quite forget when I was *scum* myself, and knew how it felt."

On the whole, however, everything went smoothly, and the grand affair came off one November night when the air was as soft and balmy as in early summer, and the full moon was sailing through a cloudless sky as carriage after carriage made its way to the brilliantly lighted house through the dense crowd of curious people which filled the road in front, and even stretched to the left along the garden fence. All the factory hands were there, and all the boys in town, with most of the young girls, and many of the women whose rank in life was in what Allen called the scum, forgetting that but for his father's money he might have been there too.

There were four bridemaids in all, and their dresses and trains were something wonderful to behold, as they swept down the stairs and through the long drawing-room to the bay-window where, amid a wilderness of roses, and azalias, and lilies, they were to stand. This was the part the most distasteful to Lord Hardy, who would greatly have preferred being married in church according to the English form—and, in fact, Augusta would have liked that, too; but Mrs. Browne was a stanch Baptist, and opposed any deviation from the good old rule, and so Lord Hardy was compelled to submit, though his face wore the look of anything but a happy man as he went through the ordeal which made him Augusta's husband, and then received the congratulations of the guests, most of whom addressed the bride as Lady Hardy.

When Augusta heard of Bessie's engagement with Grey she went at once to congratulate her, and insisted upon her being one of her bridemaids. But Bessie declined; she was too much a stranger to take so conspicuous a place, she said, and would rather be a quiet looker-on.

But she was there with Grey, to whose arm she clung as she looked wonderingly on at the gorgeous display, unlike anything which was ever seen in Allington before, or ever would be again.

Altogether it was a most brilliant and successful affair, and the reporters, who had been hired to be present, did it ample justice in the next day's papers. "Festivities in High Life" headed the column, in which the beauty and accomplishments of the bride were dwelt upon at large, while free scope was given to the imagination and the pen when it came to the elegant manners of the hostess, the air of refinement and cultivation perceptible among the guests, and the signs of wealth and perfect taste everywhere visible. The great popularity of the family was also dwelt upon as proven by the immense crowd thronging the streets, and Lord Hardy was congratulated upon his rare good luck, and hints were thrown out that England and Ireland ought to feel complimented that so many of America's fair daughters were willing to wear a foreign title and grace a foreign home.

"What fools those reporters are, to be sure, and the Brownes are bigger fools to allow such stuff to be printed," was Miss McPherson's comment upon the articles which appeared in the *Spy* and the *Gazette*, and the Springfield *Republican*, and her opinion was pretty generally shared by the citizens of Allington, who immediately raked up the ashes of the Brownes' past history, and recalled with great zest the times when Mrs. Browne had worked in the kitchen at Grey's Park, while poor Mr. Browne was charged with every possible second-class occupation, from mending brass kettles down to peddling clothes-pins.

Fortunately, however, Mrs. Browne was in happy ignorance of all this. She only knew that she had "killed a bear," as she expressed it, and that she had been described as an elegant and accomplished lady, who led the *ton* in Allington.

"I guess I've whipped 'em all, though I'll wait and see what Miss McPherson does," she said; but Miss McPherson did nothing.

It was the wish of both Bessie and Grey that the wedding should be as quiet as possible. Any one was free to go to the church where the ceremony took place one morning the last week in November, and which was filled with plain, respectable people. But only Hannah and Lucy Grey, Mr. and Mrs. Burton Jerrold, and the clergyman, Mr. Sanford, went to the house, where the wedding-breakfast was served, and where Miss Betsey broke down more than once, as she thought how soon she had lost the girl whom she had learned to love so much. Grey and Bessie were going to New York that afternoon, for they were to sail the next day, and Hannah was going with them. No good reason had been assigned for this sudden trip across the ocean at this season of the year, and only Mr. Sanford knew why it was taken. Hannah had told him everything, and while he expressed his pleasure that the long search and waiting had at last been rewarded in so satisfactory a manner, he added, sadly:

"I hope you will not stay there long. I shall be very lonely without you, Hanny."

It was the first time he had given her the pet name of old, since Martha had been laid to rest in the church-yard, and as a penance for doing so, he went the same day to Martha's grave and

stood there at least fifteen minutes, with the November rain falling upon him until his clothes were nearly wet through.

"Poor Martha," he sighed, as he turned away, "she would be fidgeted to death if she knew how wet I am. I guess I had better drink some boneset when I get home. I believe that is what she used to give me."

He went with the party to New York, and so did Miss Grey and Miss McPherson, and the loungers at the Allington station made some joking remarks about one widower going off with three old maids, but each of the old maids knew her business, and cared little what the rabble said. The Brownes, too, were in New York with Lord and Lady Hardy, who sailed in the same ship with Grey and Bessie. Just how much Augusta's wedding portion was, was never known, but that it was satisfactory was proven by the felicitous expression of Lord Hardy's face, which beamed with delight as he said good-by to his mother-in-law, whom he kissed in the exuberance of his joy. But his countenance fell a little when he heard her tell Augusta not to be so down in the mouth, for she should be over there herself early in the spring, in time to see to house-cleaning!

The day was bright and warm, as the days in Indian summer often are, and the McPherson party stood upon the wharf waving their good-bys as long as Grey and Bessie were discernible among the passengers; then they returned to their Hotel, and Miss Betsey sent the following cablegram to Neil in London:

"Bessie was married yesterday to Grey Jerrold, and sails to-day for Liverpool."

CHAPTER XVI.

BESSIE'S FORTUNE.

At last there came a day when Hannah Jerrold sat in the yew-shaded garden at Stoneleigh, on the same bench where Archie once lay sleeping, with Daisy at his side keeping the flies from him. Archie and Daisy were dead, and Hannah Jerrold, whose life had reached out and laid hold upon theirs, was there in the old home to make restitution, and coming to her down the walk were Grey and Bessie, whose face was wonderfully beautiful as she lifted it to her husband, and said something which made him stoop down and kiss the sweet mouth from which the old, tired look had nearly vanished.

She was so happy now, this little Welsh girl, who had borne so much, and suffered so much, and it seemed to Hannah as she drew near as if a halo of joy shone in her deep blue eyes and irradiated every feature of her lovely countenance.

"Oh, it is so nice to be home again, and the old place is so dear to me," she said, as she sat down by Hannah upon the bench, "I half wish we were going to stay here, though I like America very much, and shall in time, become as genuine a Yankee as Grey himself. You know he is in a way a cosmopolitan."

They had taken Anthony and Dorothy completely by surprise, for although Bessie had written to them of her engagement, she had said nothing of coming home, as she did not then expect to do so. But circumstances had changed, and the old couple were just sitting down to their frugal breakfast of bread and tea when a carriage from the station drove into the park, and in a moment Bessie was in Dorothy's arms, laughing and crying and talking in the same breath, presenting Hannah as her husband and her husband as her Aunt Hannah, in her joy and excitement at being home once more.

It did not take long to explain why they had come, to the old people, who entered heart and soul into the matter Anthony offering to go at once to Carnavon and hunt up some one who could swear to the hand-writing of Joel Rogers and help to prove the will, while Dorothy said she had no doubt that among some papers, bills and receipts which had belonged to Bessie's grandmother and which were still lying in an old writing-desk where Daisy had put them when her mother died, there were letters from Joel to his sister, which proved to be a fact.

"I remember him well, though he was a good bit older than I am," Anthony said. "A little sandy-haired man, very kind-hearted and honest, though rather touchy and quarrelsome if he had too much beer in him, I shouldn't wonder but he died in some spree brought on by drink."

"Yes, he died in a spree brought on by drink," Hannah answered, sadly, and that was the only time she was ever called upon to speak of the manner of Joel Rogers' death.

Indeed, the whole matter was managed far more easily than she had feared. No troublesome questions whatever were asked, for there was no one enough interested in Joel Rogers to ask them, and when the will was proven and Bessie's claim as his rightful heir established, Grey found no difficulty whatever in obtaining from the company where the deceased had owned shares so many years ago, a full and correct account of all moneys invested and the dividends which had been accruing since, the whole of which was at once made over to Bessie, who found herself an heiress to so large an amount that it fairly took her breath away at first.

"Why, I am rich!" she exclaimed, and then, as the tears gathered in her eyes, she continued: "Oh, if this had come to me while poor father was alive, it would have made him so comfortable, and we were so poor."

Then she began to wonder what she should do with it all, and how dispose of it to the best advantage.

"If you were only poor and wanted it, I should be so glad," she said to Grey; "but you do not, and so I must do the best I can."

It never occurred to her to use any part of it for herself. She meant to give it away, and make a great many people happy. And within a day or two she had decided what to do with a part of it at least. She was sitting alone with Grey around the bright fire in the drawing-room one evening after their late dinner, and Grey was saying to her, as she sat on a low stool at his side, leaning her head on his knee and holding his hand in hers:

"It will soon be two years since I first saw you, with your face against the window, looking out into the darkness at the big American. I dare say you wished me in Guinea."

"That I did," Bessie answered laughingly, as she deepened her clasp of his hand, "for I did not at all know what to do with you."

"But I remember well that you gave up your own cozy bedroom, like the dear, unselfish little girl you are," Grey said, and Bessie rejoined.

"Yes, but I hope you remember, too, that you would not take it, and, pretending to have the asthma, said you preferred the north chamber, with the storm and the cold and the rats. Oh, Grey, honestly I did not want you here one bit. I thought you would be in the way but I am so glad now, for if you had not come I might never have been your wife," and Bessie nestled closer to the arm which was her rightful resting-place, and which encircled her fondly, as Grey replied a little teasingly:

"No, not my wife perhaps, but you might have been Neil's, eh?"

"No, Grey, if I had not met you, I could not have married Neil. I once thought I loved him, it is true, but I know now I did not. We were so unlike we could never have been happy. But I like him very much and am sorry for him, if he really cared for me. I wonder what he will say when he hears I am married and am here in Wales. He did not even know I was engaged. I think you ought to write and tell him, and perhaps invite him here for the holidays. Do you think he would care to come?"

"No, Bessie. Neither would I care to have him," Grey replied. "I would rather spend the first Christmas alone with you in the place where I first saw you; but I am willing to write to Neil, and when we go to London I will find him of course, and you shall see him."

"Thank you, Grey," Bessie said, just as Dorothy came in with a letter for her mistress, who took it in her hand and bending to the firelight recognized Neil's hand-writing, while her cheeks flushed as she saw her new name, Mrs. Grey Jerrold, and thought that Neil was the first to address her thus.

Breaking the seal, she read as follows:

> "LONDON, December ——, 18—.
>
> "My Dear Cousin: You may think it strange that I have not written before this and congratulated you upon your marriage. But I did not know of it until a week ago, when I came home from the Continent, summoned by the news that my mother was very ill. Then I found a telegram from my Aunt Betsey, which said, 'Bessie was married yesterday to Grey Jerrold and sails to-day for Liverpool.' I was not greatly surprised, and I am glad that it is Grey, I know he is worthy of you and I hope you will both be happy, even if I am wretched and forlorn, for I am more so than I ever was in my life before. Mother is dead and we have just returned from burying her at the old home in Middlesex. She died of typhoid-pneumonia the day after my return. I did not send for you to attend her funeral, for fear it would seem like an insult, she had taken such a stand against you during her life. But she changed very much in that respect, and a few hours before she died she talked of you, and said she withdrew all her opposition, and that, if I loved you still and you loved me she hoped we would marry and be happy. I did not tell her of the telegram, and so she did not know that you were already married. But, strangest of all, she advised me to go to America, and if I could find anything to do, which would not compromise me as a gentleman, to do it. Think of that, Bessie. My mother advising me to work, after all her training to the contrary. But she knew there was no other way. It is work or starve with me now. A few weeks before mother's death she lost nearly everything which she had in her own right, and which would have naturally come to me, so that most of her income died with her. Neither Trevellian House, nor the one in the country, is ours any longer, and father must go into lodgings when the new heir takes possession. This, at his age, is very hard, and I am sorry for him. If we only had the house in Middlesex it would not be so bad, for he likes the country and would be happy there. What he will do here alone in London I am sure I don't know, for I am going out to India on a salary of three hundred pounds

a year; small enough for a chap of my habits, but better than nothing.

"I'd like awfully to see you once more before I go, and if you come to London I hope you will let me call upon you. Don't think I am breaking my heart because you belong to Grey. I am not that kind, and it would do no good. But I loved you as I can never love any one again, and there is always a thought of you in my mind, and I see your face as it looked at me that day in Liverpool, when I acted the part of a cowardly knave.

"I would kick myself for that if I could. You were too good for me, Bessie, and I should have been a drag upon your life always. But Heaven knows how much I miss you, and how at times, when the thought comes over me that you are lost to me forever, and that another man is enjoying the sweetness I once thought would be mine, I half wish I were dead and out of the way of everything. Then I put that feeling aside as unworthy of me, and say to myself that I am glad you are happy, and that Grey is the noblest and best fellow in the world, and the one of all others who ought to have you for his wife. I shall never marry; that is settled. First, there is no woman in the world I can ever look at after loving you; and, second, I am too poor, and always shall be.

"And now I suppose you are thinking of Blanche, and wondering where she is. She and mother had a jolly row, of which I fancy I was the cause. Blanche told mother that all either she or I cared for was to get her ten thousand a year, and by Jove, I believe she was right, but I did not suppose she had sense enough to know it; trust a fool sometimes to see through a stone wall.

"Well, mother told Blanche that *I* did not even care for the ten thousand pounds, that I loved you, and had been engaged to you, and that you had discarded me. That was the straw too many, and forthwith, Miss Blanche departed from Trevellian House, bag and baggage, and I hear she is about to marry the eldest son of Lord Haxton, a brainless idiot, not half as good-looking as I am. There is conceit for you! But you know I was always rather vain of my looks, and I do believe that the greatest terror poverty holds for me is the knowing that I must wear seedy hats and threadbare coats, and trousers a year behind. Maybe Grey will sometime send me a box of his cast-off clothes.

"But what nonsense I am writing, and it is time I closed. I hear father in his room, and guess it must be time for his tea, so I will go in and join him. I hope either you, or Grey, or both, will write to me and tell me your plans.

"Forever and ever yours,

"Neil."

"P.S.—I saw Jack Trevellian the other day, and told him you were married. For a minute he was as white as a piece of paper; then he rallied, and asked a great many questions about you. It seems be thought that you died in Rome when you were so sick there, and he says Grey thought so, too. Jack did not know to the contrary until one day last summer, when Flossie Meredith met him in the streets in Paris and told him you were in America. Jack is growing stout, and looks quite the landed proprietor. He keeps a lot of hounds, and has invited me to visit him. But I am done with things of that sort. Again good-by.

"P.S. No. 2.—I have had my tea with father, and when I told him I had been writing to you, he bade me give you his love, and say, that he should very much like to see you and your husband, and that if you are not coming to London, he will go to Stoneleigh, where he has never been since your grandfather died. This, I take it, is right shabby in him. But father is greatly changed. Between you and me, he was awfully afraid of mother. Poor mother, she meant well, and she was fond of me.

"By the way, Flossie is in London, with her grandmother, stopping at Langham's, and Jack is there, too, and has asked the old lady to spend some weeks at Trevellian Castle. It is frightfully lonesome there, he says, and he wants Flossie to brighten it up. Can you read between the lines? I think I can. Flossie is bright as a button.

"Again yours, forever,

"Neil."

Bessie read the letter, and then, passing it to her husband, said:

"It is from Neil. Would you like to see it?"

Taking it from her, Grey read it through, and then, leaning back in his chair, watched Bessie, as, with her elbows on her knees, and her face resting on her hands, she sat gazing intently into the fire with a wistful, earnest look which puzzled him a little. Was she thinking of the two men who had loved her so much and one of whom loved her still? And was she sending a regret after the title she had lost? He did not believe so; and, after a moment, he reached out his hand, and laying it caressingly upon her soft, wavy hair, said to her:

"What is it, *petite*? Are you thinking how you might have been Lady Bessie Trevellian?"

Then she turned her clear, truthful blue eyes upon him and answered:

"No, Grey. I would rather be your wife than the grandest duchess in the world, but I am thinking of Neil and his father, and how hard it is for them to be so poor. Grey"—and rising from her stool, Bessie seated herself on her husband's lap, and, winding her arms around his neck, and laying her soft, warm check against his bearded one, said again; "Grey, I want to ask you something—want to do something. Can I?"

"Yes, do what you like. Ask me what you like. What is it, darling?" Grey answered her, and Bessie replied:

"I want to give a thousand pounds of my money to Neil and a thousand to his father. That is not much, I know, but the interest upon it will put Uncle John in better lodgings than he can now afford, and it will help Neil, too. Only think of three hundred pounds a year after all he has been accustomed to spend. What do you think, Grey?"

Grey's arm tightened its clasp around the girlish figure, and his lips touched Bessie's white forehead as he said:

"I think you the most generous, unselfish little woman in all the world. And so I am sure would Neil, if he knew what you proposed; but, Bessie, I do not believe he would like it, or like you to offer it to him. He has more manhood than that. Poverty is hard to bear, but it will not hurt him. On the contrary, having to work for his living will bring out the very best there is in him, and make him a man. He will not starve or even suffer want on three hundred pounds a year; it is more than many a working man has with a large family to support. So do not waste your sympathy on Neil, who can take care of himself; but his father is old, and the change will be hard upon him. Was he not born at Stoneleigh?"

"I think so. Yes," Bessie answered, and Grey continued:

"Neil says he likes the country and laments the loss of Elm Park. Now, this is my suggestion; Anthony and Dorothy ought to have some one with them in their old age. How would you like taking a part of that two thousand pounds you are so anxious to dispose of, and with it repair and fit up this place into a comfortable and pleasant home for Mr. McPherson, whenever he chooses to stay here? The rest of the two thousand you can invest for his use as long as he lives, and the interest of it will add to his present moderate income. What do you think of my plan?"

"I think it the very best that could be adopted, and I shall write to Neil to-night, so it will go in the first mail to-morrow," Bessie said, and before she slept she wrote a long letter to Neil, telling him first of the fortune which had come to her so unexpectedly, but not explaining how it had come.

She was simply the sole heiress of a certain Joel Rogers, who left shares in the quarries and mines, and these she was now possessed of, and felt herself a rich woman.

"Quite an heiress, it seems to me," she wrote, "although the sum is really not so very large, but it is more than I ever dreamed of having, and as money burns in my fingers, I am dying to be rid of some of it, and this is a plan which Grey and I have talked over together, and which I hope will meet your approval and that of your father."

Then, as briefly as possible she made her offer, which she begged him to persuade his father to accept.

"It will make me very happy," she wrote, "to know that his old age is made more comfortable by me. I should be glad to give you a part of my little fortune, but Grey says you would not like it, and perhaps he is right. I am glad that you are going to do something; I think you will be happier if occupied with business, and I wish you to be happy, as I am sure you will be some day, and always remember that you have two sincere friends, Grey and your Cousin Bessie."

She was going to add "Jerrold" to the Bessie, but refrained from doing so, thinking to herself that she would not be the first to flaunt her new name in Neil's face. Grey, however, had no such scruples. Looking over Bessie's shoulder, as she finished her letter, he saw her start to make the "J," and when she changed her mind, and put down her pen, he took it up and himself wrote the "Jerrold" with a flourish, saying, as he did so:

"Don't be afraid to show your colors, *petite*. I think 'Bessie Jerrold' the sweetest name in all the world."

"So do I; but I doubt if Neil holds the same opinion," Bessie answered, with a laugh, as she leaned her head upon her husband's bosom, while he kissed her lips and forehead, and said the fond, foolish things which no loving wife, however old she may be, is ever tired of hearing—fond, foolish words, which, if oftener spoken, would keep alive the love in hearts which should never grow cold to each other.

It was three days before an answer came to Bessie's letter, and in that time she developed a most astonishing talent for architecture, or rather for devising and planning how to repair and improve a house. At least twenty sheets of paper were wasted with the plans she drew of what she meant to do. There were to be bow-windows here, and balconies there, and porticoes in another place; chimneys were to be moved as readily and easily as if they had been pieces of furniture; partitions thrown down, doors taken away, and portieres substituted. All the solid, old-fashioned

furniture was to be discarded, and light, airy articles to take its place, like the willow work and brass bedsteads then on their way to Hardy Manor as a gift from Mrs. Browne. Indeed, it was not until Grey told Bessie that she was outdoing the Yankees in her desire for change, and asked if she were copying Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, that she stopped to rest, and concluded to wait for a letter from Neil before she commenced the work of knocking down and hauling out, as Dorothy expressed it.

At last the letter came, not from Neil, but from his father, who, after thanking Bessie most cordially for her generous offer, which he was glad to accept, wrote as follows:

> "I hope you will not be disappointed because I answer your letter in place of Neil, who said he could not possibly do it. He is greatly changed, and does not seem like himself at all. After reading your letter and passing it to me, he sat for a long time staring blankly at nothing, with a look on his face which I could not understand, and when I asked him what was the matter, he put his head upon the table and cried as young men never cry except they are greatly moved, and I cried, too; though why I cannot tell, unless it was for all the trouble which has come upon us at once, the loss of my wife, the loss of our home, and the fact that Neil must now, from necessity, do something to earn his bread. But I do not think he minds that as much as one might suppose, and when I began to cry he stopped at once and tried to comfort me, and said our lot was not a hard one by any means, when compared with what many had to endure; that it was a good thing to have to bestir himself; that he had been a lazy, conceited, selfish puppy long enough, and that if it were possible he meant to be a man. And then he spoke of you as his good angel, and said you were the truest, purest, and sweetest woman in all the world, and that neither of us could ever repay you and your husband for your generosity to us. I am sure I cannot, nor can I tell you how happy I shall be at Stoneleigh. I am afraid you will have a steady incumbent, for once there, I do not believe I shall care to leave it. I have seen all of the world I wish to, and the quiet and peace of Stoneleigh will be very grateful to me. I think, however, that for the winter I shall remain in London, where I hope to see you and Mr. Jerrold, whose father and mother I met years ago at Penrhyn Park. I do not yet know when Neil will start for India; probably within a few weeks, and then I shall be very lonely. That God may bless you, my dear Bessie, and give you all the happiness you deserve, is the prayer of your affectionate uncle,
>
> "JOHN MCPHERSON."

CHAPTER XVII

OLD FRIENDS.

Over this letter Bessie had a good cry, with her face on Grey's shoulder and Grey's arms around her, and when he asked why she cried she said she did not know, only the world seemed a very dreary world with no one perfectly happy in it except themselves. But Bessie's tears in those days were like April showers, and she was soon as joyous and gay as ever, and entered heart and soul into the improvements and repairs which were to make Stoneleigh habitable for the Hon. John, who, greatly to their astonishment, came suddenly upon them one day when they were ankle deep in brick and mortar and lath and plaster, and all the other paraphernalia attendant upon repairing an old house.

Neil was away so much, he said, and he was so lonely in his lodgings, with no one to speak to but his landlady, that he had decided to come to Stoneleigh, though he did not mean to make the least trouble, or be at all in the way.

But a fine gentleman, unaccustomed to wait upon himself, is always in the way, and even Bessie's patience was taxed to its utmost during the weeks which followed. Fortunately for her, Grey knew what was needed better than she did herself, for while she would have torn down one day what had been done the day before, he moved more cautiously and judiciously, so that the work really progressed rapidly, and some time in March John McPherson took possession of the two rooms which had been expressly designed for him, and which, as they were fitted up and furnished with a reference to comfort rather than elegance, were exceedingly homelike and pleasant, and suited the London gentleman perfectly.

"Here I shall live and die, blessing you with my last breath," he said to Bessie, as he moved into his new quarters and seated himself in an arm-chair by a window which overlooked the park and the Menai Bridge not very far away.

He was very fond of Bessie, whom he always called "dear child," and once, when she stood by him, he put his arm about her and kissing her fondly said, "I wish you could have been my daughter; it would have been the making of Neil."

"No, no, oh, no, I couldn't, for there is Grey, whom I love a great deal the best," Bessie answered hurriedly, as she drew herself from him, half feeling as if a wrong had been done her husband by

even a hint that she could ever have been the wife of another.

Some time in April the Jerrolds went to London and met Neil at the Grand Hotel, where he was staying a few days before leaving for India.

Owing to Grey's tact, the interview was tolerably free from embarrassment, though in Neil's heart there was a wild tumult of conflicting emotions, as he stood with Bessie again face to face, and heard her well remembered voice.

How lovely she was in her young, happy wifehood, with the tired, care-worn look gone from her sweet face, where only the light of perfect joy and peace was shining.

Grey, who, without being in the least a prig, was something of a connoisseur in the details of dress, had delighted to adorn his bride with everything which could enhance her beauty, and Bessie wore her plumage well, and there was a most striking contrast between the girl of fifteen, who, in her washed linen gown and faded ribbons, had once stood up in the park waving her handkerchief to Neil, and the young matron of twenty, who, clad in a faultless dinner dress, with diamonds in her ears and on her fingers, went forward to meet her cousin. And Neil recognized the difference, and felt himself growing both hot and cold by turns as he took the hand extended to him, and looked down upon the little lady, whom, but for her bright face and clear, innocent blue eyes, he would scarcely have known, so complete was the transformation. For a moment Neil felt as if he preferred the old linen, with its puffed sleeves and antiquated appearance, to the shimmer of the fawn-colored satin, with its facings of delicate blue, and the flush of the solitaires; but, as he watched her moving about the elegant rooms and discharging her duties as hostess just as kindly and thoughtfully as she had done at Stoneleigh, where the china was cracked and the silver was old, he said to himself, that the transformation was such as it should be, and that satins and diamonds, though out of place on little Bessie McPherson, of Stoneleigh, were fitting adornments for Mrs. Grey Jerrold, of Boston. He had called her Bessie, as of old, and the repeating the dear name to her, and seeing the quick, responsive smile and questioning glance he knew so well, nearly unmanned him, and raised within him such a tempest of love, and remorse, and regret for what he had lost, that it required all his fortitude and will not to break down entirely, and to seem natural and at ease during the dinner, to which Grey had invited him, and which was served in the private parlor.

Half an hour or more after dinner a servant brought in a card with Jack Trevellian's name upon it, and in a moment Jack was with them, shaking hands cordially with both Grey and Bessie, and appearing as much at his ease as he did in the park when he first saw the latter and told her who the people were, while she, a shy country girl, looked on wonderingly and made her quaint remarks. She did not look like a country girl now, and Jack's eyes followed her admiringly as she moved around the room, with a faint flush on her cheeks and a very little shyness perceptible in her manner. Once, when standing near her, he put a hand on either shoulder, and looking down into her face said to her:

"Do you know, Mrs. Jerrold how nearly my heart was broken when I thought you were dead, and that for months the brightness of my life seemed blotted out. But it is all right now, and I am glad for you that you are Grey Jerrold's wife. You will be very happy with him."

"Yes, yes, very happy," Bessie answered, and then, scarcely knowing why she did so, she asked him abruptly for Flossie, and where she was.

"At Trevellian Castle," Jack replied, taking his hands from her shoulders and stepping back from her. "She is there with her grandmother, a cantankerous old woman, who leads Flossie a sorry life, or would if she were not so light-hearted that trouble slips from her easily."

"No one could be happy with Mrs. Meredith," Bessie said, "She is so cross and unreasonable, and I pity poor Flossie, who is made for sunshine. I wish she would go to America with us. I should be so glad to have her, and I mean to write and ask her. Do you think she would like to go?"

"Ye-es—no—I don't know," Jack answered, thoughtfully, while it seemed to Bessie that a shadow passed over his face, and he sat for a few moments in a brown study as if revolving something in his mind. Then rousing up he said he must leave them, as he was due at a party at the West End, and it was time he was making his toilet. "I shall be very glad to see you at Trevellian Castle," he said to Grey, "and if you will come I will treat Mistress Bessie to the biggest fox-hunt she ever saw. I have no end of hounds and horses, and Flossie is an admirable horsewoman. Why, she can take the highest fence and clear the widest ditch in the county. Come and see her do it. Good-by."

The next day Bessie wrote to Flossie, urging her to go with her to her new home, and saying that she knew she would like America, and be very happy there.

A week later and Neil started for India. He said good-by, at the hotel, to his father, who had come from Wales to see him; but Grey and Bessie went with him to Southampton, where he was to embark. It was hard for Neil to seem cheerful and natural, but he succeeded very well until the last, when he said good-by to Bessie. Then he broke down entirely, and, taking her in his arms, cried over her as a mother cries over the child she is losing.

"You have always been my good angel, Bessie," he said, "and if I ever make anything of myself, it will all be owing to you. Good-by, and may God bless you and make you the happiest woman in the world, as you deserve to be. I may never see you again, and I may. If I succeed, and really think I am a man, and not a sneak as you have always known me, I shall come to you sometime,

and show you that there was something in Neil McPherson besides selfishness and conceit. Good-by."

Releasing her, he turned to Grey, who, during this little scene, had considerately turned his back upon them, and stood looking from the window as unconcernedly as if no tall, handsome cousin were kissing his wife and crying over her. He had perfect faith in Bessie, and he pitied Neil, and when the latter offered him his hand he took it, and pressing it warmly, said:

"Good by, and God bless you. As long as I live you will have a friend in me. I think you will succeed in India, but if you fail, try America. You are sure to succeed there, if you only have the will, and I can help you some, perhaps. Good-by."

Neil made no answer, except to wring Grey's hand, and then he passed out from the old life to the new, with a pretty equal chance for failure or success.

This was in April, and the latter part of May the Jerrolds sailed for America, but before they did so Bessie received a letter from Flossie, who was at her grandmother's home near Portrush, in Ireland, and who wrote as follows:

"DEAR BESSIE: I ought to have written you long ago, and thanked you for your kind invitation to go with you to your American home. I should have liked it of all things in the world, for to see America and know what it is like, has been the dream of my life. You knew it is the paradise of my countrymen, the land into which Pat and Bridget entered when Johnny Bull came out. For various reasons, however, I must decline your invitation, and I am going to tell you all about it, but the beginning and the end lie so far apart that I must go way back to the time when, owing to some mistake, Jack Trevellian thought you died in Rome, and, because he thought so, he made a hermit of himself and wandered off into the Tyrol and the Bavarian Alps, where nobody spoke English, and where all he knew of the civilized world was what he gleaned from German papers. Nobody could communicate with him, for when he wrote to his steward, as he did sometimes, he never said where a letter could reach him, or where he was going next.

"At last, however, he concluded to go home, and got as far as Paris, where grandma and I happened to be staying. This was last August, and I was in the Rue de Rivoli one day, near Place Vendome, when, who should turn from a side street a few rods in advance of me but Jack himself, looking very rough and queer, with a long beard and a shocking hat. He did not see me, and was walking so fast that I had to run to overtake him, and even then I might not have captured him if I had not taken the handle of my umbrella and hooked it into his coat collar behind. This brought him to a stand-still and nearly threw him down. You ought to have seen the expression of his face, when he turned to see who was garroting him in broad daylight, for he thought it was that.

"'Flossie!' he exclaimed; 'what are you about, and what is this you have hitched to me?'

"You see the umbrella was still hooked to his coat collar and flopping itself open.

"'If you will stand still I will show you what it is,' I said, laughing till I cried at the comical appearance he presented, with the passers-by looking on wonderingly.

"I do not think he liked it very well. No one likes to be made ridiculous; but we were soon walking together very amicably, and he was telling me where he had been, and that he was now on his way to Trevellian Castle.

"'I have not seen you, Flossie,' he said—and I wish you could have heard how sadly and low he spoke—'I have not seen you since Bessie died in Rome. You were with her, I believe?'

"'Bessie died in Rome!' I exclaimed. 'What do you mean? Bessie did not die in Rome. She is not dead at all. She has gone to America in the same ship with Grey Jerrold.'

"He stopped more suddenly than he did when I hooked him with the umbrella, and turning toward me, asked me if I was telling him the truth. Then we walked on as far as the Champs d'Elysees, where we sat down, and I told him everything which had happened at Rome, and after we left there, as far as I knew. But I doubt if he heard half I was saying. The only point he did seem to understand was that you were not dead, and that you had gone to America in the same ship with Mr. Jerrold. It was Neil who had told me that, and to him I referred Jack for any further information concerning you. But I do not think he stopped to get it, for he went straight through London to Trevellian Castle, where his presence was needed. And then, after a time he invited grandma and me to visit him there, because he was lonely without any ladies in the house. And we went, and I was perfectly happy; for, you know, it was once my home, and it is going to be—But wait till I tell you how Jack is changed, and how he used to go away by himself, and stay for hours alone, and come back with such a tired look on his face, and ask me to tell him again of Mr. Jerrold's kindness to you in Rome. Grandma said he was in love with

you, and I think so, too. But wait till I tell you how he came home from London after seeing you there as Mrs. Jerrold, and how he raved about your beauty, and grace, and elegance, and the lovely dress you wore the night he called, blue he said he believed it was, and he wanted me to have one like it, as if what became your lilies and roses would suit my black face and turned-up Irish nose. But men know nothing of color, or anything else, at least Jack does not, as you will see when I tell you, if I ever come to that.

"Well, it was like this: You were married to Mr. Jerrold, and now I am going to tell you how your letter came, and Jack brought it to me, and stood staring at me while I read it, and then he said:

"'She has asked you to go to America?'

"'Yes,' I answered, without looking up; and he continued:

"'And you are going?

"'I'd like to,' I said, 'I would rather go to America than to any other place in all the world.'

"'Rather than stay here with me?' he asked.

"Something in his voice made me look up, and then—and then—I do not believe I can tell you, except that I suddenly found out that I had been caring a great deal for Sir Jack Trevellian. Yes, a great deal; while he—well, I may as well tell you, for Sir Jack is not the man to say he loves a girl if he does not, and he told me he loved me, and wanted me for his wife; and I, well, I just covered up my face so he could not see it, and cried with all my might, I was so happy and glad.

"I know what transpired at Stoneleigh, and that I am not his first choice, but I am satisfied. How could he help loving you. I am sure I could not if I were a man, and so we are to be married in June, here, in grandma's house, where she brought me the minute she heard of the engagement.

"'It is highly improper for you to stay at Trevellian Castle a day, under the circumstances,' she said, as if Sir Jack, as my promised husband, had been suddenly transformed into a monster, who would work me harm.

"I wish you could come to the wedding, and so does Jack. He is here, and has been for a week, and when I finish this letter we are going out to sit upon the rocks and see the tide come in and the moon rise, and shall naturally sentimentalize a little, and he will tell me how much he loves me, and call me his Irish lassie; he has done that a hundred times, but when he gets too spooney and demonstrative, I ask him if he loves me better than he did you, and that quiets him, for like your president, or king, George Somebody or other, he cannot tell a lie, and says:

"'Not better, perhaps, but differently, just as you are different from her. She is fair, you know, and you are dark—' and so I infer that his love for you was white, and his love for me black. '*Ah, bien; je suis contente*.'

"And now I *must* close, for Jack has come in, hat in hand, and bids me hurry, as there is the funniest specimen of an American down on the Rocks that he ever saw. Her name is Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, and her daughter married an Irish lord who lives near Dublin. I have met so few Americans that I must really see this one. Jack says it is better than a play to hear her talk. So, good-by. From your loving FLOSSIE."

"P.S.—I have seen Mrs. Rossiter-Browne, who knows you, and Grey, and all his relations back to the flood. Is she a fair specimen of Americans? But of course not; even I know better than that. Mr. Jerrold is not at all like her—neither, I fancy, are his people. Mrs. Browne has recently arrived, and is to spend the summer with her daughter. Lady Hardy, who is not with her. She talks so funny, and her slang is so original, and her grammar so droll, that I find her charming, and if many of the Americans are like her, you are to be congratulated, as you can never lack variety. Once more, good-by, FLORENCE MEREDITH."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOME AGAIN.

Great were the rejoicings both in Boston and Allington over the return of the travelers, and great the surprise of all, when it was known that Bessie had come back an heiress to no mean fortune. But just who the great uncle was from whom her money had come to her, none, except Grey's father and Mr. Sanford ever knew, and if they had, few would have remembered the peddler of more than forty years ago whose disappearance had caused no remark, and awakened no

suspicion. Could Bessie have had her way she would have told the story fearlessly and moved the bones of her kinsman to another resting-place, but Grey and Mr. Sanford overruled her, both for Hannah's sake and for the sake of Grey's father, who could not have borne the talk it would have created.

Mr. Jerrold had never been the same since that night when he heard his father's confession, and he was fast growing into a morbid, misanthropic man, whom his wife, not without reason, feared would one day be crazy.

Every year he shrank more and more from meeting his fellowmen, and at last he abandoned business altogether, and remained mostly at home in a room which he called his office, and where he saw only those he was obliged to see. The money lying in his bank in Hannah's name, but which he knew was intended for some one else, and the shares in the mines and quarries of Wales, troubled him greatly, for somewhere in the world there were people to whom they belonged, and he sometimes felt that if he and his sister were guiltless of their father's crime, they were, at least, thieves and robbers, because of the silence upon which he himself had insisted. More than once recently he had resolved to tell Grey, and let him decide the matter, and it was upon this very thing he was brooding, on the morning when his son was announced. Grey had reached Allington the previous day, and found his mother there waiting to receive him.

"I wanted your father to come with me, but he would not. He dislikes Allington worse than I do, and mopes all day in his room just as his father did. I wonder if there is any insanity in the family," she said to Grey, who answered, cheerily:

"Not a bit of it, mother; and if there is Bessie's advent among us will exorcise the demon. I am going to Boston to-morrow to see father, and shall bring him back with me a different man entirely."

He found his father in his room, moping, as his mother had said, and was struck with the change in him, even during the few months he had been away. He stooped more than ever, and there was in his whole appearance an air of weakness and brokenness of spirit pitiable to see in a man who had once been so proud and strong.

"Grey, my boy, how are you? I am glad to see you, very glad," he said, as his son entered the room; and when Grey sat down by him, and taking his thin, white hand, pressed it gently and said, "Poor father, you are not well, are you?" he did a most astonishing thing. He laid his head on his son's arm and sobbed aloud:

"No, Grey, I am sick—in mind, not in body—and I have been sick these—how old are you, Grey?"

"Twenty-six, my next birthday," Grey replied, and he continued:

"Yes, you were fourteen when your grandfather died. Twelve years ago, and for twelve years I have been sick—very sick. Oh, Grey, if I dared to tell you, and ask you what to do!"

"You need not tell me," Grey said to him. "I know what you mean, and have known it ever since grandpa died, for I was there that night, unknown to you or any one; was in the kitchen by the stove, and heard what grandpa told you. Don't you remember how sick I was after it? Well, that was what ailed me. Aunt Hannah knows. I told her, and together we have tried to find his heirs, and, father, we *have* found them, or *her*, for there is but one direct heir of his sister Elizabeth, and that—and that—is Bessie, my wife. Oh, father, look up, bear up; you must not faint," Grey continued in alarm, as he felt his father press heavily against him, and saw the ghastly pallor on his face.

"Bessie—your wife—the heir! And does she know what we do?" Mr. Jerrold gasped, and Grey replied:

"Yes, everything—and knew it before I married her. Listen, and I will tell you all."

Ringing the bell, Grey bade the servant who appeared bring a glass of wine, which he made his father swallow, and then, supporting him with his arm, he told him everything, from the night when he had knelt upon the snow in the woods and asked to be forgiven for his grandfather's sin, down to the present time.

"And you knew it all these years when I was trying to hide it from you," Mr. Jerrold said; "and you have worked while I have only sat still and brooded; and you have found the heir in Bessie. Are you sure it is Bessie? Oh, Grey! God bless you, my boy! You do not know what a load of care you have taken from me, for, though my father's sin is none the less, it does not hurt me as much, and I feel as if I could forgive him all. I do not believe he was so much in fault. The peddler struck him first, you know. I must see Hannah, and hear the story again. What time do you return to Allington?"

Grey told him, and he continued:

"I shall go with you—first to see Hannah, and then to Grey's Park in the evening. Poor Hannah! she has had such a lonely life!"

Three hours later and Mr. Jerrold was driven to the house in the pasture-land, in the phaeton which Lucy had sent to the station to meet Grey, who walked to Grey's Park, where Bessie greeted him as rapturously as if weeks instead of hours had passed since she saw him.

Mr. Jerrold had expected to find his sister alone, and was a little disappointed to see the Rev. Mr. Sanford there, cozily taking tea in the pleasant south room, where the morning-glories were trained across the windows, and the early June roses were looking in.

"Oh, Burton, how glad I am to see you! and how well you are looking!" Hannah cried, as she went forward to meet her brother, in whom she saw a change, as if he had suddenly grown young.

And he did feel younger and happier than he had in years; and as soon as Mr. Sanford took his leave, which he did immediately after tea, Burton plunged at once into the principal object of his visit.

"I have come," he said, "to open the doors and windows of that ghostly room, and let in the light and air of Heaven. Grey has told me everything, and I feel like a new man. Even the—the—the thing father did, does not seem to me quite as it did. Would you mind telling me again the particulars of the quarrel?—how it commenced, I mean—nothing more."

He had risen as he was talking, and going into the bedroom, threw back the heavy curtains, and opening the windows and blinds, sat down in his father's chair, while Hannah stood beside him and told him how both men had drank until their reason was clouded, and how the peddler had called her father a cheat and a liar, and struck him first, and how—But here her brother stopped her, and said:

"That will do. I am satisfied that what father did was done in self-defense, and so the world would have said, and acquitted him, too, I am sure. I almost wish you had told at the time. We should have lived it down, though I might never have married Geraldine and never have had Grey. No, sister, you did right, and having kept it so long, we must keep it still. No use to unearth it now, though I would give half my life and every dollar I own—yes, I'd give everything except my boy Grey, to know it had never been there," and he pointed to the corner of the room, where the bed was still standing, and under which was the hidden grave.

"Bessie is willing we should tell, and if I thought we ought, I should be willing, too," Hannah said, but her brother shook his head.

"It can do no good to any one, so let the poor man rest in peace. You have found his heirs and restitution can be made; the money is safe in the bank."

"And now I must go, for Geraldine is waiting for me," Burton said, adding, as be stood a moment by the door: "I feel twenty years younger than I did, and you, Hannah—why, you look thirty years younger, and are really a handsome woman for your age. By the way, shall you live here, or with Grey?"

"I don't know yet where I shall live," Hannah replied, and her cheeks were scarlet as she said good-by and watched him as he drove away.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOEL ROGERS' MONUMENT.

It was a very merry party which met next day at the farm-house, and Mr. Jerrold was the merriest of them all, though he could not understand exactly why he was so light-hearted and glad. The fact that Joel Rogers died by his father's hand remained the same, but it did not now affect him as it once had done. Bessie seemed to have taken all the shame and pain away. He was very fond of her, always calling her daughter when he addressed her, and when, after dinner was over, she came and sat at his side, and laying her hand on his, said to him, "Father, there is something I very much wish to do, and I want your consent," he answered, unhesitatingly: "You shall have it, no matter what you ask."

"Thanks," Bessie said, with a triumphant look at Grey, who was standing near. "I thought you would not oppose me, even if Grey did. You see, I have so much money that it burns my fingers, and I think I must have lived in America long enough to have caught your fever for change, or else the smell of plaster and paint at Stoneleigh awakened in me a desire for more, for, what I wish to do is to tear down this old house and build another one, where we can spend our summers. This house, though very nice and comfortable, is falling to pieces, and will tumble down in some high wind. The plastering is off in two of the rooms up stairs, and a part of the roof has fallen in over the bedroom and wood-shed. Aunt Hannah says the snow was suffered to lie there last winter while she was with us in Wales. So you see we must do something, and I have the plan of such a pretty place, which I want to call Stoneleigh Cottage after my old home. Your room and Aunt Hannah's are to be the pleasantest of all, with a bow-window and fire-place in both, and there is to be a fire-place in the hall, which is to be finished in oak, with a wide staircase and a tall clock on the landing, and the windows are to have little colored panes of glass at the top, and the floors are to be inlaid and waxed, with rugs of matting instead of carpets, as we want everything cool for summer, and we will have a big piazza where we can have tea or breakfast, or even a dance, if we like. Won't that be nice?"

Bessie had talked very rapidly, with a feeling that she did not have the sympathy of her hearers.

She had conceived the idea of pulling down the old house and building a new one while she was in Wales, alleging to herself as one reason that both Hannah and Grey would enjoy themselves better under a roof which did not cover a grave, while the other reason was not then quite clear enough in her own mind to be put into words, but she had said nothing to any one until the morning of the day when she broached the subject to his father. Together with Grey, she had gone over the old house, which, from having been shut up so long, seemed more dilapidated than ever. But Grey opposed her plan, and Hannah opposed it, while Mr. Jerrold grew hot and cold by turns, as he thought what might possibly be brought to light if the house were removed and any excavations made, as there might be. As if divining what was in his mind, Bessie continued:

"I do not mean to have the new house just where this one stands, but farther to the right. We can fill up the cellar with the debris, and have loads of earth brought in and make a kind of plateau, with it terrace all around it. We can make that plateau so lovely with shrubs, and flowers, and grass. I once saw one like what I have in mind, at a country place in England, and in one corner, under a willow tree, was a little grave; the only son of the house had been buried there, and I thought it so lovely to have a monument of flowers, and trees and singing birds."

Locking into the blue eyes fixed so earnestly upon him, Mr. Jerrold read what she meant, and said to her:

"You shall do as you like; if Hannah does not object."

Hannah, too, began to get a glimpse of the truth, and so did Grey, and when she said, "You are all willing—it is settled?" they answered yes, and Grey went with her to choose the site for the new house, which in her impetuosity, she declared should be commenced at once saying she would remain in Allington during the summer and superintend it herself.

It was Bessie who choose the site, to the right of the old building and near a great flat rock which she said she meant to have in a corner of the yard, as it would be such a nice play-house for children.

"Yes, a very nice play-house for children," Grey said, winding his arms around her and kissing her blushing cheek, and then they sat down upon the rock and talked of and planned the house, and Bessie told him all that was in her mind in regard to the plateau, which she meant to make as beautiful as a garden, so that no one would ever dream it held a grave.

"I ought to do something for him," she said; "and as my grandmother was fond of flowers, and grass, and singing birds, so I am sure was he, and he shall have them in abundance, and maybe he will know that his sister's granddaughter is doing it for him, and be glad."

In the light of this new idea, Mr. Jerrold, Hannah and Grey entered heart and soul into Bessie's project, and within a week a plan for the cottage had been drawn, and a contract made with the builders who were to commence work at once. Neither Hannah nor Bessie were present when the walls of the main building went crashing down into the cellar they were to fill, but when it came to the bed-room and wood-shed, Hannah, Bessie, Grey and his father sat under a tree at a little distance, watching nervously while the men took down timber after timber, until the spot was clear, and the ground as smooth as it usually is under a floor where there is no cellar.

"Oh," Bessie said, with a sigh of relief, as she turned to Grey, who was sitting next to her, but her eye went past him to Hannah, who, with her hands clasped tightly together, sat as rigid as a block of marble, gazing so intently at the spot which held so much horror for her that she did not at first know when Bessie stole softly to her side; but when the young girl wound her arm around her neck, and kissing her softly, said: "They have let him into the light, and I am so glad; it does not seem now like a hidden grave," the tension on her nerves gave way, and she burst into a paroxysm of tears, the very last she ever shed over that hidden grave. For, like Bessie, she felt better, now that the sunlight was falling upon it, and by and by, when everything was accomplished, and Bessie had carried out her idea, she felt that the dead man's monument would be worthy of a far nobler personage than he who slept beneath it.

Yielding to Bessie's earnest solicitations Grey decided to remain with her in Allington during the summer and superintend in person the work, which, owing to good management and the great number of men employed, went on so rapidly that by the last of October everything was done except the furnishing, which was to be put off until Spring, for before the autumn came it was known that Hannah would never occupy the house save as she went there a visitor. The words spoken to her many years before by the Rev. Charles Sanford had been repeated, and this time her answer had been:

"Yes, Charlie, if you do not think it too ridiculous for people as old as we are to marry. Why, I am almost sixty."

"But just as dear and young to me as if you were sixteen," was the reply of the Rev. Charles, who was quite as much in love as he had been nearly forty years before, when he asked Hannah Jerrold to be his wife.

Of course after it was settled he went straight to Martha's grave and staid there all the afternoon, and did a little gardening around it, and trained the rose-bush around the head-stone, and picking a half open blossom, put it in his button-hole and silently apostrophized the dead woman at his feet, telling her that though he was about to bring a new mistress to the home where she had reigned supreme, he should not forget her, and should so far as was consistent, see that all

her ideas were carried out, especially as far as his health was concerned. Then be walked thoughtfully away, whispering to himself;

"Martha was a very good and excellent woman, but I loved Hanny first, and God forgive me if it is wrong to say it, I think I love her the best."

Then he went and told Miss McPherson, who called him and Hannah fools, to think of marrying at their time of life, but said she was satisfied if they were. Then he told Lucy Grey, who congratulated him warmly and was sure he would be happy. Then he told Bessie, who cried at first because her Aunt Hannah was not to live with her, and then entered heart and soul into the affair and became as much interested in the wedding and the wedding outfit as if the bride-elect had been a young girl in her teens instead or an elderly woman in her fifties. Then he told his senior warden, who, having himself been married three times, had nothing to say, but hurried home with the news, which was all over Allington by the next day, and was received differently, according to the different natures of the receivers. Some were very glad, and predicted that the rector would be far happier with Hannah than he had been with Martha, while others wondered what that worthy woman would say if she knew that another was to fill her place, and *all* calculated the ages of the respective parties, making *him* out younger than he was and *her* a great deal older. But neither he nor she ever knew what was said, and they would not have cared if they had, for both were supremely happy and thankful for the peace and blessedness which had crowned their later life. Fifty and even sixty is not so very old, at least to those who have reached it, and Hannah neither looked nor felt old when in her becoming traveling dress of seal brown she stood up in the parlors of her brother's house on Beacon street and was made Mrs. Charles Sanford.

This was early in February, and six weeks before, on Christmas Eve, there had come to that same house on Beacon street a little black-eyed, black-haired boy, as unlike either Bessie or Grey as a baby well could be.

"He is not like any one I have ever seen of your family," the old nurse said, when she brought the sturdy fellow to Bessie, who, the moment she looked at him exclaimed:

"Why, Grey, he is exactly like Neil; his eyes, his hair, his expression, and Neil will be so glad. We must have his picture taken at once and sent to Neil, with a lock of his hair."

Grey thought it doubtful if Neil would be quite as enthusiastic over Bessie's baby as she seemed to think, but when a few hours later she drew his face down to hers and whispered to him:

"We will call baby Neil McPherson, won't we?" he fondly kissed the little mother, and answered hesitatingly:

"Yes, darling, we will call our baby Neil McPherson, if you like."

And so with a birth, a christening, and a wedding the winter passed rapidly at No. —— Beacon street, and by the first of May Bessie was again in Allington, armed and equipped for settling Stoneleigh Cottage, and giving the finishing touches to the plateau, which with the advance of summer, began to show marks of great beauty, and to attract general attention. Bessie's idea of raising it two feet above the level of the ground had been carried out, and the sods which had been placed upon it, and the terrace around it in the autumn, were fresh and green as velvet in the early spring, while of the roses, and lilies, and flowering shrubs which had been planted with so much care, not one had died, and many of them blossomed as freely as plants of older growth. The plateau was Bessie's especial pride and care, particularly that corner of it over which the bedroom once stood. Here she had an immense bed of pansies, heart-shaped and perfect in outline, and in the center a cross, where only white daisies were growing.

"Grandmother liked pansies and daisies the best, and I thought, perhaps, he did, too; and then mother's name was Daisy, you know," she said to Hannah, who rightly guessed that this bank of flowers was Bessie's *In Memoriam*, not only to her uncle, but to her mother as well.

And very beautiful the heart-shaped bed of human-faced pansies, with the daisy cross in the center, looked all the summer long, and many admired and commented upon it, but only five persons ever knew that the white cross marked a grave.

CHAPTER XX.

After Five Years.

"Noiselessly as I be spring-time
Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
Open their thousand leaves,"

So noiselessly and quickly have the years come and gone since we first saw our heroine, Bessie, a little girl on the sands of Aberystwyth, and now we present her to our readers for the last time, a sweet-faced, lovely matron of twenty-six, who, with her husband, was waiting at the Allington

station, one bright June afternoon, for the incoming train from New York. Just behind the station, where the horses would not be startled by the engine, stood the family carriage, a large, roomy vehicle, bought for comfort rather than show, and which seemed to be full of children, though in reality there were only three. First, Neil, the boy of five years and a half, who, with his dark eyes and hair, and bright olive complexion, was the very image of the Neil for whom he was named, and who was a most lovable and affectionate child.

Next to Neil was the three-year old Robin, with blue eyes and golden hair, like the blind Robin for whom he was named, and next was the girl baby, who came nearly a year and a half ago, and to whom Grey said, when he first took her in his arms:

"I thank God for giving you to me my little daughter, and I am sure you look just as your mother did when she first opened her eyes at Stoneleigh. Yes, I am very glad for you, little Bessie McPherson."

And so that was the name they gave the baby with lustrous blue eyes and wavy hair, and the same sweet, patient expression about the mouth as there was about the mouth of the young girl-mother, whom Neil and Robin called "Bessie mamma," while to their sister they gave the name of "Baby Bessie."

And Baby Bessie was in the roomy carriage, sitting on Jenny's lap, and playing peek-a-boo with Robin, while Neil stood on the opposite seat engaged in a hot altercation with another boy about his own age, who, dressed in deep black, which gave him a peculiar look, was seated at a little distance in a most elegant carriage, with servants in livery, and who, when asked by some one standing near what his name was, had answered:

"I am Lord Rossiter Hardy, and I am waiting for my mother, who is coming from New York, and who is going to bring me a bicycle."

Something in the boy's tone of superiority irritated Neil, who was thoroughly democratic, and he called out:

"Phoo!—a *lord*—why you are nobody but Ross Hardy! and your grandmother—"

"Hush, Neil, or I'll tell your father; and look where you are standin', with your dirthy fate on the cushions. Come down directly, or I'll be afther helpin' ye!" said Jennie; whereupon Neil turned his attention to her, and a spirited battle ensued, in which Robin also took part, and which was only brought to an end by the sound of the train in the distance.

"There's the whistle! Out with ye, or ye'll not be in time to grate yer uncle!" Jennie cried; and with a bound Neil was upon the ground, and rushing through the station, joined his mother, who with Grey was looking anxiously at the few passengers alighting from the train.

First came Lady Augusta Hardy, habited in the deepest of crape. Poor Teddie had died a few months before, and with her little son Rossiter, who was now the heir of Hardy Manor, she was spending the summer at home, and with her foreign airs and liveried servants brought from Dublin was creating quite a sensation to Allington. With a bow to the Jerrolds, who were among the few she condescended to notice, she passed on to where her coachman and footman waited for her, while Bessie ran hastily down the platform towards a tall, sickly looking man, who almost tottered as he walked, while a sudden pallor about his lips told how weak he was.

"Oh, Neil, I am so glad—and so sorry, too. I did not think you were like this," Bessie cried, as she took both his hands in hers, and, standing on tiptoe, kissed the quivering lips, which could not for a moment speak to her "You are very tired," she continued, as Grey came up and, after greeting the stranger cordially, offered him his arm.

"You are very tired from the voyage and the journey here, it is so hot and dusty; but you will rest now, our house is so cool and the air here so pure. There, let me help you, too."

And in her eagerness, Bessie passed her arm through Neil's, or rather put it around him, and thus supported, the sick man went slowly to the open carriage, where Jennie had the children with the exception of little Neil, who, finding himself overlooked, was cultivating the station master and telling him that the dark-looking man was his Uncle Neil from India, and that they were to have ice cream for dinner in honor of his arrival, and he was to go to the table and have two saucers full.

In her anxiety for her cousin, Bessie had forgotten her children, but at the sight of them she exclaimed:

"Oh, Neil, look! Here are two of my babies, Robin and Bessie, and the boy over there throwing stones, is your namesake. I hope they will not trouble you—Robin and Bessie, I mean—for you and I are to go in the carriage with them, and Grey will take little Neil in the phaeton."

"Yes, thank you," Neil replied, too sick and tired to care for anything just then; and leaning back in the carriage, he closed his eyes wearily, and did not open them again until they were more than half way to Stoneleigh Cottage.

Then Robin, who had been regarding the stranger curiously, laid his little dimpled hand on the thin, wasted one, and said:

"Is you s'eep?"

With a start Neil's eyes unclosed, and he looked for the first time on Bessie's children, with such a pain in his heart as he had hoped he might never feel again. Over and over he had said to himself that she should never know how the very thought of them hurt and almost maddened him, and how, in his foolish anger, he had burned the lock of hair which she had sent to him from the head of her first-born. And he said it to himself again, now that he was face to face with the little ones, and though every nerve in his body thrilled at the touch of the soft hand on his, he tried to smile, and said:

"No, I am not asleep; I am only tired. What is your name, my little man?"

"Wobin; tree years old. And this is Baby Bessie, and this is Bessie mamma," was the prompt reply; and Neil rejoined:

"Yes, I knew your mamma when she was a little girl no bigger than you, and her hands felt just as yours feel."

"I p'ays for you every night when mamma puts me to bed. I say, 'God bless Uncle Neil,'" the child continued.

Then two great tears gathered in the sick man's eyes, but he brushed them away quickly, while Bessie took the boy in her lap and kept him from talking any more.

By this time they were in the road which led from the highway to the house. This had formerly been little more than a lane, but under Bessie's supervision it had been transformed into a broad avenue, bordered with trees and footpaths on either side, and seats beneath the trees, which, though young, had grown rapidly, and already cast cool shadows upon the grass.

"This is the place; that is Stoneleigh Cottage," Bessie said, pointing to the house where Grey was waiting for them, with the boy Neil at his side.

"And this is Neil, my eldest; we think he is like you," Bessie continued, as she alighted from the carriage and presented the child to her cousin.

"Phoo! I ain't a bit like him," was the boy's mental comment, while Neil, the elder said, quickly:

"Heaven forbid that he should be like me."

They took him to his room at once—the pleasant south room, whose windows overlooked the plateau, now all ablaze with flowers.

"You must lie down and rest till dinner. I ordered it at seven to-night, I will send you up some tea at once. I hope you will be comfortable and ask for what you want," Bessie said, as she flitted about the room, anxious to make her guest feel at home.

He was very tired, and sank down upon the inviting looking lounge, saying as he did so:

"Oh, Bessie, you do not know how glad I am to be here with you and Grey; nor yet how it affects me. I am not always as bad as this. I shall be better by and by. God bless you."

He drew her face down to his and kissed it fervently; then she went softly out and left him there alone.

Poor Neil! he was greatly to be pitied. His life in India had been a failure from first to last. He had no talent for business, and as he thoroughly disliked the business he was in, it was not strange that he was dismissed by his employers within six months after his arrival in Calcutta. Then he tried something else, and still something else, and was just beginning to feel some interest in his work and to hope for success, when a malarial fever seized upon him and reduced him to a mere wreck of his former self.

Then it was that his father died suddenly at Stoneleigh, and as it seemed desirable that some one should attend to what little there was left to him, Neil returned to England, going first to Wales and then to London, where he took the very lodgings which Bessie had occupied years before, and at which he had rebelled as dingy and second-class. How sorry he was now that he had wounded Bessie so unnecessarily, and how well he understood from actual experience the poverty which could only afford such apartments as Mrs. Buncher's! Except the little his father had left him he had scarcely a shilling in the world, and the future looked very dreary and desolate on that first evening in April, when the once fashionable and fastidious Neil McPherson took possession of his cheerless rooms on Abingdon Road, and threw himself down upon the hair-cloth sofa with an ache in his head and an ache in his heart as he thought of all the past, and remembered the sweet-faced girl who had once been there, and who had left there an atmosphere of peace and quiet, which reconciled him at last to his surroundings.

Of all his large circle of acquaintance in London, there was not one whom he cared to meet, and so he staid mostly in his room, only going out at unfashionable hours for a stroll in Kensington Gardens, and occasionally to the park, where he always sat down in the place where Bessie had sat in her faded linen when he drove by with Blanche. Once only he joined the crowd on Saturday afternoon, and saw the *elite* go by, the princess with her children, the dukes and duchesses, the lords and ladies, and lastly Lady Blanche Paxton, who rode alone in her glory.

The man, who was almost an imbecile when she married him, was an idiot now, and had a keeper to look after him, and on Blanche's face there was an expression of *ennui* and discontent which told Neil that she was scarcely happier than himself, even with her hundreds of thousands and

her home on Grosvenor Square.

It was about this time that Neil received a most cordial letter from Grey and Bessie, urging him to spend the summer with them in Allington, and to stay as much longer as he pleased.

"Always, if you will, for our home is yours," Bessie wrote; and after a severe conflict with his love and his pride, Neil accepted the invitation, and left England with a feeling that he might never see it again.

The voyage was a rough one, and as he was sick all the way, he had scarcely strength to stand when he reached Allington, and only excitement and sheer will kept him up until he found himself in the cool, pretty room which had been prepared for him, and which it seemed to him he could never leave again.

Just as the twilight was beginning to fall, Miss Betsey drove up the avenue, stiff, straight, and severe, in her best black silk and white India shawl, which she only wore on rare occasions. Why she wore them now, she hardly knew, and she had hesitated a little before deciding to do so.

"I do not want the dude to think me a scarecrow," she said to herself; "though who cares what he thinks? I did not favor his coming, and they know it. I told them they would have him on their hands for life, and Bessie actually said they might have a worse thing. I don't know about that, but I do know he will not sit down upon *me*."

From this it will be seen that Miss Betsey's attitude toward the young man was anything but friendly, as she started to make her first call upon him.

"Didn't come down to dinner? I don't like that. He will be having all his meals in his room, first you will know. Better begin as you can hold out," she said, sharply, and Bessie replied, with tears in her eyes:

"Oh, auntie, don't be so hard upon poor Neil. You do not know how weak, and sick, and changed he is. Just think of his lodging with Mrs. Buncher in London, and coming out as a second-class passenger."

"Did he do that?" Miss Betsey asked, quickly, while the lines about her mouth softened as she went up stairs to meet the *dude*, who looked like anything but a dude as he rose to greet her, in his shabby clothes, which, nevertheless, were worn with a certain grace which made you forget their shabbiness, while his manner, though a little constrained, had in it that air of good breeding and courtesy inseparable from Neil.

Miss Betsey had expected to see him thin and worn, but she was not prepared for the white, wasted face, which turned so wistfully to her, or for the expression of the dark eyes so like her brother Hugh, Archie's father. Hugh had been her favorite brother, the one nearest her age, with whom she had played and romped in the old garden at Stoneleigh. He had been with her at Monte Carlo when her lover was brought to her dead, and in the frightened face which had looked at her then there was the same look which she saw now in Neil, as he came slowly forward. She had expected a dandy, with enough of invalidism about him to make him interesting to himself at least; but she saw a broken, sorry young man, as far removed from dandyism as it was possible for Neil to be, and she felt herself melting at once.

He was her own flesh and blood, nearer to her even than Bessie; he was sick; he was subdued; he had crossed as a second-class passenger, and this went further toward reconciling her to him than anything he could have done.

"Why Neil, my boy," she said, as she took both his hands, "I am sorry to see you so weak. Sit down; don't try to stand; or rather, lie down, and I will sit beside you."

She arranged his pillows and made him lie down again, he protesting the while, and saying, with a faint smile:

"It hardly seems right for a great hulking fellow like me to be lying here, but I am very tired and weak," and in proof thereof the perspiration came out in great drops upon his forehead and hands, and about his pallid lips.

Miss Betsey did not talk long with him that night, but when she left him she promised to come again next day and bring him some wine, which she had made herself, and which was sure to do him good.

"Sleep well to-night, and you will be better to-morrow," she said.

But Neil did not sleep well, and he was not better on the morrow, and for many days he kept his room, seeming to take little interest in anything around him, except Bessie. At sight of her he always brightened and made an effort to be cheerful and to talk, but nothing she could do availed to arouse him from his state of apathy.

"All life and hope have gone out of me," he said to her one day, "and I sometimes wonder what has become of that finefied swell I used to know as Neil McPherson. I never felt this more, I think, than the day I hesitated before paying my penny for a chair in the park because I did not know as I could afford it. That was the time I saw Blanche go by in her grand carriage, where I might have sat, I suppose; but I preferred my hired chair, and sent no regret after her and her ten thousand a year. I saw Jack, too, that day; did I tell you? He stumbled upon me, and I think

would have offered me money if he had dared. I am glad he did not. He was staying in London, at Langham's, and Flossie was with him. I did not see her, but he told me of her, and of his twin boys, Jack and Giles, whom Flossie calls 'Jack and Gill.' Roguish little bears he said they were, with all their mother's Irish in them, even to her brogue. He has grown stout with years, and seemed very happy, as he deserves to be. Everybody is happy, but myself; everybody of some use, while I am a mere leech, a sponge, a nonenitity in everybody's way, and I often wish I were dead. Nobody would miss me. Don't interrupt me, please," he continued, as he saw Bessie about to speak. "Don't interrupt me, and do not misunderstand me. I know you and Grey would be sorry just at first, but you have each other, and you have your children. You could not miss me long, or be sorry except for my wasted life. No, Bessie. I would far rather die, and I think I shall."

This was Neil's state of mind, and nothing could rouse him from it until one day in August when Miss Betsey drove over to Stoneleigh Cottage, and went up to his room, where he sat as usual by the window looking out upon the plateau, where Bessie's children were frolicking with their nurse. Of late he had evinced some interest in the children, and once or twice had had them in his room, and had held Baby Bessie on his knee and kissed her fat hands, and the boy Neil, who saw everything, had said to his mother, in speaking of it:

"He looked as if he wanted to cry, when sister patted his face and said 'I love oo,' and when I asked him if he didn't wish she was his baby, he looked so white, and said, 'Yes, Neil; will you give her to me?'

"I told him 'No, sir-ee, I'd give him my ball, and velocipede, and jackknife, but not baby.'"

This was the day before Miss Betsey came, straight and prim as usual, but with a different look on her face and tone in her voice from anything Neil had known, as she asked him how he was feeling, and them, sitting down beside him, began abruptly:

"I say, Neil, why, don't you rouse yourself? I've been talking to the doctor, and he says you have no particular disease, except that you seem discouraged and hopeless, and have made up your mind that you must die."

"Yes, auntie, that is just it; hopeless and discouraged, and want to die—oh, so badly!" Neil replied, as he leaned back in his chair. "What use for me to live? Who wants me?"

"*I do!*"

The words rang sharply through the room, and Neil started as if a pistol had been fired at him.

"You want me? You!" he said, staring blankly at her as she went on rapidly:

"Yes, I want you, and have come to tell you so. I am an odd old woman, hard to be moved, but I am not quite calloused yet. I did not like you, years ago, when those letters passed between us and you would not accept my offer because you thought it degrading. I am glad now you did not, for if you had, Bessie would not have been Grey's wife, but yours; and you are not fit to be her husband, or in fact anybody's. You are only fit to live with *me*, and see to my business. I am cheated at every turn, and I need somebody who is honest to look after my rents and investments. You can do this. It is not hard, and will pay in the end. I am old and lonesome, and want somebody to speak to besides the cat—somebody to sit at table and say good-morning to me. In short, I want you for my son, or grandson, if you like that better. I shall be queer, and cranky, and hard to get along with at times, but I shall mean well always. I shall give you a thousand dollars a year to manage my affairs, and when I die I shall divide with you and Bessie. I have made a new will to that effect this very morning, so you see I am in earnest. What do you say?"

He said nothing at first, but cried like a child, while Miss Betsey cried, too, a little, and blew her nose loudly, and told him not to be a fool, but to go outdoors on the plateau, where the children were, and sit there in the shade, and try to get some strength, for she wanted him very soon.

Then she went away, and he dragged himself out to the plateau, and let Neil and Robin play that he was a balky horse who would not go, notwithstanding their shouts and blows with dandelions and blades of grass, while Baby Bessie pelted him with daisies from the white cross and pansies from the border.

From that day on, Neil's improvement was rapid, and when, on the last day of September, the Jerrolds returned to their house in Boston, they left him domesticated with Miss Betsey, and to all appearance happy and contented. He would never be very strong again, for the malaria contracted in India had undermined his constitution; but he was able to do all his aunt required of him, even to overseeing at times the hands in the cotton-mill, an office he had once spurned with contempt, and from which he undoubtedly shrank a little, although he never made a sign to that effect.

A year or more after his arrival in America he wrote to Jack Trevellian as follows:

> "I hardly think you would know the once fastidious Neil McPherson, if you could see him now in a noisy cotton-mill, screaming at the top of his voice to the stupid operatives, and button-holed confidentially by the Brother Jonathans, who address him as 'Square, and speak of his aunt as the 'old woman.' But it is astonishing how soon one gets accustomed to things, and I really am very happy, especially when scouting the country on my beautiful bay, a present from my aunt, who gave it to

me on condition that I would take care of it myself. Think of me in overalls and knit jacket, currying a horse and bedding him down, for I do all that; in fact, I do everything, even to splitting the kindlings when the chore-boy (that's what they call him here) does not come.

"Ah, well; I have learned many things in this land of democracy, and am content; though in my heart I believe I still have a hankering after old aristocratic England, provided I could be one of the aristocrats. I suppose you know that poor Blanche died last winter of fever in Naples, but perhaps you do not know that she left me ten thousand pounds! Fifty thousand dollars they count that in America, and I actually do not know what to do with it. My aunt gives me a thousand a year for spending money, and when she dies, I shall have, as nearly as I can estimate it, half a million, which in this country makes a rich man. If Bessie had not provided for old Anthony and Dorothy, I should care for them; but as she has, I believe I shall use the interest of Blanche's money in paying for scholarships in India, and China, and Japan, and Greece, and I'll call them the Blanche Trevellian and the Bessie McPherson scholarships. That will please Bessie, for she is great on missions, both at home and abroad, and her kitchen is a regular soup-house in the winter, for every beggar in Boston knows Mrs. Grey Jerrold. Jack, you don't know what a lovely woman Bessie is. Sweeter and prettier even than when she was a girl and you and I were both in love with her. And Grey—well, you ought to see how he worships her! Why, she is never within his reach that he does not put his hands upon her, and if he thinks no one is looking on he always kisses her, and by Jove, she kisses him back as if she liked it! And I—well, I bear it now with a good deal of equanimity. Eels, they say, can get used to being skinned, and so I am getting accustomed to think of Bessie as Grey's wife instead of mine, and I really have quite an uncleish feeling for her children. Indeed. I intend to make them my heirs

"And so good-by to you, old chap; with love to Flossie and the twins, from your Yankeefied friend,

"NEIL McPHERSON."

And now our story winds to a close, and we are dropping the curtain upon the characters, who go out one by one and pass from our sight forever. In the cozy rectory Hannah Jerrold's last days are passing happily and peacefully with the Rev. Charles Sanford, who loves her just as dearly and thinks her just as fair as on that night years and years ago, when she walked with him under the chestnut trees, and while her heart was breaking with its load of care and pain, sent him from her with no other explanation than that it could not be.

At Grey's Park Lucy Grey lives her life of sweet unselfishness, looked up to by the villagers as the lady *par excellence* of the town, and idolized by the little ones from Boston, who know no spot quite as attractive as her house in the park.

Miss Betsey and Neil still scramble along together, he indolent at times and prone to lapse into his old habits of luxurious ease, for which she rates him sharply, though on the whole she pets him as she has never petted a human being before.

"Boys will be boys," she says, forgetting that Neil is over thirty years of age, and she keeps his breakfast warm for him, and gets up to let him in when he has staid later than usual at the Ridge House, where he is a frequent visitor, for he and Allen Browne are fast friends and boon companions. Together they ride and drive, and row on the lakes around Allington; together they smoke and lounge on the broad piazza of the Ridge House, but Neil never drinks or plays with Allen, or any one else, for his aunt made it a condition of her friendship, that he should never touch a drop of anything which could intoxicate, or soil his hands with cards, even for amusement. The shadow of that awful tragedy at Monte Carlo is over her still, and she looks upon anything like card-playing as savoring of the pit.

Allen Browne is a young man of elegant leisure, who takes perfumed baths, and wears an overcoat which comes nearly to his feet, and a collar which cuts his ears. He is a graduate from Harvard, and his mother says his 'schoolin' has cost over fifteen thousand dollars, though where under the sun and moon the money went she can't contrive.

Mrs. Rossiter-Browne is very proud of her son and of her daughter, the Lady Augusta, who comes home nearly every summer with a retinue of servants and her little boy, who calls himself Lord Rossiter-Browne Hardy, and Neil Jerrold, when he is angry with him, "a little Yankee," while Neil promptly returns the compliment by calling him a "freckled-faced paddy."

In the old home on Beacon street, Mrs. Geraldine still affects her air of exclusiveness and invalidism, although a good deal softened and improved by the grandchildren, of whom she is very fond, and whose baby hands and baby prattle have found their way to her heart, making her a better because a less selfish woman.

In the street and among men Burton Jerrold holds his head as high as ever, for all his shame and dread are buried in the grave under the white cross at Stoneleigh Cottage, where Bessie spends every summer, with her children, and where Grey spends as much time as possible. He is a man of business now, and many go to him for counsel and advice, and this, except in the hottest weather, keeps him in the city during the week. But every Saturday afternoon the Jerrold carriage, with Bessie and the children in it, stands behind the station waiting for the train, the

first sound of which in the distance is caught up and repeated by Neil and Robin, while Baby Bessie claps her hands and calls out, "Papa is coming." And very soon papa comes, with an expression of perfect content on his fine face as he kisses his wife and babies, and then in the delicious coolness of the late afternoon is driven up the shaded avenue to the cottage where the plateau is bright with flowers, and where the daisy cross in its purple heart of pansies, gleams white and pure in the summer sunshine.

THE END.

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