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Transcriber's note:

On page 137 a printing error left a word or two not printed. The place is marked in the text: [**missing words**]

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HOLIDAYS AT THE GRANGE,

OR

A WEEK'S DELIGHT.

Games and Stories for Parlor and Fireside.

BY

EMILY MAYER HIGGINS.

PHILADELPHIA:
PORTER & COATES.

[Pg 6]

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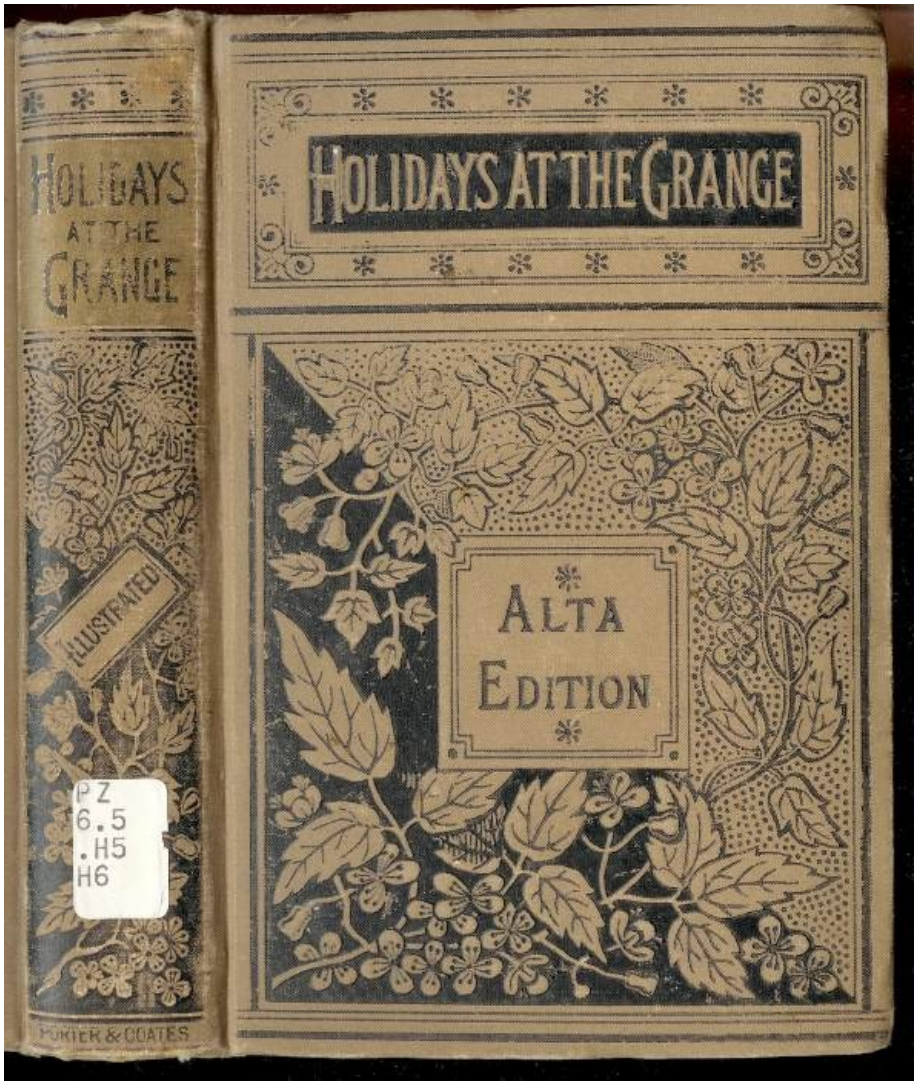
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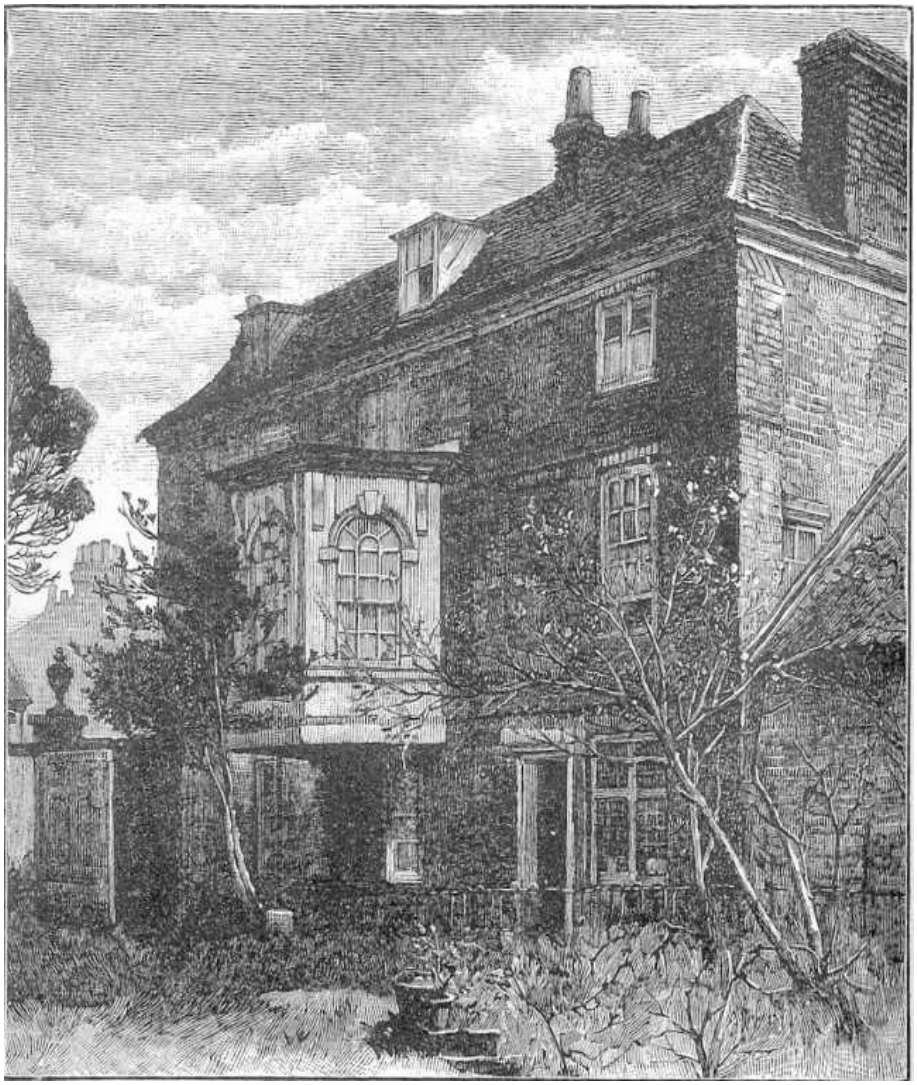

WYNDHAM GRANGE.

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GAMES AND STORIES.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GATHERING.—CHRISTMAS EVE.—CONSEQUENCES.—HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?

Not many miles from Philadelphia, in a beautifully wooded and hilly country, may be seen a large rambling mansion, whose substantial walls show that it was built at a time when more attention was paid to the durability of dwellings than at present. It is, indeed, quite an ancient house for this part of the world, having been erected by a certain John Wyndham, a hundred years ago; and it has remained in the family ever since, the owner of it generally inheriting the name of John, a taste for rural life, and the old homestead together. It was constructed in good taste, and with great regard for comfort; the broad hall, the favorite resort in summer, was ornamented with family portraits of many ages back, and a complete suit of armor, visor and all, struck awe into the hearts of young visitors, who almost expected its former occupant to resume possession, with his gauntleted hand to draw the sword from its scabbard, and, seizing the flag over his head, to drive the modern usurpers from the house. Large antlers, bows and arrows, and rusty fowling-pieces against the wall, intimated that the descendants of the grim warrior had exercised their [Pg 10] valor in the chase; while a guitar with blue ribbon, in the corner, told that gentler days had come, and spoke of peace, domestic joys, and woman's influence.

Many were the bright sunshiny chambers in that cheerful home; but I will describe one apartment only, the sitting-room, with which we are chiefly concerned. The furniture is quaint and massive; but it is the rich mellow light streaming through the room that principally attracts the eye. Is it the western sun, tinted by the colored glass of the bay-window, or is it the ruddy hickory fire? What a remarkable chimney-place! few such can be seen now-a-days; they had gone out of date a hundred years ago; but it was ancient John Wyndham's fancy, as far as possible, to possess a fac-simile of the family mansion in England, in which his childish days had been spent. What elaborate carving upon the huge mantel-piece!—hunters with their guns and dogs; shepherds and shepherdesses, with crooks and sheep; scriptural scenes and rural incidents, afford endless amusement to the groups gathered before the fire. Before, did I say? around, is the right expression; for so large is the chimney, that while crackling up-piled logs blaze upon the hearth, a number might be accommodated on the benches at the side, as well as in front. It is the most sociable gathering-place in the world, and the stiffest and most formal person would soon relax there; while fingers are thawed, hearts are melted by that fire—warm and kind affections are drawn out—sparkles of wit fly about the room, as if in emulation of the good hickory: it is a chimney corner most provocative of ancient legends, of frightful ghost-stories, of tales of knight-errantry and romantic love, of dangers and of hair-breadth escapes; in short, of all that can draw both old and young away from their every-day cares, into the brighter world of fiction and poesy. [Pg 11] In the recess on one side is a small library, comfortable enough to entice the student from the merry group so near him; on the other, is a room looked upon with great affection by the juvenile members of the family, for here does Aunt Lucy manufacture and keep for distribution those delicious cakes, never to be refused at lunch time; and those pies, jellies, whips, and creams, which promise to carry down her name to posterity as the very nonpareil of housekeepers.

Three persons are sitting in the room, whom in common politeness I should introduce to the reader: very pleasant people are they to know and to visit. Uncle John and Aunt Lucy Wyndham, the master and mistress of the house, are remarkable for kindness, and make their nephews and nieces, and whole troops of friends, feel perfectly at home at once; they are Uncle John and Aunt Lucy to all their young acquaintances, and delight in the title. Perhaps they would not have been generally called so, had they any children of their own; but they have none, and the only young person in the house at present is Mary Dalton—Cousin Mary—an orphan niece of Mrs. Wyndham, whom they have brought up from a child. She looks like her aunt, plump, rosy, good natured and sensible; she is just seventeen, and very popular with the whole cousinhood. She has many accomplishments: she does not talk French, Spanish, or Italian, but she knows how to play every

game that ever was invented, can tell stories to suit every age, can soothe a screaming child sooner than any one else, can rattle off cotillions on the piano-forte of a winter's evening without thinking it hard that she cannot join in the dance; and lastly, can lay down an interesting book or piece of crochet work to run on an errand for Aunt, or untangle the bob-tails of a kite, without showing any signs of crossness. Self is a very subordinate person with her, and indeed she seems [Pg 12] hardly to realize her separate individuality; she is everybody's Cousin Mary, and frowns vanish, and smiles brighten up the countenance, wherever she appears. A very happy looking group they are, but restless, this afternoon of the 24th of December; Uncle John frequently goes to the hall door; Aunt Lucy lays down her knitting to listen; and Cousin Mary does not pretend to read the book she holds, but gazes out of the window, down the long avenue of elms, as if she expected an arrival. Old Cæsar, "the last of the servants," as Mr. Wyndham styles him, a white-haired negro who was born in the house, and is devoted to the family, always speaking of *our* house, *our* carriage, and *our* children, as if he were chief owner, vibrates constantly between the kitchen and the porter's lodge, feeling it to be his especial duty and prerogative to give the first welcome to the guests.

And soon the sound of wheels is heard, and merry voices resound through the hall, and cheeks rosy with the cold are made yet rosier by hearty kisses; it is the young Wyndhams, come to spend their Christmas holidays at the Grange with Uncle John. There is Cornelia, a bright, intelligent girl of sixteen, full of fun, with sparkling black eyes. John, a boy of fourteen, matter-of fact and practical, a comical miniature of Uncle John, whom he regards with veneration, as the greatest, wisest, and best of living men, and only slightly inferior to General Washington himself; and George, his twin brother and very devoted friend, a good boy in the main, but so very full of mischief! he would get into a thousand scrapes, if his more sober companion did not restrain him. We must not overlook little Amy, the sweet child of twelve, with flowing golden hair and languishing eyes, the gentle, unspoiled pet and playmate of all. Her cheek is pale, for she has [Pg 13] ever been the delicate flower of the family, and the winter winds must not visit her too roughly: she is one to be carefully nurtured. And the more so, as her mind is highly imaginative and much in advance of her age; already does the light of genius shine forth in her eye. Scarcely are these visitors well ensconced in the chimney corner, after their fur wrappings are removed, before the sound of wheels is again heard, and shouts of joy announce the arrival of the Greens. That tall, slender, intellectual girl, with pale oval face and expressive eyes, is Ellen. Her cousins are very proud of her, for she has just returned from boarding-school with a high character for scholarship, and has carried away the prize medal for poetry from all competitors; the children think that she can speak every language, and she is really a refined and accomplished girl. She has not seen Mary or Cornelia for a couple of years, and great are the rejoicings at their meeting; they are warm friends already. Her manly brother Tom, although younger, looks older than she does: a fine, handsome fellow he is. The younger Greens are almost too numerous to particularize; Harry and Louis, Anna and Gertrude—merry children all, noisy and frolicsome, but well-inclined and tolerably submissive to authority; they ranged from nine years old, upward. Just as the sun was setting, and Aunt Lucy had almost given them up, the third family of cousins arrived, the Boltons. Charlie Bolton is the elder of the two—he will be called Charlie to the end of his days, if he live to be a white-haired grandfather, he is so pleasant and full of fun, so ready with his joke and merry laugh; he is Cornelia's great friend and ally, and the two together would keep any house wide awake. His sister Alice is rather sentimental, for which she is heartily laughed at by her harum-skarum brother; but she is at an age when girls are apt to take this turn [Pg 14] —fourteen; she will leave it all behind her when she is older. Sentimentality may be considered the last disease of childhood; measles, hooping-cough, and scarlatina having been successfully overcome, if the girl passes through this peril unscathed, and no weakness is left in her mental constitution, she will probably be a woman of sane body and mind. Alice is much given to day-dreams, and to reading novels by stealth; she is very romantic, and would dearly love to be a heroine, if she could. The only objection to the scheme, in her mind, is that her eyes have a very slight cast, and that her nose is *un petit nez retroussé*—in other words, something of a pug; and Alice has always been under the impression that a heroine must have straight vision, and a Grecian nose. Hers is a face that will look very arch and *piquante*, when she acquires more sense, and lays aside her lack-a-daisical airs; but, at present, the expression and the features are very incongruous. It is excessively mortifying! but it cannot be helped; many times a day does she cast her eyes on the glass, but the obstinate pug remains a pug, and Alice is forced to conclude that she is not intended for a heroine. Yet she always holds herself ready for any marvellous adventure that may turn up, and she is perfectly convinced that there must be concealed doors, long winding passages in the walls, and perhaps a charmingly horrible dungeon, at The Grange. Why not? Such things are of constant occurrence in story books, and that house is the oldest one she knows. She is determined on this visit to explore it thoroughly, and perhaps she may become the happy discoverer of a casket of jewels, or a skeleton, or some other treasure.

Thirteen young people there are in all, with pleasant faces and joyful hearts; and none of them, I am happy to say were of the perfect sort you read of in books. Had they been, their Aunt Lucy, [Pg 15] who was used to real children, would have entertained serious fears for their longevity. They all required a caution or a reprimand now and then, and none were so wise as not to make an occasional silly speech, or to do a heedless action. But they were good-tempered and obliging, as healthy children should always be, and were seldom cross unless they felt a twinge of toothache. How fast did their tongues run, that first hour! How much had all to tell, and how much to hear! And how happy did Uncle John appear, as he sat in the centre of the group, with little Amy on his lap, leaning her languid head against his broad and manly chest, while a cluster of the younger ones contended together for possession of the unoccupied knee.

After the hearty, cheerful country supper, the whole party of visitors was escorted into a dark room adjoining the hall, while Aunt Lucy and Cousin Mary were engaged in certain preparations, well understood by the older guests, who were too discreet to allay the curiosity of the younger ones, who for the first time were allowed to share the hospitality of the Grange at Christmas. At last the folding-doors were thrown open, and the hall appeared to be in a blaze of light; colored lamps were suspended in festoons from the ceiling, showing how prettily the old portraits were adorned with evergreens. Even the man in armor looked less grim, as if his temper was mollified by the ivy wreath wound around his helmet. But the chief object of interest was a stately tree at the end of the hall, from whose trunk proceeded thirteen branches, brilliantly illuminated with wax lights and pendant lamps of various hues; while gilded fruit, and baskets of flowers and confectionary, looked to the uninitiated as if the fairies themselves had been at work. Many were the exclamations of delight, and intense the excitement; the old hall echoed with the shouts of [Pg 16] the boys. Uncle John, ever happy in the enjoyment of others, declared that he believed himself to be the youngest child there, and that he enjoyed the revels of Christmas Eve more than any of them.

When the noise and rapture had somewhat subsided, Cousin Mary proposed that they should try some games, by way of variety. Chess, checkers, backgammon, Chinese puzzles, dominoes, jack-straws, etc., were mentioned, and each one of them was declared by different members of the group to be exceedingly entertaining; but Charlie Bolton said that "although he was neither Grand Turk nor perpetual Dictator, he must put his veto upon all such games as being of an unsocial nature. It was all very well, when only two persons were together, to amuse themselves with such things; but for his part, he did hate to see people ride in sulkies, and play *solitaire*, when they could have such agreeable society as was there gathered together;" making, as he spoke, a dashing bow to the girls. "Has not any one wit enough to think of a game at which we can all assist?"

"Do you know how to play 'Consequences?'" said Mary.

"I never heard of it," replied Cornelia; "how do you play it?"

"With paper and pencils. Here is my writing-desk full of paper, and my drawing-box with pencils ready sharpened, and you have nothing to do but all to write according to my directions, and doubling down the paper, to hand it to a neighbor, so that each time you have a different slip. When it is finished, I will read them aloud, supplying some words which will make sense—or, what is much better, arrant nonsense—of the whole. So begin by writing a term descriptive of a gentleman." [Pg 17]

"Now write a gentleman's name—some one you know, or some distinguished person."

"Next, an adjective descriptive of a lady."

"And now, a lady's name."

"Mention a place, and describe it."

"Now write down some date, or period of time when a thing might happen."

"Put a speech into the gentleman's mouth."

"Make the lady reply."

"Tell what the consequences were."

"And what the world said of it."

"And now allow me to enlighten the company. Here is one specimen:

"The gallant and accomplished Nero met the beautiful, but rather coquettish Mrs. Wyndham at Gretna Green, that place once so famous for runaway couples and matrimonial blacksmiths, upon the 4th of July, 1900 A.D. He said, 'Dearest madam, my tender heart will break if you refuse my hand;' but she replied, 'La, sir, don't talk such nonsense!' The consequences were, that their names were embalmed together in history; and the world said, 'It is exactly what I expected.'"

"Are you sure, Mary," said Mrs. Wyndham, laughing, "that you are not taking any liberties with my name?"

"Here it is ma'am, you can see it yourself; but I think you escaped very well. Here's another: "The refined and dandified Jack the Giant-Killer met the modest, retiring Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, at the Pyramids, (ah! some one peeped!) those wonderful monuments of ages long since passed away, on Christmas Day, in the year One. He said, 'I never entertained a very lofty opinion of your ladyship;' she replied, 'I perfectly agree with the noble sentiments you have just uttered: our [Pg 18] hearts shall henceforward be united in the strictest friendship.' The consequences were that they parted, to meet no more; and the partial world remarked, 'What a pair of fools!'"

"Here is another: "The brave, daring, thoughtless King Solomon met the elegant, fashionable Queen Semiramis upon the top of Mont Blanc, that lofty mountain, crowned with perpetual snow, on the 30th of February. He remarked, 'Do you like the last style of bonnets, Madam?' She answered, 'Sir, do not press the matter. I am but young; you can speak to my papa.' The consequences were, that they took an ice-cream, and went up to the clouds in an air-balloon; and the amiable world said, 'Who would have believed it?'"

After reading all the papers, which caused much diversion, one of the party proposed playing "How do you like it." While Tom Green was waiting in another room, the remainder of the company fixed upon a word of double or treble meaning, which it was his duty to discover by the answers given to three questions he was to ask of all in succession. If unable to guess the word at the end of the third round, he would be crowned with the dunce-cap, and must recommence his questions: if, on the contrary, he hit upon the right word, the person whose answer led him to conjecture it must take his place.

"Anna," said Tom, "how do you like it? Now, don't tell me you like it very well, or not at all; give me something descriptive."

"I like it with a large capital."

"You do? Then it may either be a word, a state, a pillar, or a man of business. Cousin Alice, how do you like it?"

"I like it shady and covered with moss." [Pg 19]

"And you, Sister Ellen?"

"With vaults secure and well filled."

"What do you say, Gertrude?"

"I like it covered with violets."

"How do you prefer it, Charlie?"

"With a good board of directors."

"And you, Amy?"

"Covered with strong and skilful rowers."

"What is your preference, George?"

"I like it high and picturesque."

"How do you like it, John?"

"With numerous branches."

"It can't be a tree—how do you like it, Mary?"

"Very green."

"And you, Harry?"

"Of red brick or white marble."

"How contradictory! What have you to answer, Cornelia?"

"I like it steep and rocky."

"And you, Louis?"

"I like it warranted not to break."

"When do you like it, Anna?"

"When I have an account in it."

"When do you like it, Alice?"

"When I am in the country, and feel weary."

"And you, Ellen?"

"When I hold a check in my hand."

"And you, Gertrude?"

"In the spring of the year, when I feel languid and sentimental."

"When do you prefer it, Charlie?"

"When I want a loan, and can give good security." [Pg 20]

"And you, Amy?"

"When I am in a boat, and becalmed."

"And you, George?"

"When I am at sea, anxiously looking out for land."

"What say you, John?"

"When I am a merchant, engaged in large transactions."

"When do you like it, Mary?"

"When my eye is weary of a flat, dull country."

"And you, Harry?"

"When I am a stockholder."

"So I should think, if it paid a good dividend. And if I were to ask you my third question, 'Where will you put it!' one would place it under an umbrageous tree, another by the sea, a third by a river, and a fourth on a good business street, near the Exchange. My good friends, I would be dull indeed if I did not guess it to be a BANK; and you, Sister Ellen, may take my place; your well-filled vaults first gave me the clue."

After amusing themselves a little longer, they adjourned to the sitting-room, as the tall, old-fashioned clock in the hall gave warning of the rapid flight of time; and Mary, as was her custom, brought to her uncle the large family Bible. When he opened the holy book, the very youngest and wildest of the children listened with reverence to the solemn words, and tried to join in the thanks which the good man offered up to Heaven for bringing them together in health and peace, and granting them so much happiness.

And then kisses and good-nights were exchanged, and the young group was scattered; but not without a parting charge to each from Aunt Lucy, "not to forget to hang up the stocking for Kriss-Kinkle, near the chimney place; and not on any account to lock their doors—for they might easily be taken sick in the night."

CHAPTER II.

[Pg 21]

CHRISTMAS DAY.—RHYMES.—CENTO.—GENTEEL LADY.—THE FAIRY WOOD.

Sound were the slumbers that night at the Grange, notwithstanding the determination of little Amy to lie awake and catch Kriss-Kinkle for once; although as she said, "I know it *must* be Cousin Mary." Those happy days of innocence and unsuspecting faith have passed away, when children believed in a literal Kriss-Kinkle, clad in furs, and laden with presents for the good, and sticks of wood for the naughty little urchins who refuse to learn their A, B, C's, and to stand still while mamma combs out their hair. The "infantry" of America have quite given up their old-fashioned credulity, and as, according to the obsolete saying of the older philosophers, "nature abhors a vacuum," and there must be some children in the world, to keep the balance, the spirit-rappers have kindly stepped into their vacant places, and may be regarded as the true and only children on this side the Atlantic. The frightful skepticism of the young ones with regard to Kriss-Kinkle has come to such a pass, that a little girl of three years old, who had been kept, as her relations thought, in all the verdure becoming to her tender years, upon her aunt telling her that she ought not to expect many gifts that season, as it was such stormy weather that poor Kriss-Kinkle could scarcely venture out, replied: "But, Aunty! could he not take grandma's carriage—he would not get wet then!"

If the merry old soul really came down the chimney at the Grange, he shewed great discernment in the gifts he bestowed, for each found in the stocking some article that had been ardently [Pg 22] desired. Ellen, who was deeply interested in the study of Italian, found a beautiful copy of Dante's "Divina Commedia;" Mary, who possessed a fine talent for drawing, and frequently sketched from nature, discovered that a complete set of artist's colors and brushes had fallen to her lot; George, who was devoted to skating, found a pair of skates, "real beauties," as he said, appended to his stocking; all plainly saw that their individual tastes and peculiarities had been consulted in a very gratifying manner. Of course they did not neglect to express their pleasure and gratitude to their kind friends, requesting them to inform that very worthy old gentleman, Mr. Kriss-Kinkle, of their delight at his selection. Nor were Uncle John and Aunt Lucy forgotten: their nephews and nieces had all provided some little gifts, as expressions of love. Mrs. Wyndham declared that she was quite set up in crochet bags and purses, for a year to come; and tastefully worked book-markers, with appropriate sentiments, were very plentiful. Tom Green made himself exceedingly agreeable to the whole party, by presenting to each some pretty little box, thimble-case, or other ingenious trifle, which he had made at his leisure with the aid of his turning-lathe; whereupon Charlie Bolton assumed an irresistibly ludicrous air of dejection, and asserted that he felt quite crushed by Tom's superior gallantry. "Really, a fellow is not much thought of now-a-days, unless he can do something in the pretty line. I must get a turning-lathe at once, or else learn to carve brooches out of marbles, and rings out of peach-stones, and baskets out of cherry and apricot stones. If I can't get up that much artistic talent, I might as well resign myself to complete insignificance all my life." Cornelia Wyndham highly approved of his intentions, and told him that when he had [Pg 23] come to perfection in the fancy business, she hoped he would remember her devoted and perfectly disinterested friendship; her cousinly affection was of the warmest and truest quality, especially when there were any hopes of cherry-stone baskets.

Full of enjoyment as they were, none were too intent upon fun and frolic to neglect accompanying their kind relatives to the pretty little country church, for it was their uncle's habit to begin the

day with religious exercises: he said it seemed to him ungrateful to spend it in unbroken jollity, and to forget entirely the original motive of its institution. It was a very pleasant custom, and very conducive to mutual attachment, for friends and relations to give and to receive presents: but this should be subordinate to the remembrance of God's Great Gift to the children of men, which was celebrated on that happy day. So the young people passed a unanimous vote that church-going was as regular a part of keeping Christmas as presents or mince-pie, and gladly set off to walk through the frosty air to the ivy-covered church, shaded by ancient trees. It was situated on a hill, and was approached by numerous paths running across the fields; and as Ellen gazed upon its spire, standing in relief against the deep blue sky, she thought of that beautiful line of Wordsworth,

"Pointing its taper finger up to heaven!"

The chime of bells, too, joyfully pealing out, appeared to be the voice of the church calling upon all who heard it, to return thanks to Him who blesses the families of men; it seemed to say, "Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord." What a mistake it is, to think of religion only as a refuge from sorrow, and a solace for the disappointments of the world! It is that, truly, but it is also the sanctifier of joy: the happy young [Pg 24] heart should be laid upon God's altar, as well as the stricken spirit, and the eye moistened with tears. That the services of the church had not a depressing effect upon the minds of any, was very evident from the heart-felt greetings and warm shakes of the hand which were exchanged by all, as they left the house of prayer. It was a very pleasant sight to behold young and old, rich and poor, joined together in one common feeling of brotherhood, under the genial influences of the season. "A merry Christmas" seemed not only to spring from every tongue, but to sparkle in every eye.

If I were to attempt to describe the varied pleasures of that day, which was declared by Charlie Bolton to be the most glorious one he had ever spent, I should be obliged to dip my pen, not in ink, but in a solution of rainbow, or dancing sun-beams, or in any thing else that is proved to be the most joyful thing in nature. At dinner-table, after being helped the second time to a slice of "splendid" turkey with oyster sauce, little Louis Green, the youngest of the party, occasioned a general burst of laughter by laying down his knife and fork, which certainly deserved a little rest if activity ever can earn it, and leaning back in his chair, saying with the greatest earnestness: "Uncle, if I were asked to point out the very happiest time of the whole year, I would fix upon Christmas day, at exactly this hour—the dinner hour—as the thing for me!"

"O you gormandizer!" said his sister Ellen, "you don't really think the dinner the best part of the day?"

"Indeed I do, though," replied Louis; "and I rather guess a good many people are of the same opinion. And, sister Ellen, if you were a boy, and just come home from boarding-school, where they always want you to eat potatoes, I think you'd value turkey and mince-pie as much as I do! [Pg 25] Hurra for Christmas, I say!"

There was some conversation at the dinner-table about the origin of the different modes of keeping Christmas day in our country. Mr. Wyndham remarked, that probably the reason why it was so universally kept in Philadelphia, was from the large mixture of the German element in the population of Pennsylvania: perhaps the little Swedish colony which Penn found already settled on the ground when he came over, may have had some influence, as the nations in the middle and north of Europe have always celebrated the day, making it a sort of festival of home, and fireside pleasures. He said that when he was a young man he had passed a winter in Germany, and was spending some time in the house of a friend, in the month of December: being very intimate with all the family, he had been admitted into numerous little secrets, both by young and old. He had seen beforehand the drawings and the ornamental needle-work which were intended as a surprise to the parents, and were executed after they had retired to rest; and he had been allowed to hear the new songs and pieces of instrumental music, learnt by stealth during their absence from home; and had even been privileged to hear the little boy of eight, the pet of the family, recite the verses composed in honor of the joyful occasion, by his oldest sister. And the parents, also, had their own mysteries: for a fortnight before the eventful day, the blooming, comfortable mamma rode out regularly, and returned laden with bundles, which were immediately transferred to a certain large parlor, the windows of which were carefully bolted, the door locked, and the very key-hole stopped up, so that nothing was visible. The children were sent out of the way, and then there were raps at the door, and the carrying of heavy articles [Pg 26] along the hall, into the mysterious chamber—Blue Beard's room of horrors was not more eagerly gazed at, than was this parlor, but its blank walls told no secrets.

At length the long-expected day arrived; on Christmas Eve all were assembled in a dark room adjacent—you see I have taken a few hints from my German friends—and at last the doors being thrown open, the mystery was revealed. The room was ornamented with evergreens and colored lamps, very much in the style of our hall, and a large tree blazed with light and sparkled with candied fruits and gilded cornucopias; I made up my mind then, that if ever I had a house of my own, I would keep Christmas Eve in the same way. The little children stood a while, awe-struck by the grandeur of the spectacle: for I can tell you, young people, that the German children are kept in a state of innocence—what you would call *greenness*—that would amaze you. The good mother then came forward, and took them by the hand: "Come in, Carl; come in, Hermann; fear nothing, little Ida; come in and see if there is any thing here for you." Encouraged by this invitation, all entered, and the room was found to be lined with tables, piled with articles both for

use and pleasure; there was a separate table for every one in the house, including the servants, who in Germany live many years in one family, and even for the baby. Their guest also was not forgotten; I found upon my table a pair of slippers, and sundry other gifts, some of which I still keep with care, as a memorial of that very happy evening.

"That must have been really charming! I think the mystery adds very much to the pleasure," said Alice. "And, uncle, is not the custom of hanging up the stocking derived from Germany?" [Pg 27]

"I think it is. In Holland there is a little variation, for there the *shoe* is placed at the door of the chamber, for adults as well as children enter into the sport. I heard an amusing story connected with this practice, when I was in Holland; if you like, I will relate it; the event is said really to have happened."

"Do tell it, uncle!" said John Wyndham. "I like true stories."

"There was a poor, but very handsome and excellent young minister, a licentiate, I think they call it, when a young man is not yet settled in a church; to support himself until he was appointed to a congregation, he took the place of tutor in a rich burgomaster's family, where he fell in love with the pretty, amiable, and mischievous daughter. She fully reciprocated his feelings, and as her parents approved of the match, she gave the bashful young man all the encouragement she could: she felt very sure as to the nature of his sentiments towards her, but notwithstanding all she could do, the young man *would not propose*—as she rightly concluded, the thought of her superior wealth deterred him; and meantime the foolish fellow became pale and melancholy, as if he seriously meditated going into a decline. So the merry maiden thought, 'This will never do; I must take strong measures, or the poor soul will mope himself to death.' Christmas Eve came round, and the assembled family were joking about the presents they expected. 'Put your slippers outside your door to-night, Dominie,' said the father, calling him by the title commonly applied to clergymen in Holland, and among the descendants of the Dutch in the State of New York, 'I have no doubt your friend Caterina has something to put in them.' 'Oh, it is not worth while—no one cares for me, sir.' 'But, indeed, we do,' replied little Caterina; 'I have something for you, but I am [Pg 28] not at all sure you will condescend to accept it. 'Have you indeed, Miss Caterina? I shall feel highly honored; I give you my word that whatever it is, I will accept it joyfully.' 'Very well: only please to remember this, when you see what is in your slippers.'

"The next morning, when the young Dominie opened his door, full of eagerness to see what was in store for him, lo and behold! his slippers had vanished. 'I might have known that the light-hearted, mischievous maiden was only laughing at me—and well I deserve it—fool that I am to dream about one so much above me!' Thus trying to scold himself into stoicism, the young man went over to the breakfast-table, where all were gathered together except Caterina. 'A very merry Christmas! but my dear Dominie, how sober you look!' 'Do I, indeed? that is very improper; but I've been thinking of going away—I had better do so—that makes me look rather sad, perhaps; I've spent so many happy hours among you all.' 'Going away! oh, no, you are not to think of that; I cannot allow such a word. By the way, what have you found in your slippers?' 'To reprove my presumption, no doubt, my slippers have been spirited away in the night: it is not for a poor fellow like me to receive gifts from lovely young ladies.' As he spoke these words, the door opened, and Caterina entered, bright as the morning, her face covered with smiles and blushes; she shuffled along in a strange way, and all eyes naturally fell upon her little feet, which were sailing about in the Dominie's slippers! Amid the general laughter, she walked up to the diffident youth, who could scarcely believe his eyes, and said with an air of irresistible drollery, by which she tried to cover her confusion: 'Here is your Christmas present, sir; do you hold to your promise of accepting it?' Of course, the lady having broken the ice, the Dominie could do no less [Pg 29] than speak out, and, all being willing, the two were soon converted into one; a good church was procured for him by the influence of the burgomaster, and they lived as happily as possible all their days."

"She was a determined damsel!" cried Cornelia; "I think she had brass enough to set up a foundry."

"Probably it was leap-year, Cornelia," replied Ellen; "you know it is then the ladies' *privilege*—great privilege, forsooth!—to pay attention to the lords of the creation."

"I hope, when women take advantage of their prescriptive rights, they will wear the Bloomer costume, and make themselves look as little like the rest of their sex as possible!" said Mary.

"Come, girls," cried Charlie Bolton, "you are too hard on that frank little Caterina; I approve of such conduct entirely, and some ten years hence, when I am ready to be appropriated, I shall certainly leave my slippers outside my door as a hint to whomsoever it may concern. It would save us men a great deal of trouble, if all girls were as sensible as Caterina."

"Us men, indeed! How long since?" said Cornelia.

"Ever since I got out of frocks and into trowsers," replied Charlie, laughing good-naturedly. He and Cornelia were always sparring, but never quarrelled.

In the evening they played at various games; among others, at writing rhymes. Each had a slip of paper, and would write a line, then double it down, and hand it to the next, telling the last word; the second person then added a line rhyming with the first, the third started a fresh rhyme, and so it went on. When read, it of course made the greatest farrago of nonsense imaginable. Ellen then proposed "Cento," a Spanish or Italian game, which requires great readiness of memory, [Pg 30]

and a large acquaintance with poetry. One person quotes a well-known line, the next another that rhymes with it, and so on, making some sort of connection whenever it can be done; but after trying it, and finding that only three or four of the eldest could think of appropriate passages, they voted Cento *a bore*, Cornelia remarking that there was great stupidity somewhere; of course they could not think it was in themselves, and therefore it must be in the game.

Mary said that there was another game requiring a good memory, but the advantage of it was, that the more you forgot the more merriment you made; if you were not witty yourself, you were the cause of wit in others. It was called *Genteel Lady*, and was played by one person politely bowing to his neighbor, and reciting a certain formula, which must be repeated, with an addition, by the next, and so round the circle; whenever the least mistake or omission was made, the person had to drop the title of Genteel Lady, or Genteel Gentleman, and putting a horn of twisted paper in the hair or button-hole, could now glory in the dignity of being a One-horned Lady or Gentleman. Very soon horns become so plenty that few can claim any gentility; as the description proceeds, and becomes more complicated, it is perfectly laughable, and the whole party look ludicrous enough.

"Here is a whole bundle of lamp-lighters," said Cornelia; "let us begin the game, I think it must be comical."

Mary bowed to Tom Green, and commenced. "Good evening, genteel gentleman, ever genteel, I, a genteel lady, ever genteel, come from that genteel lady, ever genteel, to tell you that she owns a little dog with hair on its back."

Tom bowed to Ellen: "Good evening, genteel lady, ever genteel, I, a genteel gentleman, ever genteel, come from that genteel lady, ever genteel (bowing to Mary), to tell you that she owns a little dog with hair on its back, and a red tongue in its mouth." [Pg 31]

Ellen took up the play: "Good evening, genteel gentleman, ever genteel, I, a genteel lady, ever genteel, come from that genteel gentleman, ever genteel, to tell you that he owns a little dog with hair on its back, a red tongue in its mouth, and two ears on its head."

It was now Charlie Bolton's turn: "Good evening, genteel lady, ever genteel, I, a genteel gentleman, *ever* genteel, come from that genteel lady, ever genteel, to say that she owns a little dog with ears on its back, a tongue in its head, hair in its mouth, and a bone between its teeth."

"Charlie! Charlie! three horns!"

"All honorable horns! hurra! I'm the only one with horns!"

"You'll soon have companions in misfortune," said Mary, laughing.

"Good morning, genteel lady, ever genteel," said Gertrude, bowing to Alice, "I, a genteel lady, ever genteel, come from that three-horned gentleman, ever three-horned, to say that he owns a little dog with hair on its back, a red tongue in its mouth, two ears on its head, a bone between its teeth, and a tail a yard long."

"Good morning, she said! that's one horn!" cried the other children.

"Good evening, genteel gentleman, ever genteel," said Alice, reverently bowing to John Wyndham, "I, a genteel lady, ever genteel, come from that one-horned lady, ever one-horned, to say that she owns a little dog with hair on its back, a red tongue in its mouth, a bone between its teeth, a fell a yard long, and three legs and a half." [Pg 32]

"You left out two ears on its head! a horn!"

"I'm resigned," said Alice, "gentility seems to be at a discount."

So the game went on, becoming every moment more difficult and more ludicrous—as Charlie called it, more *trippy*—and by the time it went round the second time, none escaped the horns. Any thing will do for the genteel lady to own, and it makes it more agreeable to vary it each time it is played: for instance, an eagle with a golden beak, silver claws, diamond eyes, ostrich feathers, bird-of-paradise tail, a crown on its head, a diamond ring on its thumb, a gold chain round its neck, a pocket-handkerchief in its hand, and any other nonsense you can string together. A lady's étagère or what-not would be a good medium for collecting together absurdities—Mont Blanc at the top, a gridiron below, a gold thimble at the side, the poets in a corner, a breakfast set on one shelf, a card-case above, a smelling-bottle at the side, a work-box, a writing-desk, a piece of coral, etc. A *genteel* lady's description of her mansion—certainly an extraordinary one—would be suitable; a modern-built house, with a *porto-ricco* in front, and a *pizarro* in the rear, a summer-house *contagious*, and *turpentine* walks, etc.

Being now weary of games, Amy proposed that they should vary their pleasures by a tale, which gained the general approval; and Ellen Green was commissioned to relate it. Ever ready to oblige, she told them she would, if they chose a subject. "What sort of a story will you have?"

"An Indian story!" exclaimed the younger boys.

"Do tell us about some great historical character—Washington, or King Alfred, or Napoleon Bonaparte, or some other hero!" cried John Wyndham. [Pg 33]

"I go in for a very frightful ghost-story, that will make our hair stand on end, and make the girls afraid to go to bed!" said his brother George.

"Tell us a romantic narrative about a knight going to the Crusades, and his fair lady following him in the disguise of a page!" said Alice Bolton.

"That's exactly like you!" cried her brother Charlie; "now, I say give us some exciting adventures by sea or by land; a real fish-story, or escape from a lion or tiger, or a tale of a bear, or something of that sort."

"Poor Cousin Ellen! How can she please you all?" said Mary. "As Amy first proposed it, let us leave it to her to choose the kind of story she prefers, and so settle the difficulty."

"Agreed! agreed! choose, Amy!"

"As for me, I always like a real fairy-tale," said Amy, her eyes sparkling with pleasure as she saw with what good nature all had left the choice to her.

"Then you shall have it; and I don't doubt that Aunt Lucy or Cousin Mary will contrive to please all in turn, another day."

"Most especially, I hope they will not forget to give Charlie that brush with the *bear's tail* that he wants so much!" said Cornelia, with a saucy glance of her eye.

"Attention, Miss Cornelia! or you will prove that you deserve it yourself. Don't you see that Ellen is ready to begin?"

The Fairy Wood.

[Pg 34]

Upon the banks of the Rhine there stand the ruins of an ancient castle, which still attracts the attention of the passer-by, from its gigantic remains, and the exceeding beauty of its situation. And if now, when its glory has departed, the traveller is irresistibly impelled to ask its name, how imposing must it have been when its dark shadow was thrown unbroken upon the smooth waters below, and troops of cavaliers and armed retainers rode over its drawbridge, and mounted its battlements. Here, in the olden time, dwelt the noble Baron Sigismund; and here, nothing daunted by the gloomy grandeur of the fortress, his little son Rudolph romped and frolicked the live-long day. A charming fellow he was, with eyes of heavenly blue, and a complexion of pure milk and roses; a true boy, full of activity and vivacity, and with not a slight touch of mischief in his composition. And yet he was such an affectionate and good-hearted little soul, that his arms would be about your neck in a moment, if he thought you were offended by his conduct; and so generous, that he would take the cake from his own lips to give it to the beggar—no trifling stretch of charity in a boy.

Is it wonderful, that Rudolph was the idol of his parents, the favorite of his playmates, and the cherished darling of the whole castle? His merry spirit and winning ways completely gained the hearts of the servants and retainers, and many voices in the adjacent cottages were loud in the praise of the beautiful, golden-haired boy. What a proud man was Fritz, the old seneschal, when he taught him to manage the horse, to couch the lance, and draw the bow! and when, for the first time, the young heir followed him to the chase, who so happy as he? And Rudolph reciprocated [Pg 35] his affection; next to papa and dear mamma, sweet little black-eyed Cousin Bertha, and the ugly, shaggy mastiff to which he was devoted, old Fritz came in for his warmest love. And some people were malicious enough to say that there was a strong resemblance between these last two favorites, both in countenance and character; certain it is, that both Bruno and Fritz were faithful, every ready to contribute to his amusement, and although rough with other people, gentle enough with their young master.

One day, in the absence of his father, he set out to ride, with Fritz for his only attendant. It was a splendid afternoon; the sky was of that pure exquisite blue you sometimes see, rendered deeper by a pile of snowy clouds in the west; the birds were silent, as if unwilling to disturb the holy calm of nature; not a leaf stirred, save here and there a quivering aspen, emblem of a restless, discontented mind. Rudolph was in excellent spirits, and Saladin, his good Arab steed, flew like the wind; old Fritz tried to restrain his ardor, but in vain; the impetuous boy kept far ahead. They were soon some miles from home, and Rudolph saw before him a point where the road branched off in several directions, one of them leading back again to the castle, another taking a circuit of some distance, and a third, a narrow, unfrequented path, entering into a dark forest. Into this wood the boy had never been allowed to enter, from the evil name it had acquired in the traditions of the peasantry. Some said that robbers haunted its deep recesses, for travellers had entered it, notwithstanding all the entreaties of those who would have detained them, but had never been seen again; in fact, none had ever been known to return, who had been fool-hardy enough to enter into that snare. Others argued that they had been devoured by the wild beasts, [Pg 36] whose savage roar might sometimes be heard at night; or that, losing their way, they had perished with hunger. But the older and wiser shook their heads at these suggestions, insinuating that skepticism on such awful subjects might bring down vengeance upon the unbelieving; and intimated, more by look and by gesture than by word, that the whole forest was enchanted ground, and that powers more than mortal claimed it as their own. All agreed that the Fairy Wood—so it was called—was a dangerous place, and few, indeed, would venture into its shady depths. Rudolph's curiosity had been excited in the most vivid manner by what he had heard concerning the mysteries of the forest, and he had long determined to seize the first opportunity of gratifying it. Old Fritz would not have consented to his entering it, if he had given

him his weight in gold, but the worthy seneschal was now out of sight, and here was a glorious opportunity for the boy—he dashed into the wood, and urging Saladin onward, was soon involved in the intricacies of the forest.

On went the fearless boy, determined to explore, and doubting nothing, although the dark, gloomy shades might well have appalled an older person, and the numerous, faintly defined paths would certainly have made an experienced one hesitate. On he went, deeper and deeper into the wood, until he was suddenly startled by low, prolonged, growling thunder. He tried to retrace his steps, but was only more entangled in the maze: the sky had become black as midnight, the rain fell in torrents, the lightnings flashed fearfully, and all nature appeared convulsed. Rudolph had never before witnessed such a storm, and brave boy as he was, his heart quaked with terror—he felt how powerless a human being is, when, unsheltered, he is brought face to face with the [Pg 37] elements, lashed up to fury. He now realized, in addition, that he had lost his way, and feared that in his efforts to extricate himself, he might penetrate still deeper into the wood; so he determined to throw the reins upon his horse's head, and trust to his instinct, as he had often heard that travellers had done successfully, when they had wandered out of their road. He accordingly did so, and speaking cheerily to Saladin, allowed him to choose his own path: to his surprise his beautiful Arab left the track, and set off on what he concluded to be a short cut out of the forest. After about an hour, however, poor little Rudolph began to doubt the instinct of horses, for the aspect of every thing around him became wilder every moment; but, happily, the rain had ceased falling, and as far as he could judge from the occasional glimpse he got of the sky, it had cleared up. On went Saladin, and did not stop until they entered an open glade; when, as if his task were quite accomplished, he came to a dead halt. Rudolph alighted, and looked about him: all was so still and beautiful, that it had the effect of calming the agitation of his spirits, and filling his mind with an indescribable awe,—it looked pure and holy, as if the foot of man had never trod there, from the foundation of the world. The setting sun, at this moment, pierced through the clouds, tinting them with purple, crimson, and gold, and revealing the full beauty of the scene. Rudolph found himself in a circular opening, around which lofty trees, overgrown with moss and lichen, seemed planted as a wall of defence. As he approached, seeking to leave the spot, they tossed their long arms as if warning him away, and the thick darkness behind appeared to become denser, and to frown him back. A superstitious fear crept into his heart, and he turned his eyes to the sweet glade rejoicing in the sunlight, where all looked [Pg 38] smiling and inviting. In the centre, upon a gentle mound covered with a carpet of the softest, richest green, there towered a majestic oak, which had looked upward to the sky for centuries, while generation after generation of men had entered the world, had laughed and wept, grown old and died. It showed no signs of the decrepitude of age, and raised up its head proudly like the monarch of the forest; but a deep rent in its heart showed that decay was at work, and that the lofty tree would, one day, he laid low in the dust. Led by an irresistible impulse, Rudolph ascended the mound, and entered the little chamber in the oak. The boy was exhausted by fatigue and excitement, and, insensibly, his eyes closed, and his weary frame was wrapt in slumber.

And now a strange thing occurred. Whether he dreamed, or whether he waked, he scarcely knew; but delicious music stole through his soul, and he opened his eyes. The little woodland glen was steeped in soft moonlight; and, if it looked wonderful and beautiful when the sun shone upon it, how much more so now, when the very light was mysterious, and suggestive of something beyond! Around the mound there doated—for that word only can express their motion—like bright and fleecy clouds, a band of lovely beings, resembling none he had ever seen before. As he gazed upon them, he thought not of creatures of earthly mould, but of the most rapturous and fleeting sights and sounds of nature;—of the rainbow, spanning the sky after a storm; of the dashing cataract, descending in mist from stupendous heights; of the nightingale, singing in her hidden nest; of harmless sheet-lightning, suddenly revealing hills, domes, and castles in the clouds, then as suddenly dispelling the illusion. As he looked more closely, he found that, as with linked hands they glided round, their gossamer wings moving through the air waked up a melody [Pg 39] like that of the Eolian harp; while a few, standing apart, made silvery music by shaking instruments, which looked like spikes of bell-shaped flowers, and deeper tones were evolved from larger, single bells, struck with rays of light. As the bells swung to the breeze, and the cadence swelled and rose, a delicious fragrance of wild-flowers filled the air, and from the depths of the forest all animated creatures came forth to gaze upon the spectacle. The glow-worm crept there, but his tiny lamp was dimmed by brighter fairy eyes; the noisy cricket and the songsters of the grove hushed their notes, to listen to the harmony. The wolf and the bear drew near together, but laid aside their fierceness; the deer and the hare came forward fearlessly, under the influence of the potent spell. Suddenly, from a hollow in the oak, an owl with glaring eyes flew down: the music and the dance were hushed, and all listened to his voice. To his surprise, Rudolph found that he could understand the language of all animals, which had formerly seemed to him mere unmeaning sounds.

"Bright Fairy Queen, shall mortal dare
  On beauty gaze beyond compare;
  Shall one of earth unpunish'd see
  The mazes of your revelry?
That ancient oak, by your donation,
For years has been my habitation;
  And now a child usurps my right,
  Sleeping within its heart to-night;

Nor that alone, but dares to view
The mysteries of nature too.
And shall he go, unscath'd, away?
As Privy Counsellor, I say nay!
Else man will learn our secrets dread.
And higher raise his haughty head:
All nature soon would subject be,
Nor place be left us, on land or sea.
E'en now, prophetic, I see the day
When steam exerts resistless sway—
And iron monsters, with breath of flame,
Shall blot from earth the fairy name.
Then to the beasts that throng the wild,
Dread Queen, give up the intruding child!"

At this address, to which the wolves howled a dismal chorus of assent, all eyes were turned upon the chamber in the ancient oak, in which Rudolph sat, his heart quaking with terror at the thought of the fate before him. But a sweet voice, clear and piercing, spoke his name, and commanded him to descend, fearing nothing if his conscience was pure, and if he had not obtruded through vain curiosity upon the revels of the Queen of Fairy Land. Rudolph obeyed. The Queen was standing, with the ladies of her court ranged on either side. They all were beautiful, but she was like the brightness of the morning and the freshness of flowers. Dazzling loveliness distinguished her, and a dignity to which all paid obeisance. Upon her brow sparkled the evening star, her only diadem. She gazed mildly, yet searchingly, upon the boy, as if she read his very thoughts; and then she spoke: [Pg 40]

"'Tis true, wise Counsellor, that according to our laws of Fairy Realm, the child should die; and yet my heart yearns to the innocent, blue-eyed boy. Does no one have compassion upon him? Have none a plea to offer for his pardon? I solemnly declare that he shall be saved, were my very crown and life endangered, if but one act of kindness and mercy shown by him to weaker creatures, can be proved. For to the kind and merciful, mercy should ever be shown; this law stands higher than any judicial enactment."

As she spoke these words, a dove with gentle eyes and downy breast flew to her feet, and thus timidly offered her prayer: [Pg 41]

"I plead for mercy, gracious Queen,
I pray you to forgive!
And if my voice were silent now,
I were not fit to live.
One day, when absent from my nest,
A falcon, fierce and strong,
Seized me, all helpless to resist—
Soon would have ceased my song.
Just then, young Rudolph, brave and fair,
Perceived my urgent need;
He risk'd his life in saving mine—
And shall that kind heart bleed?"

"It shall not: he is saved; and you, gentle dove, ever wear this collar round your neck as a token of my approbation; it shall descend in your family to the latest generations." The Queen then touched Rudolph with her golden wand; an electric thrill passed through his frame, and he fell down senseless to the ground. When he awoke, he found himself lying upon a couch of purple and gold, in a superb crystal hall, whose pillars, sparkling with gems, rose upward to a lofty transparent dome of blue, through which the sun was shining brilliantly. Over him bent the Fairy Queen, radiant in beauty, and eying him with indescribable tenderness. At last she spoke, kindly caressing him: "My son, you are now in my dwelling, where no harm shall befall you; fear nothing. Here you shall live forever, in splendor and happiness; your every wish shall be gratified; no more scorching suns, no more dark and gloomy days for you—all shall be joy, unvaried pleasure, eternal youth and health. One solitary restriction I must lay upon you, but that is positive; on no account shed a tear, for on that day when you weep, you must return to earth—even my power could not keep you here. Tears must never sully the palace of the Fairy Queen. But why should you weep? I myself will take care of you, teach you, be a mother to you: when you feel a desire, mention it to me, and it is already accomplished." [Pg 42]

With ardent gratitude and passionate love and admiration, Rudolph embraced the beautiful Queen, and said, "Is this really true? and is this splendid place to be my own home?" "It really is; I have adopted you for my son. It is my intention to educate you myself." "How very good of you! how I love you! And my papa and mamma, and dear little Bertha, can they live here too? And may Bruno, and Saladin, and old Fritz come too?" "Oh no, little Rudolph, you must not talk about those other people; they belong to the earth—let them stay there. You must forget about that old home of yours, for all that has passed away; your home is with me, in Fairy Land. It is much more beautiful here; there is nothing on earth that can compare with it. I will show you such splendid things! I will teach you how to paint the flowers, and to make diamonds, and emeralds, and pearls. You shall see me mix the rainbow, and scatter the dew upon the flowers at night. I have a thousand pretty things I want to teach you: do you not wish to learn them?" "Oh, very much

indeed! I should like to do such things; I love dearly to work: mamma often lets me water her flowers with a little watering-pot; is that the way you scatter the dew?" "Child, child! How ignorant he is! But under my tuition he will soon learn to understand the mysteries of nature. On earth, children are so mismanaged—no wonder they become the sort of men they do. My Rudolph shall be different; he shall hear no silly nursery tales, shall waste no time in learning exploded nonsense, but shall early become acquainted with *things*, and shall learn to value science. I quite long to begin! It is a grand experiment; the work of education is a noble one. And when he is a [Pg 43] man, and has become under my teaching a perfect specimen of what a man should be, what then? Shall I let him return to earth? It is time enough yet to think of that." "May I go now, and play, pretty lady? You are not talking to me." "True, I forgot myself; come with me, Rudolph, and I will show you through my palace and pleasure-grounds: recollect that you are now my son."

What words can describe the sights of beauty that awaited him? All spectacles that could enchant the eye, all melodies that could ravish the ear, were collected together, in infinite variety. Nothing that was exquisite upon earth was unrepresented; but the grossness and the imperfection which will cleave to every thing earthly, was left out. It was the very palace of delights. And nothing faded here—the flowers were ever-blooming, and if picked, were instantly replaced by fairer blossoms. Delicious fruit, ever ripe, but never decaying, hung from the boughs; streams of milk, wine, sherbet, and other delicious drinks, trickled from the rocks into marble basins, and gold cups were suspended near, to invite the thirsty to partake; while pure, sparkling water rose high into the air, as if ambitious to greet the kindred clouds, and then fell into large receptacles, fashioned out of one pearl, emerald, or ruby. The pleasure-grounds were separated from the gross outer world by a thick and lofty wall of evergreens, impervious to mortals, which forbade both ingress and egress: at least, Rudolph's eyes could see no mode of exit. But what could be wished for beyond? It was a paradise!

Rudolph was allowed to roam undisturbed through the splendid saloons, vast halls, and pillared galleries of the palace, where at every step he saw some new subject of wonder. No treasure-house of princes could for one moment compare with the wealth and grandeur here exhibited, and the Fairy Queen informed him that all should be his, when by knowledge he had earned a [Pg 44] title to it—it should be the reward of his application to the noble studies to which she wished to introduce him. "I would do a good deal to get all these beautiful things: I hope the lessons are not very hard, for I never did like to study. I love play a great deal better." "But play is only meant for babies and kittens, Rudolph: it is unworthy of a being who can think. I know you have great talents, and I am the one to develop them. I mean to teach you mineralogy and chemistry, natural philosophy and history, astronomy and geology, botany and geometry. You shall be wise, and shall learn to look beyond the surface of things into their natures and constituent parts. You shall know *why* every thing was made just as it is, and shall understand the exact proportions of all things to each other, and to the universe, so that the whole system goes on in perfect and beautiful harmony. You shall learn the balancings of the clouds, and the potent spell which keeps the sun in its place, and makes the moon circle round the world. You shall go with me into the dark caverns of the earth, and see how rocks and metals are made in nature's forging shop. You shall witness the operation of the subterranean forces which have altered the whole aspect of this planet, and thrown up the lofty mountains, and tossed out from the treasury below the varied wealth it held, making the world both beautiful and rich. And I will show you ancient creatures, more huge than whales, which once frolicked on the earth, before man was made: oh, I have a thousand wonders to point out to you, and a great deal to teach." "Thank you; you are very good. But indeed it sounds very hard, and I don't like such things at all. I'd much rather play ball."

"Silly child!" thought the Fairy Queen, "he has been too long perverted by the trifling ways of [Pg 45] man: I should have taken him younger. I see that I cannot at once indoctrinate him into the arcana of nature; I must gradually lead him on, as if in play. Good! a bright idea! that must be the right way to educate frivolous, frolicksome childhood. Science in sport! excellent. Yes, I'll teach him the vocabularies in rhyme, and set them to lively music—that will do; he'll like it nearly as well as if it were nonsense. I'll lead him on to the knowledge of principles, by means of beautiful experiments: he'll think I am amusing him, when I am gravely in earnest in the work of instruction. I will set rewards before him, to impel him onward: I will excite his curiosity, and make it a favor to gratify it; and then the boy will swallow knowledge as if it were cake."

"Come with me, Rudolph, I have something pretty to show you." "That I will: I love to see pretty things, dear lady." "Call me mamma, Rudolph: you are now my son." "Indeed I cannot: nobody is mamma but my own dear mamma who loves me so—oh, I do *so* wish I could see her!" "Hush, child, that's silly. Now keep very quiet in this dark room, and you'll see something. What is this I hold in my hand?" "A great glass jar, like one of mamma's preserve jars, only much larger." "Do you see any thing in it?" "Yes, ma'am, ever so much iron wire twisted round and round." "Is there any thing else in the jar?" "Nothing at all." "Nothing you can see, but there is a kind of gas we call oxygen, which will burn when I put in a lighted piece of stick, very carefully. Look!" "Oh, beautiful, beautiful! how the wire burns! only look at the sparks! that is very pretty indeed, ma'am. Now it has all burnt out—what a pity!" "Now, Rudolph, I want to tell you about it. You must know that the air we breathe is made up of this oxygen, of nitrogen, a very little carbonic [Pg 46] acid gas, and a small quantity of water. If the oxygen was taken out of the air, you could not live for one moment: I'll show you. You see this jar? It is full of nitrogen—of air with the oxygen taken out." "But what are you putting into it? A little mouse, I declare!" "Yes: but you see it dies instantly; it cannot live because there is no oxygen in the air." "Poor little mouse, how I wish you had not killed it! It is a shame! If *I* did such a cruel thing, my mamma would punish me." "Don't talk so, child! it's silly. The mouse died without any pain, and if one principle of science is fixed in

your head, it is well worth the sacrifice of its insignificant life. There will be less cheese eaten in the world—that's all. Now, do you understand about oxygen and nitrogen, which chiefly make up the atmospheric air?" "I know that oxygen made the wire burn beautifully, and I know that horrid nitrogen killed the poor little mouse; but I don't half believe that they are in the air I breathe. I like to see pretty experiments, but I do hate explanations. Now will you let me fly a kite?" "Yes; come out into the open air—remember it is composed of oxygen and nitrogen—and I'll make you a kite."

So saying, she led him into the gardens, and waving her wand over a piece of birch bark, behold three splendid kites! The larger one resembled an eagle, and as it mounted into the air, and its light wings flapped in the wind, it seemed about to pounce upon the two smaller kites, which were in shape like pigeons. Rudolph was enchanted, and clapped his hands with glee. After allowing him to enjoy the novelty for some time, the Fairy said to him, "To-morrow I will show you another kite, more wonderful than these. I will make it so, that it will draw down the electricity from the sky. Have you ever rubbed a cat's fur the wrong way, in the dark?" "Oh, that I [Pg 47] have! it's great fun. There's our black cat, at home, I have often done it to her, and I can see the sparks in cold weather." "Well, that is electricity, and there is electricity in every thing, only some objects have more than others. When you see the sparks, it is the electricity leaving a thing which is overcharged with it, for another which has less, to keep up a balance. The lightning is nothing but electricity, and to-morrow I'll make a storm, to show you how to draw down this subtle element from the clouds." "Oh, don't trouble yourself! I like this kind of kite well enough: if I have to learn about that old electricity, I'd rather give up playing kite."

"Rudolph, would you like to play at soap-bubbles?" "That I would! How I wish Bertha was here—wouldn't she clap her hands and jump, as the large bubbles fly up into the air!" "I do not wish you to think about little Bertha. Here are your basin of soapsuds and your golden pipe; now blow away, my boy!" "Oh, how very pretty! Do you see that big fellow, how he shines in the sun, and shows all the colors of the rainbow? Isn't it fine?" "That is the very thing I want to tell you about. The sun, shining upon vapor and falling water, makes all these beautiful colors. That is the way I mix the rainbow. The science which teaches about the rays of light, their reflection and refraction, and the coloring they give to different objects, is called Optics: it is an interesting study, and I wish you to be a proficient in it." "Optics, is it? That seems to me very different from blowing soap-bubbles. I do hate to be cheated into learning big words, and understanding things, when I am playing."

"The child has no brains for science, I fear!" thought the fairy. "I almost repent my bargain! However, I will not be discouraged quite yet, perhaps the proper chord has not been struck." [Pg 48] Accordingly, she invented for him various pretty toys, since then copied by men: the kaleidoscope, with its infinite variety of shifting figures; the orrery; the prism; the burning-glass; the microscope and the telescope; and the magic lantern, with its vast variety of entertainment. Another magic spell she put into operation, by which, with the aid of an instrument in a little square box, the sun was compelled to paint landscapes and portraits, so true to life that they seemed only to lack motion. Rudolph was very happy, playing with these beautiful and ingenious toys: he thought them more entertaining than marbles, or battledore and shuttle-cock. But when the *rationale* came to be explained, his preceptress found her labor was all lost—there was no mistaking the fact that the child had an invincible dislike to science.

"I believe I see my mistake," thought the unconquerable Fairy. "I began at the wrong end. Children *feel* before they *think*. I must elevate his fancy, and train his imagination by communion with forms of beauty. I see that he cannot yet penetrate into the reason of things around him; but he can feel the power of the external, and when his nature is sufficiently exalted and matured, then he will of his own accord seek knowledge. Yes, sentiment comes first, and reflection will follow in its train."

Accordingly, the Fairy Queen commenced his poetical training, and for some time she flattered herself that it advanced charmingly. As the attraction of novelty had worn off from her extensive pleasure-grounds, she caused the landscape daily to change, so that all the beauties, scattered over the wide earth, were in succession placed before him. At one time, the lofty Alps rose to the sky, filling his soul with the sense of the sublime; and the chamois, with fleet foot, climbed their [Pg 49] snowy pinnacles; while the deep, frowning precipices and the dark valleys gave him a sensation of terror, not unmingled with pleasure. Suddenly the scene would change, and he stood upon an island of the Pacific, a little emerald gem of the ocean. Around the coral reefs the waves lashed themselves into fury, and the white surf flew upward; but one little opening admitted the water gently into a quiet bay, where the deep blue rivalled that of the sky, and the water-birds swam in peace. The cocoa-nut, the plantain, and the banana spread their broad leaves to the sun, and flowers of brilliant hues and exquisite fragrance enlivened the landscape. Behind, there uprose tall cliffs covered with the richest foliage, and cascades, like silver threads, dashed downward to the sea. Again the spectacle changed, and Vesuvius appeared in flames, reddening the sky, and paling the moon; floods of lava rolled down, and rocks and ashes were tossed aloft. It seemed as if evil spirits were sporting beneath, and the mountain shook in agony. In the distance, peacefully slept the city of Naples, and that broad and beautiful bay, the admiration of the world. These objects, however, did not last. Rudolph soon lingered among sweet-scented orange groves, and plucked the golden fruit by the light of the moon, and rejoiced in perfect beauty; or wandered off into a magnolia forest, where the huge white flowers shone forth among the dark glistening leaves, and the air was heavy with fragrance. Or he paddled his small canoe among the waters of the Amazon, and saw those magnificent water-lilies, on one of whose round green leaves, with

up-turned edges, he could float with perfect safety; while the brilliant tropical birds flew around, and monkeys climbed the tall trees, which were festooned with vines of luxuriant growth. Again did the scene vary—and Niagara thundered down its cliffs, filling his heart with delighted awe; [Pg 50] resistless and changeless, rolled it then, when the deer wandered undisturbed upon its shores, as now, when thousands of visitors marvel at its grandeur, and feel the infinitude of nature and the insignificance of man.

One day the Rhine was presented to his view—its vine-clad hills, its frowning castles, its romantic scenery, and the happy peasants coming from the vintage, with songs of rejoicing. But this struck a chord untouched before. It brought up home and homely pleasures with a force and vividness that made the boy, in the midst of all sensual delights, feel a sudden sickness of the heart, a longing for the fireside, and for the every-day occupations from which he had been snatched. He thought of his father and mother, so kind and good; of merry little Bertha, ever so pleased to frolic with him—and he almost felt her chubby arm around his neck; he remembered old Fritz, and his rides upon Saladin, with his arched neck and flowing mane. He thought of the ancient hall, in which he had played such mad pranks with Bruno—even the black cat came in for a portion of his regret. And never, never more was he to behold these objects of his love! So feels the Swiss, when in a foreign land, when breathing the balmy air of Italy, or wandering amid the gayeties of Paris, he hears the Ranz des Vaches; the simple notes recall the Alpine home, the mother and the friends: he sickens and dies.

Rudolph's sad countenance soon attracted the notice of his kind protectress, who eagerly asked what she could do to promote his happiness. He told his trouble, and especially dwelt upon his loneliness; he longed to see his papa and mamma, and little Bertha; and he wanted companions of his own age—human children, with whom he could laugh and play, whom he could toss in the [Pg 51] snow in winter, and with whom he could rove the fields in summer, picking the flowers and chasing the butterflies. The Fairy Queen shook her head: "You ask an impossibility, Rudolph; my very existence was endangered by bringing you here, and how can I convey other mortals to the crystal palace, the inner temple of nature? It cannot be—however, now I think of a plan; yes, to-morrow you shall have your wish, only you must smile and be happy once more, Rudolph."

On the morrow, with the early dawn, a troop of merry, rosy children awaited his waking: how soon they were friends! children, and child-like hearts, are not long in knowing each other. They were all pretty, but different, both in appearance and disposition; they were crowned with flowers and green leaves, of various sorts. "What funny names you have!" said Rudolph, as they introduced themselves. "Yes; but we did not name ourselves," they replied; "it is not our fault if we have hard names—you'll soon learn them." And so he did: there was Cochlearia, a sharp-witted girl, who made rather biting speeches occasionally; there was Daucus, a red-headed youngster, and Raphanus, a pretty child of brilliant complexion, crowned with violet-colored flowers; there was Brassica, and Zea, and Maranta, and Capsicum, a fiery fellow, and Nasturtium, crowned with bright orange-flowers, and a great many others. Rudolph liked most of them very much, but his especial favorites were little Solanum and Farinacea, brother and sister, both crowned with blue flowers. He thought they were so good, he could never get tired of them; perhaps Brassica and Zea were sweeter, and Raphanus was more piquant, but these two friends of his could never cloy his taste; he should always love them. As for Cochlearia, he could not abide her: she was so pert. Several times she came near disturbing the harmony of the little band [Pg 52] by her speeches: she reproached Daucus with his carroty head, and told Capsicum that his temper was too hot, and called Nasturtium only a weedy fellow, after all. Hereupon, Solanum, who was a very amiable soul, told her she was enough to bring tears into anybody's eyes; and at that, she turned round, and informed him that he was such a mealy-mouthed fellow, he was no judge at all. At last Rudolph was obliged to tell her that he had never known a child whose society he relished so little, and that he would be compelled to complain of her, unless she went away; accordingly she did so, and then they enjoyed uninterrupted peace. How happy was that day! how varied the amusements! what joyful shouts! what heart-felt laughter! Rudolph, long debarred from the company of other children, was almost out of his wits with excitement.

But the sun now approached the west, and with one accord they hastened away, notwithstanding all his entreaties. "Why must they go? They could sleep with him; there was plenty of room in the palace; they should not leave." "They would return to-morrow, but now they must go; before the sun set—good-by, good-by." "You shall *not* go," cried Rudolph, seizing hold of Solanum and Farinacea, who struggled hard to evade him, while their companions swiftly passed them, and vanished through a little postern gate he had never seen before, into the forest beyond. "Why should you want to go? Do you not love me?" said Rudolph, as the two struggled yet more earnestly to escape his grasp. "I assure you we *have* hearts, but we cannot now stay," was all they could utter, for at that moment the sun sank below the horizon, and the beautiful children vanished from his sight: in their place, there fell to the ground—two potatoes! Scarcely believing [Pg 53] his eyes, he quickly opened the little gate, calling to his friends to return; but no voice replied, and no children were to be seen. Instead, scattered about upon the ground, were radishes, carrots, turnips, parsneps, cabbages—all that remained of his playmates. The disappointed child burst into a fit of passionate weeping. Was all deception, illusion? Was there nothing real, naught to satisfy the heart? Was he ever to be alone, consumed by vain longings for affection he was destined never to receive? What did *he* care for all that beauty and grandeur—one heart-given human kiss was worth it all.

The child was still sobbing bitterly when the Fairy Queen drew near. Her starry crown was dim, like the evening star seen through a mist; the sparkle had gone out of her eye and her face. She

was sad, for she knew that she must lose her little protégé; she was vexed, for she had been completely baffled. "And cannot I make you happy?" she said. "Is all the power, and the grandeur, and the wisdom, and the beauty you see in Fairy Land, insufficient to satisfy that foolish heart of yours? Silly boy! he longs for human love. Go then—even if I *could* keep you, I think I scarcely would; I can teach you nothing." "And may I really go? Go to my own dear, sweet mamma? Oh, how happy I am!" "You little ungrateful wretch! is that all the thanks I get for the pains I have taken to make a man of you?" "Of course you are very good: but indeed I always told you I wanted to remain a little boy." "Out of my sight!" said she, stamping her tiny foot upon the rock on which she was standing—sympathizing with her passion, it threw out sparks, which hardened into diamonds when they cooled. "My experiment has proved a signal failure; I see a child will be a child, in spite of all the charms of science: if ever I take another—if ever I try again to bring up [Pg 54] a philosopher, may I lose my crown!"

Rudolph, affrighted, had run through the little gate, which immediately closed behind him. He looked around; the scene was strangely familiar. He found himself at the border of a wood, in a place where three roads crossed. "It was there," thought he, "that, a year or two ago, I dashed into the forest on Saladin, and got lost: and since then I have been in Fairy Land." At that moment he lifted up his eyes, and saw old Fritz approach, leading Saladin; he ran forward to meet him, and Fritz, on his part, seemed overjoyed at seeing his young master. "You dear old soul! how glad I am to see you! Why, you don't look a day older than when we parted!" "It would be queer if I did, as we only parted company an hour ago, when you rode off and left your poor old Fritz. How you have frightened me! I thought you had gone home the nearest way, and rode there to see: but no, you were not at the castle. So I came back again, very much worried about you on account of the shower that came up so suddenly, and met your horse, quite near the wood. I'm glad to find you at last!" "Is it possible it was only an hour ago? I can hardly believe it." "Oh yes, no more, though it has seemed longer to me, I have been so anxious." Rudolph laughed. "I do believe I have been asleep! and I have had the funniest dream! Do you know, I thought I was in Fairy Land? It was all so sweet, and so grand, and learned, and tiresome—Oh, I am glad it was only a dream. I did want so much to get home again, and have some fun."

"How could he wish to leave such a charming place, where there was every thing that was lovely [Pg 55] on earth?" cried Gertrude. "I think he had very little taste."

"There was all there," said Aunt Lucy, "but the very things he wanted—his father and mother, his playmates, kind old Fritz, and his horse and dog—not to speak of a very important thing in a boy's eyes, liberty to play without being pestered with continual lectures."

"I think your Fairy Queen has a tart temper of her own, sister Ellen," said Tom. "When she was rating the poor little fellow for ingratitude, I thought of that passage in Virgil, where the rage of the gods is spoken of—'Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ!'"

"Do translate, for the benefit of the unlearned. It is so *mannish* to quote Latin," said Cornelia.

"'Can such anger dwell in celestial souls?' You see I am all obedience," answered Tom.

"You should remember, my dear critic, that fairies never yet claimed to be perfect beings. They are very far from being angels, and are decidedly of the earth, earthy. You know that the inferior specimens of the race—the vulgar fairies—delight in playing tricks upon careless housekeepers, spilling their cream and spoiling their butter: that is not very angelic, I'm sure. Of course, the Queen would be too dignified and too spiritual for such frolics; but she could not understand much about human nature, or child-nature, and especially she would think the affections to be great nonsense. But she has bought her experience now, with Rudolph."

"One comfort is, that she does not intend to take another child to educate—she has had enough!" said Amy. [Pg 56]

"She could not, if she would," replied Mary. "I think the day has now come, foreseen by the prophetic owl,

> 'When iron monsters, with breath of flame,
> Shall blot from earth the fairy name.'"

"Steam engines and locomotives?" said Louis.

"Nothing else," replied Ellen. "I do not doubt in the least that the whole of that Fairy Wood has been carefully surveyed and graded, and iron tracks run directly through the palace itself."

"Oh what a shame!" cried Harry.

"'Tis very sad, indeed, to have all romance spoiled in this way," said Mrs. Wyndham. "But we have a modern substitute for the magic of Elfdom—this very steam-engine, which works such wonders; the electric telegraph, which beats time itself, making news depart from Philadelphia for St. Louis, and reach its destination an hour before it started, if you may believe the clock. And some of those toys, originally invented by the Fairy Queen, if we may credit Ellen—the telescope, bringing down the moon so near to you, that you feel inclined to take a long step, and place yourself in another planet—and photography, which enables you in one moment to possess upon metal or paper an exact fac-simile of your friend. If these things do not surpass all we read of in Fairy Land, I know nothing about it."

"I have one very serious objection to your Fairy Queen, Cousin Ellen," said Charlie Bolton, trying to keep a long, sober face.

"What is that? Poor Queen, how she is criticised! If she were here, she would show her temper now, I think!"

"She is such a horrid *blue*. It's all very well for her to dance, and mix the rainbow, and sprinkle the dew upon her flowers, and wear the evening star on her forehead, if she does not find its [Pg 57] weight oppressive—that's all feminine enough. But when she tries to come over us as an *esprit fort*—a strong-minded woman—it's rather too much. Oxygen and hydrogen, and all the *ologies*—I never can stand that sort of thing in a woman."

"Just as if we had not a right to knowledge as well as the lords of the creation! And besides, I want to know, Master Charlie, which is the most disgusting—for a woman to lisp learning, or for a man to talk politics, as the creatures will do!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon—I very humbly retract, my dear Coz. I must use the words of that sensible 'Coon, who has earned immortality by meeting his death like a philosopher—'Is that you, Captain Scott?' 'Yes.' 'Then you need not fire—don't take the trouble to raise your rifle—if it's you, Captain Scott, I might as well come down.' So, if it's you, Miss Cornelia Wyndham, you can spare your shot, for I'll come down at once;—I would rather face the Woman's Rights' Convention, in full conclave assembled, than my Cousin Cornelia, when she stands up for the rights of her sex to be pedantic and disagreeable!"

"I was quite amused at the Queen's experiments in education," said Mr. Wyndham. "She is not the only one who has tried to force knowledge upon unwilling minds, and to develop children as we would spring peas and asparagus, by subjecting them to hot-house stimulants. These fancy methods of training the young idea do not appear to succeed very well; to see some of the cards used in infant schools, and to read occasional school advertisements, you would deem it quite impossible that any dunces could escape the elevating processes now applied to the unfortunate little ones—yet, happily, the constitutions of most children are very elastic, and there are not as [Pg 58] many instances of dropsy on the brain as we might expect."

"I wonder the Fairy did not take a hint from the bees," remarked Mary.

"How is that? Have they any particular mode of training?"

"Very much so: when they want to rear up a sovereign who shall be fitted to govern the hive with wisdom, they take any one of their hundred little grubs at random, and put it under tutors and governors. These cram it, not with lectures on political economy, books on international law, or any thing of that sort, but with food much more to its taste—the very best honey, and a kind of *royal food*, which I suppose it is considered high treason for a subject to touch. Day by day, the grub becomes more and more the princess, and finally expands into queenly magnificence, when, of course, she must have a hive of her own, or do as Dido of Tyre—colonize, and found a Carthage."

"Quite amusing! But is it true?"

"Yes, actually; and if only some such process could be applied to children, would it not save trouble?"

"And wouldn't we like it!" cried George Wyndham, "Ah, but I'd make a bonfire of my Euclid and Virgil, and all the other worthies, or bury them, as the fellows do yearly at Yale College—I had much rather be fed with some essence of knowledge, like the bees."

"This talk about fancy modes of mental culture," remarked Mr. Wyndham, "reminds me of a Life I lately read of Mr. Day, the author of that delightful book, Sandford and Merton. He was a remarkably benevolent and excellent man, but visionary, and had some peculiar crotchets about education. When quite a young man, he took charge of two poor, pretty orphan girls, and had [Pg 59] them trained up in accordance with his own ideas, intending to make one of them his wife. Both grew to be fine women, but to spoil the romance, fell in love with other men! so that he enjoyed the pleasure of sedulously educating good wives for two worthy tradesmen, and being left in the lurch himself. A second experiment turned out yet worse, for it cost him his life: he had doubtless had enough of girls, so he took another animal, which he thought might be tamer and more tractable—a horse. He would not allow it to be broken in the usual method, which he considered very cruel: he would talk to it, caress it, make it his friend, win it by kindness. But unfortunately for his experiment, the horse killed him, by a kick, I believe, before it had succeeded."

"Poor Day! Uncle, you remind me of the cow that the man wanted to train so as to consider eating a superfluity—she was coming on admirably, but unfortunately for the full success of the experiment, she perversely died, the very day her owner had reduced her to one straw."

"How very unlucky!"

"Aunt Lucy," said Alice, "when Ellen gave us the Queen's theorizing in education, I could not help thinking of the old saw, 'Bachelors' wives and old maids' bairns are always the best guided.' It's very easy to manage *dream* children; but when you come to real flesh and blood, it's quite another matter. It does not appear to me that all this systematizing and speculation does much good."

"Not a bit of it," cried George Wyndham. "We boys must be boys to the end of the chapter; and I tell you, some of us are pretty tough subjects! The only hope is that we may turn out not quite so horrid, when we grow up." [Pg 60]

"I once heard a plan proposed for getting rid of boys of your age, brother George," said Cornelia.

"Much obliged; what was that?"

"To bury them at seven, and dig them out at seventeen; how do you like it?"

"'Tis a bad plan. There would be nobody left in the world to run errands for older sisters—it would never do."

"When little Rudolph was so fond of his vegetable friends," said Mary, "and found them so good, so sweet, so much to his taste, I thought of an account I had somewhere read, written, I think, by the witty Sydney Smith, of a conversation a new missionary in the South Sea islands held about his predecessor, who had been eaten by the cannibals. He asked the natives if they had known him—we will call him Mr. Brown, as it's rather fabulous. 'Mr. Brown? Oh yes! very good man—Mr. Brown! very good.' 'And did you know his family?' 'Oh yes! such sweet little children! so nice and tender! But Mrs. Brown was a bad woman—she was *so very tough*.' She was not to their taste."

"But, Cousin Ellen," said Amy, "I want to know about those vegetable friends of Rudolph. I know that Capsicum is a kind of pepper, and I have often met Nasturtium, crowned with his orange-flowers; I suppose, of course, that Solanum and Farinacea are potatoes—but who is that sharp Cochlearia, who told Solanum he was a mealy-mouthed fellow?"

"Horse-radish—which Solanum thought enough to bring tears into anybody's eyes."

"And Daucus—was he a carrot?"

"Yes; and Raphanus, with his brilliant complexion, was a radish. Maranta was arrow-root, Zea was Indian corn, and Brassica, a turnip—we often enjoy their society at table." [Pg 61]

"I shall always think of Cochlearia when I eat horse-radish on my beef," said Charlie Bolton. "Especially when I take too much, by mistake."

"And when I find, to my sorrow, that potatoes have hearts I shall think of Solanum."

CHAPTER III. [Pg 62]

THE RHYMING GAME.—ORIKAMA, OR THE WHITE WATER LILY, AN INDIAN TALE.

Great was the chagrin of our young party on the following morning, to find that a storm had set in, giving no prospect of amusements out of doors for the day: the rain came down in a determined manner, as if it had no intention of clearing up for a week, and the winds whistled and scolded in every variety of note; even the boys, who prided themselves upon a manly contempt for wind and weather, agreed that the chimney corner was the best place under the circumstances, and that they must try to make themselves as agreeable as possible at home. Cornelia quoted, for the benefit of the rest, a receipt she had somewhere met with for the "manufacture of sunshine," which she thought would be especially valuable on such a darksome day: "Take a good handful of industry, mix it thoroughly with family love, and season well with good-nature and mutual forbearance. Gradually stir in smiles, and jokes, and laughter, to make it light, but take care these ingredients do not run over, or it will make a cloud instead of what you wish. Follow this receipt carefully, and you have an excellent supply of sunshine, warranted to keep in all weathers."

Accordingly, it was resolved to make sunshine, and Aunt Lucy offered to provide the industry, if they would furnish the other materials. Soon were heaps of flannel and other stout fabrics produced from her "Dorcas closet," as she called it, in which her provisions for the poor were laid up, in nice order; for even in our happy land does it hold true that "the poor ye have always with you, and whensoever ye *will* ye may do them good," and kind Aunt Lucy was not one to neglect this duty. On the day preceding Christmas, according to her principle of making as many happy as possible, she had ordered a barrel of flour to be baked into cakes and pies, and had distributed them, along with a turkey and a bushel of potatoes to each, among all the poor families of the neighborhood; and this was only one specimen of the numerous kindly acts by which she drew together the hearts of all around her, and made them realize the Christian brotherhood of man. Where there were children, she made them happy by the present of a few penny toys; a very cheap investment, yielding a large return of rapture! She could never deny herself the pleasure of giving these little offerings of love with her own hands, and wishing her poor neighbors a "Happy Christmas;" and on this occasion she had learnt the destitution of a poor widow, who struggled hard to support her young family and to maintain a decent appearance, but who was now laid up with sickness, and unable to provide clothing and fuel for herself and her little ones. Mr. Wyndham had immediately sent her a load of wood, and his wife was now anxious to furnish the necessary garments. The young girls were rejoiced to aid in the good work, and soon all [Pg 63]

fingers were busy, and needles were in swift operation; while the boys took turns in the entertainment of the sewers, by alternately reading aloud from a pleasant book. Tom Green was an excellent reader; his agreeable tones of voice made it a pleasure to listen to him, and his clear articulation and varied expression added greatly to the interest of the narrative. Why is it that this desirable accomplishment, which promotes so much the happiness of the home circle, is not more cultivated? [Pg 64]

After dinner, Charlie Bolton proposed some games, as he said that quite enough of industry and gravity had been put into the preparation, and he feared the sunshine would not be properly made without the smiles, jokes, and laughter spoken of in the receipt. "How do those lines of Milton run, Ellen, in L'Allegro? my favorite piece—before the old fellow got to be so very sublime, as he is in the Paradise Lost."

"You irreverent jackanapes! to speak so of the immortal bard! I suppose you mean,

'But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In Heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing mirth;
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek:
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter, holding both his sides.'"

"That is the passage I mean, and that is the very company I should like to invite, if the rest have no objection."

All approved of the suggestion, and soon the whole party was busily engaged in various lively games, "Graces," "Battledore and Shuttlecock," "Hunt the Slipper," etc., which combined bodily exercise with healthful excitement of the mirthful organs, which some philosophers assert to be, after all, the distinguishing trait of mankind. Some call man a "thinking animal," but this is so self-evident a slander upon the great majority of the species, that no words are needed to refute it: one attempted to define him as "a biped without feathers," but when a plucked fowl was [Pg 65] brought forward as a specimen of his man, he was obliged to give up that definition. Others again describe him as "a cooking animal," but while dogs can act as turnspits, and monkeys can roast chestnuts, he cannot claim this lofty epithet as peculiarly his own; besides, some savages have been found so degraded as to be unacquainted with the use of fire. But wherever man is found, whether under the heats of an African sun, or shivering in the cold of a Lapland winter, upon the steppes of Tartary, or the pampas of South America, his joyful laughter shows that he is a man, intended for social life and for happiness. 'Tis true, we read of the *hyena laugh*, but we protest against such a misapplication of terms: the fierce, mocking yell of that ferocious creature has nothing in common with hearty, genial, human laughter: other animals can weep, but man alone can laugh. And how great a refreshment is it! It relieves the overtasked brain, and the heart laden with cares; it makes the blood dance in the veins of youth, and gives a new impetus to the spirits; work goes on more briskly, when a gay heart sets the active powers in motion. Well did the Wise King say, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine:" it keeps off gray hairs and wrinkles, better than any cosmetic that ever was invented. The ancient Greeks realized its value, when they placed a jester in the society of their gods upon Olympus: as their deities were clothed with human attributes, they did not omit to provide for their amusement.

The young ladies were not too dignified and fastidious, nor Aunt Lucy too wise to join in the sports, and the old lady's spectacles and cap did not feel at all insulted when the handkerchief was tied round them in "Blind Man's Buff," and the hall rang with the jocund shouts of the children, whose greater activity eluded her grasp. When even the youngest acknowledged that [Pg 66] they had enjoyed enough romping for one day, Mary proposed a new amusement of a quieter character, which she had just heard of, entitled "the Rhyming Game." As it was found very pleasant, I will give a specimen, that the reader may try it of a winter's evening. One person thinks of a word, but instead of naming it, mentions another with which it rhymes; the next thinks of another rhyme, which is to be *described*, not spoken, and then the leader of the game, guessing from the description what word is meant, says it is, or it is not, such a thing. And so all round the circle.

"I've thought of a word that rhymes with *sat*," said Mary.

"Is it that sly animal of the tiger species which is domesticated by man, and delights to steal the cream and to torture poor little mice?" said Amy.

"No, it is not a *cat*."

"Is it that useful article which covers the floor in summer, that is on the dinner-table every day in the year, and may be seen behind or before almost every front door?" said Cornelia.

"No, it is not a *mat*."

"Is it that nondescript winged quadruped, something like a bird, something like a mouse, something like a kangaroo, which troubles us sometimes of a summer's evening, by flying about

the room and entangling itself in our hair?" said Ellen.

"No, it is not a *bat*."

"Is it that other agreeable creature, which infests old houses, but is prudent enough to leave them when they begin to fall down: that is very voracious, and sometimes eats babies' noses off?" said Tom.

"No, it is not a *rat*." [Pg 67]

"Is it a very gentle slap, indicative of love?"

"No, it is not a *pat*."

"Is it one of the wooden pieces of which blinds are composed?"

"No, it is not a *slat*."

"Is it a manly covering for the head?"

"No, it is not a *hat*."

"Is it that word sometimes applied to a disagreeable child?"

"No, it is not a *brat*."

"Is it the opposite of leanness?"

"No, it is not *fat*."

"Is it that covering for the head occasionally worn by young misses, and also a frequent quality of their conversation?" said Charlie Bolton.

"No, insulting sir, it is *not* a *flat*."

"Is it that amiable insect, so anxious to discover whether all are made of the same blood, which pays such particular attention to visitors among pine forests?"

"No, it is not a *gnat*."

"Is it a large receptacle used in the brewery and tannery?"

"No, it is not a *vat*."

"Is it an ornamental way of dressing the hair?" said Gertrude.

"Yes, it is a *plait*. Now it's your turn, Gertrude."

"I've thought of a word that rhymes with *rock*."

"Is it an important part of woman's attire?"

"No, it is not a *frock*."

"Is it an article of infants' clothing?"

"No, it is not a *sock*."

"Is it the thing that brokers buy and sell?"

"No, it is not *stock*." [Pg 68]

"Is it a common weed, and also the place where ships are built?"

"No, it is not a *dock*."

"Is it a collection of sheep?"

"No, it's not a *flock*."

"Is it a German wine, highly prized by connoisseurs?"

"No, it is not *hock*."

"Is it a rap at the door?"

"No, it is not *knock*."

"Is it a curious instrument that has hands, but no eyes or ears, and that always weighs its actions, but never does any thing but reprove other people's laziness?"

"No, it is not a *clock*."

"Is it that word, which followed by head, shows what we all are, for not guessing it sooner?"

"Yes, you are right, it is a *block*."

In the evening, Mary was appointed by general consent to tell that eagerly-desired Indian story.

"And mind you give us scalping enough," said Charlie Bolton; "I'm a little afraid you are too

tender-hearted to give your story the proper dramatic effect. It's worth nothing unless there is a great deal of blood spilt, and a whole string of scalps."

"Horrible, Charlie! how can you bear such things! However, I needn't be afraid, if Cousin Mary is to tell the tale," said Amy.

"How can I possibly please the taste of both?" replied Mary; "I plainly see that only one way is left for me; to suit myself—so, if you'll excuse me, that's the thing I'll do."

"We'll be compelled to excuse you, I suppose," said Charlie with a shrug: "well, go on then, and be as merciful as your weak woman's nature compels you to be." [Pg 69]

Accordingly, with this encouraging permission, Mary began her story, which she called

Orikama, or the White Water-Lily:

AN INDIAN TALE.

Nearly a hundred years ago, when the greater part of Pennsylvania was still covered with forests, and was peopled chiefly by wild deer and yet wilder Indians, there might have been seen, upon the banks of the beautiful Susquehanna, a log cottage of very pretty appearance. It consisted of two stories, and was surrounded by a piazza, whose pillars, trunks of trees unstripped of their bark, were encircled by a luxuriant growth of ivies and honeysuckles, which ran up to the roof, and hung down in graceful festoons. The house was situated so as to command the finest prospect of the river and the distant hills, and gave the traveller the impression that it was erected by people of more refinement than the common settlers of that region, rough backwoodsmen, who thought of little else than the very necessary work of subduing the wild, planting corn and potatoes, and shooting bears and deer. And so it was: James Buckingham, who with his young wife had settled there, having purchased land in that vicinity, was a man accustomed to a more polished state of society, and had received a college education in New England. But having become deeply attached to a young girl whose parents refused consent to their union, the impetuosity of his character prevailed over his sense of filial piety, and he persuaded the beautiful Ellen Farmington to leave her home and duty, and to give him a husband's right to protect her. In all probability, patience and submission might have prevailed upon her parents to give up an opposition, which was in reality unreasonable and groundless, as [Pg 70] Buckingham was a young man in every way calculated to make their daughter happy; but this rash act of youthful folly had embittered their feelings, and the young couple were forbidden ever to show their faces in the old homestead, lest a parent's curse should light upon their heads. Too proud to show any repentance, even if he felt it, James Buckingham determined to settle in another State, where nothing should recall the past, and where his small amount of capital, and large stock of energy and industry, might be employed to advantage; accordingly, he fixed his lot among the pioneers of Penn's colony, and chose a romantic situation upon the Susquehanna for his dwelling.

Very toilsome were the first years of their settlement, and great their privations; but they were young and happy, and willing hands and loving hearts made toil a pleasure. In a few years, woods were cleared, fields inclosed, barns built, and then, agreeably to Solomon's advice, the Buckinghams thought of building a commodious dwelling. "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field, and afterwards build thy house." The aid of neighbors, ever ready for such an undertaking, was called into requisition, and soon they removed from the small and only too well ventilated hut, through the chinks of which the sun shone in by day and the moon by night, and the rain penetrated whenever it would, to the ample, pleasant home already described. Here it was that little Emily Buckingham, their only child, first saw the light; and then the cup of their happiness seemed only too full for mortals to quaff. As the child daily grew in beauty, and her engaging ways filled their hearts with delight, then first did they realize the absorbing nature of a parent's love, and regret that *they* were separated from those who had so felt to Emily's [Pg 71] mother, when she lay, a helpless infant, in their arms. Yet pride prevailed, and no overtures were made to those whom they still thought severe and unrelenting.

Few, and scattered far, were the farmers in that region, for they were on the very outskirts of civilization. At a short distance rose a primeval forest, untouched by the axe of the settler, where the deer roamed freely, unless shot by the Indian hunter; and many were the friendly Indians who visited the cottage, and exchanged their game, their baskets, and their ornamented moccasins, for the much-coveted goods of civilized life. Frequent among these guests was Towandahoc, Great Black Eagle,—so called from his first boyish feat, when, riding at full gallop, he had shot down an eagle on the wing, so unerring was his aim; and its feathers now adorned his head. Towandahoc was a great hunter, and did not disdain to traffic with the "pale faces," not only for rifles and gunpowder, but for many domestic comforts to which most Indians are indifferent. But Great Black Eagle, although fearless as the bird whose name he bore, was a humane man, more gentle in character than most of his race, and a great friend of the whites, the brethren of the good Onas, as the red men called the man who laid the foundations of our commonwealth in peace, by a treaty which, in the language of Voltaire, "is the only one never confirmed by an oath, and never broken." Especially was Towandahoc attached to the

Buckingham family, who ever treated him kindly, and to the little girl who played with his bow and arrows, and tried in her artless prattle to pronounce his name. Unbroken peace had hitherto prevailed between the red men and the pale faces, owing to the just and friendly treatment the natives had experienced; but symptoms of another spirit began now to appear. The war waged [Pg 72] between England and France had extended to the colonies, and the French were unremitting in their efforts to gain the Indians to their side. A line of fortifications was erected by them, extending from Canada to the Ohio and Mississippi, and they were strongly intrenched at Fort Du Quesne, the site of the city of Pittsburg. Braddock's expedition and memorable defeat had just taken place; and it was thought by many that the Pennsylvania tribes, enraged by the honorable refusal of the Assembly to accept their tomahawks and scalping-knives in the war, and courted, on the other hand, by the French, were cherishing a secret, but deep hostility. Many of Mr. Buckingham's neighbors erected blockhouses, protected by palisades, to which they might retreat in case of an attack, and stored them with arms, ammunition, and provisions; but his confidence in the good disposition of the aborigines was too great to allow him to appear suspicious of those who came backward and forward to his dwelling in so much apparent friendship.

Such was the posture of affairs when Emily had reached her fourth year: dear as she was to her parents, the return of her birthday found her unspoilt, and as sweet and well-trained a child as any in the colony. It was worth a walk to see her: her golden curls fell upon a neck of alabaster, and her delicate, regular features were illuminated by dark vivacious eyes: she strongly resembled her mother, who had one of those faces which once seen, are never forgotten, and that seem to ripen merely, not to change, from youth to old age. But this extreme loveliness of person formed but the setting of the gem; Emily herself combined so much sweetness and liveliness of disposition, was so affectionate, gentle, and docile, that it was no wonder her parents made her the centre of all their plans and enjoyments. It was she who must always outstrip her mother, in [Pg 73] welcoming her father in from the field,

"And climbed his knee, the envied kiss to share,"

and to listen to the delightful tale, that could never be repeated too often: she must bring his slippers, and place his seat near the fire in winter. And she must "help mamma" in all her concerns; and although such help was only a delicious kind of hindrance, her bright face and winsome ways made all tasks light and pleasant. Never had she looked so lovely in her mother's eyes as she did on the evening of her birthday, when in her little white night-slip, with bare feet and folded hands, she knelt down to recite the simple prayer she had been taught that day, as a reward for good conduct; the setting sun streamed in at the window, and as its rays lingered among her curls, as if they belonged there, and were reluctant to leave, the mother thought of a kneeling cherub, with a glory encirling her head—but blessed God that her child was yet upon the earth. Long did that picture dwell upon her memory.

After singing her to sleep with a gentle lullaby, such as a mother only can employ, she imprinted a tender kiss upon the sleeping child, and having seen that all things were well and safely arranged in the house, she and her husband left, intending to spend the evening with Mr. Markley and his family, who lived at a distance of five or six miles. They were on more intimate terms with them than with any other neighbors, and took back with them Roland Markley, a boy of ten, who had spent the day with little Emily, his especial friend and pet, whom he was never weary of assisting and amusing. It was a pleasure to see the children together: the little girl looked up to him as almost a man, and he made her every whim a law. For her he would make the trip little vessel, and launch it upon the water; for her he would construct the bridge of stones [Pg 74] across the brook, and guide her little feet safely to the other side.

The conversation at Mr. Markley's house was of an alarming character; it was said that sure information had been received of a speedy rising of the Indians, and the Buckinghams were urged instantly to remove to that more thickly settled spot, where a large blockhouse was erected, and all preparations were made to give the enemy a warm reception. The addition of even one able-bodied man to their force was desirable, and they strove to impress upon their neighbors the imminent peril of their exposed situation. So earnest were they, and so probable did the news appear, that Mr. Buckingham resolved to comply with their wishes, and to remove on the morrow; and with hearts heavier than when they left home, they started to return to it.

"Do you perceive the smell of smoke? If it should be our cottage!" said Ellen Buckingham, first breaking the silence in which they rode along.

"The woods may be on fire again: do not be alarmed; the conversation this evening has unnerved you," replied her husband; but he could not conceal the tremor of his own voice, as a horrible fear entered into his heart; a fear, soon to become a more horrible certainty!

As they drew near, the air became thick with smoke, and when they entered the cleared ground and looked for their home, no home was there! Instead, burning rafters and smoking ruins: around, the ground was trodden down by many feet of moccasined men. Partly consumed by the fire, lay the bodies of two farm-servants who had been in Mr. Buckingham's employ; a tomahawk, smeared with fresh blood, lay among the smoking embers; and a golden curl singed by fire, was [Pg 75] near it—all they could discover of little Emily!

The murderers had left, doubtless disappointed that, their prey was so small; and in the first moments of agony, the bereaved parents wished that they too had fallen victims to their fiendish

rage. Emily was dead, certainly dead! The fresh blood, the lock of hair, proved it only too clearly; her body had been consumed by the flames. The light of their lives had been put out, the glory had passed away from their sky, and they must now go mourning all their days; they felt as did a parent in the olden time, whose words are recorded in Scripture, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." One little hour had changed the aspect of the whole earth to them.

And yet, broken-hearted as they were, they must act: not now could they fold their hands in despair. Soon was the news of the Indian rising spread among the settlers; and while all flew to arms, and joined in the necessary preparations, tears fell from eyes that were never known to weep before, and rough men spoke soothing words to the mourners; for little Emily was known and loved by all for miles around, and many said "she need not change much to be made an angel." It was agreed that with the earliest dawn, when the women and children were safely disposed of, they should meet at the ruins of the Hopedale Cottage, so was it called, and follow the trail of the savages through the woods; some sanguine spirits, chief among whom was little Roland Markley, still asserted that Emily might live, and have been carried away into captivity; but her parents could not so deceive themselves—that lock of hair had convinced them of her death; hope could not enter their hearts, it had died with Emily. [Pg 76]

One entire day did the Indian-hunters follow in the trail and came upon the spot where their enemies had encamped; and there, three trails in different directions, looked as if the savages had scattered. What was to be done? To follow all was impossible, as their own force was a small one; and meantime night had come on, wrapping all things in her mantle of secrecy, and fatigue required them to rest their weary frames. Setting a watch, and lighting a fire, with loaded rifles within reach, they slept; such a sleep as men can take, when they dream of a red hand at their throats, and a tomahawk glancing before their eyes. Light hearts make heavy sleep; but such a deed as had been committed in the midst of them, makes men start from their slumbers if but a cricket chirps, or a withered leaf falls to the ground.

During the night, heavy rains began to fall, and when morning light appeared, all traces of the pathway of their enemy had disappeared; the leaves fell abundantly from the trees, and no mark was left upon the earth to show where they had passed. The baffled party did not give up the search for several days, but nothing transpired to throw any light upon the subject; and they were obliged reluctantly to return, in order to defend their own homes and families from a similar fate. Few doubted little Emily's death; but some still clung to the hope that she was in the land of the living, and might yet be recovered.

But her father and mother hoped nothing: grief entirely filled up their hearts. And with the grief arose a new feeling—bitter and poignant remorse. "This is the just punishment," they thought, "that offended Heaven has inflicted upon us, for having wrung *our* parents' hearts with anguish. Now we feel a parent's agony: now can we realize what we made them suffer. This was the tender spot on which a wound would penetrate to the heart; and here it is that a retributive [Pg 77] Providence has struck us. The arrows of the Almighty have pierced us—shall we any longer strive against our Maker? We will humble ourselves in the dust, O righteous Judge, and will return to duty: if it be not yet too late—if our parents still live—incline their hearts to forgive!"

And their pitying God heard their prayer, and brought them in safety to their childhood's home, and prepared for them pardon and peace of conscience. For Ellen Buckingham's father had been brought to the brink of the grave by sudden illness, and the stern old man wept like a child, when the village pastor, a faithful minister of the Gospel, told him that the most faultless creed would not avail him if he cherished a hardened, unforgiving spirit, and exhorted him to pardon and bless his exiled son and daughter. His iron heart was subdued within him, and when his wife, whose gentler nature had long since pined for a reconciliation, joined her entreaties to the commands of religion, then, like the sudden breaking up of the ice upon a noble river, his feelings gushed forth beyond control; all coldness and hardness vanished. At this moment it was that James and Ellen Buckingham arrived: they had come in the spirit of the Prodigal Son, not thinking themselves worthy to be called the children of those they had offended; and they were greeted with the same tenderness and overflowing affection described in the parable—their confessions of guilt were stopped by kisses and embraces, and soon they were weeping and recounting their loss, with arms encircling their long-estranged parents.

When the doctor paid his next visit, he said that a greater physician than he had interfered, and had administered a new medicine, not very bitter to take, which threw all his drugs into the [Pg 78] shade: it was called *heart's ease*, and nothing more was wanting to his patient's recovery, than very tender nursing, and daily applications of the same dose. And tender nursing indeed did he receive from his daughter Ellen, and proudly did he lean on the strong arm of his son, when sufficiently convalescent to venture abroad: it seemed as if the affection, restrained within their bosoms for so long a time, now gushed forth more fully and freely than if there had never been a coldness. And thus did sorrow on one side, and sickness on the other, guided by an overruling Providence, join together long severed hearts, purify affections too much fixed upon the earth, and lead all to look upward to Him who ruleth in the affairs of mankind. Truly, "he doth not afflict *willingly* nor grieve the children of men."

At the earnest request of Ellen's parents, her husband agreed to continue with them, acting in all respects as their son, and taking off from them the burdens of life: and their latter years were made happy by religion and filial piety. After their death, the Buckinghams removed once more to their farm upon the Susquehanna, and rebuilt their cottage, in all respects as it was before its destruction. Soon again did the vines clamber up the pillars, and hang in beautiful festoons from

the roof; but where was she, the beloved one, who had so wound herself round their feelings, that death itself could not unclasp the tendrils? Joy had vanished with her, and no portion remained for them in this life but peace, which will ever follow the diligent discharge of duty: the hope of happiness they transferred to that better world, where little Emily awaited to welcome them.

What, meantime, had been her fate? On that eventful evening she lay upon her little crib, in a darkened corner of the room, buried in the sweet slumber of childhood and innocence. The [Pg 79] savage yells did not disturb her, she peacefully slept on; angels must have guarded her bed when a fierce Indian, with bloody tomahawk in hand, rushed into the room, but saw her not in her little nest, and returned to his comrades, reporting that all the rest of the inhabitants had fled. Determined to do all the mischief in their power, they set fire to the house and barns, and then pushed off into the woods, to seek new victims in the unoffending Moravian settlement of Guadenhutten. Little Emily was first awakened by a suffocating heat and smoke, and by the crackling of the flames: she screamed aloud to her father for help, and tried to approach the stairs, but the blinding smoke and the quickly spreading fire drove her back. Just then, a tall and noble form, arrayed in Indian garb, forced a passage through the raging flames and among the falling rafters, and guided by her cries, sought her chamber, caught her in his arms, and rushed down to the outer air. Not without peril to both: the arm which encircled her was burnt so as to bear the scar ever after, but still it sustained its precious burden, and the little girl was unharmed, save that some of her long golden tresses, hanging loosely behind her, were severed from her head by the fire: hence the lock of hair that remained unconsumed, convincing her friends of her death.

And who was her brave preserver? Towandahoc, Great Black Eagle, the friend of the pale faces! The secret plans of his tribe had been kept from his ears, from the fear that he might betray them to the unsuspecting whites; and it was not until after the expedition had departed for the banks of the Susquehanna, that he learned their hostile intentions towards his friends. He lost no time, but followed rapidly in their steps, hoping by his representations to induce his people to give up their murderous purpose, or perhaps, by a short but difficult route through the mountains, to [Pg 80] reach the cottage of Hopedale before them. But hate is as swift as love in its flight, and as he approached the spot, and saw the flames mounting up to the sky, he thought himself too late, and the work of murder and of destruction complete. Just then he heard little Emily's cries, and rushed in at the peril of his life, to save the child.

Supposing her parents to be dead, he resolved to take the helpless little one to his wigwam, and to adopt her as his own. His home was at the distance of several days' journey from the Susquehanna, in a retired valley of the Alleghany mountains, and thither, through a dense forest, he bent his steps. The greater part of the way he carried the child, her white arm wound round his dusky neck, her fair head lying upon his shoulder; he dried her tears, he picked berries in the wood to refresh her, and strove to comfort her little heart, which was very heavy with sorrow. At last they arrived at his wigwam; his wife Ponawtan, or Wild Rose, ran out to meet her husband, and great was her wonder at the sight of his beautiful burden. He said to her:—

"Ponawtan, I have brought you home a child, as the Great Spirit has taken away our own, and sent them to the good hunting grounds, where forever they hunt the deer. Take good care of the child, for she is like a white water-lily, encircled by troubled waters: in our wigwam may she find rest and peace."

Ponawtan, with a woman's tenderness, took into her arms the trembling, weeping child, who, with the quick instinct of childhood, soon learned that she was a friend. The Indian woman understood not even the few words of English by which Towandahoc made his kind intentions intelligible, but the language of the heart is a universal one, and in that she was a proficient. Well [Pg 81] was it for little Emily—or Orikama, White Water-Lily, as she was henceforth called, that she had fallen into such good hands. Ponawtan was a kind, affectionate being, who had deeply mourned the loneliness of her cabin; and now that a child was given her, that a little motherless, homeless outcast was thrown upon her love, she was happy, and her sweet voice was again heard singing snatches of wild Indian melodies at the door of her hut, and about her work.

For some weeks Orikama drooped her head, and her pale cheek looked indeed like the flower whose name had been given her; and Ponawtan grieved when she beheld her languid step, and the sad expression in her large speaking eyes, or when she found her weeping in a corner of the hut. But childhood is happily elastic in its feelings, and again the merry glance came back to her eye, and the little feet danced upon the green grass, and the soft baby voice caught up the Indian words she heard, and learned to call her kind protectors by the holy name of father and mother.

And was the memory of the past blotted out from her mind? Not so—indelibly painted there, was the image of a whitewashed cottage, overgrown with vines, near which a noble river rolled, seen through an opening of the trees; and of a kind father, who wore no plumes in his hair, who bore no bow and arrows, whom she had run to greet, and on whose knee she daily sat, listening to beautiful tales. And of a sweet, pretty mother, in whose face she loved to look, who taught her to say a prayer, kneeling with clasped hands; especially did she think of her as she appeared on that last evening, when she kissed her good-night, and sang her to sleep with a gentle lullaby. And never did she forget to kneel down, before she lay upon her bed of sweet grass, and with folded hands and reverent look to recite her evening prayer. What though the full meaning of the words [Pg 82] did not enter into her mind—with childlike piety she looked upward to her Maker, and impressions of purity and goodness were made upon her heart. In the beautiful language of Keble,

"Oh, say not, dream not, heavenly notes
To childish ears are vain,
That the young mind at random floats,
And cannot reach the strain.

Dim or unheard, the words may fell,
And yet the heaven-taught mind
May learn the sacred air, and all
The harmony unwind.

And if some tones be false or low,
What are all prayers beneath,
But cries of babes, that cannot know
Half the deep thoughts they breathe.

In his own words we Christ adore,
But angels, as we speak,
Higher above our meaning soar
Than we o'er children weak:

And yet His words mean more than they,
And yet he owns their praise:
Why should we think, He turns away
From infants' simple lays?"

Towandahoc and Ponawtan wondered when they saw her kneeling in prayer, but did not interfere with the lovely child; and doubtless this daily habit not only kept up within her mind purer notions of God and duty than she could otherwise have entertained, but enabled her to cherish a more vivid remembrance of the parents she believed to be dead, and of the beautiful home of her infancy. Never hearing aught spoken but the Indian tongue, the little girl would soon have entirely forgotten her native language, had it not been for this daily practice, which kept at least some words of English fresh in her memory. [Pg 83]

Among the indistinct, but most pleasing recollections of the home of her early childhood, was one of a boy with curly black hair and smiling face, who brought her beautiful flowers, and made for her rabbits out of his handkerchief, and pretty little boats out of nut-shells. She remembered eagerly leaning over the water, watching the tiny bark till it got out of sight, while he held her hand tightly, for fear she should fall into the water. Another scene, of a different character, was imprinted upon her mind, never to be erased—that fearful waking, when the flames crackled and roared around her, and the thick smoke filled the air, when she called upon her father for help, but no father was there; and when her dark-skinned father Towandahoc rushed in to her rescue. When she thought of this night of horror, she instinctively clasped her hands before her eyes, to shut out the fearful sight.

These remembrances, however, did not hinder the bright and lively child from being very happy in her new life. And why not? True, here were none of the conveniences or refinements of civilized life, but the little girl grew up without the feeling of their loss, and

"Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

No mirrors reflected her erect and graceful figure, unspoiled by corset or by long, wearisome hours of confinement at the school-bench; it was lithe and well-proportioned as one of Diana's nymphs; but instead, she arranged her golden tresses, and decked her head with a wreath of wild-flowers, bending over a small mountain lake, which she had appropriated to her own use, and which served her as bathing-house, dressing-room, and looking-glass, all in one. No Turkey or Persian carpets were spread upon the floor, no sofa with rich carving and velvet seat invited her to indolence; but instead, she trod upon soft green moss, sweet grass and flowers, and when weary, reposed upon such seat as Dame Nature provides for her children in her beautiful mansion—the old stump, the mossy bank, the well-washed rock, or the tree prostrated by a storm. No sparkling fountain rose into the air, and fell into its ornamented basin, to please her taste; but the mountain waterfall, of which this is but a feeble imitation, rushed down the rocks in snow-white foam, near her cabin; and she would gaze upon it for hours with delight. To the imaginative mind, to the eye and the ear open to the impressions of beauty, nature has many school-books, unopened in the great city, and amid the busy haunts of men; and her ready scholars may gain many a lesson from the great common mother, undreamt of amid the cares of business, the dreams of ambition, and the bustle of fictitious wants. To Orikama the world was one vast temple: instead of marble pillars with Corinthian capitals, instead of Gothic aisles and dark Cathedrals, her eye rested with admiration upon the nobler, loftier columns of trees that had grown for centuries, crowned with graceful spreading foliage; upon long avenues, whose overlapping branches formed a natural arch, imitated long since by man, and called an invention; upon the deep recesses of forests, with their "dim religious light," or with their sudden, glorious illumination, when the last rays of the sun stream in lengthwise, with coloring as rich as any painted window can furnish. Her choristers were the birds; her incense the sweet perfume which the grateful earth and her innocent children the flowers continually offer up to their Maker: instead of the gaudy chandelier, she gazed upon the full-orbed moon, hanging like a silver lamp from its dome of blue, and forcibly recalling the Divine Hand which placed it there. All nature had [Pg 84] [Pg 85]

a voice and a meaning to her, and in the absence of the ordinary means of education, and of the invaluable aids of the Christian ministry, her pure and religious soul

> "Found tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

Living thus constantly in the open air, while her mind expanded in tranquil beauty, she grew up a blooming, healthful maiden, whose kindly, candid nature shone out through a countenance of rare loveliness.

> "Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty's self."

None were there to flatter the young girl, and to awaken that uneasy vanity which fills the mind with the consciousness of observation, and gives awkwardness to the timid, and affectation to the self-possessed. Seeing herself so different from those she loved the best, the fair Water-Lily often wished she could darken her skin and hair, that she might more resemble others. Nor think that Orikama was totally unaccomplished; her kind mother Ponawtan taught her all she herself knew —to fear and love the Great Spirit; to be obedient, kind, and patient; to speak the truth, and to bear pain without a murmur. She learned that important part of the Indian woman's duty, to raise the vegetables needed for their simple repasts, and to prepare savory dishes of venison and other game; to fabricate their garments, ornamenting them with uncommon skill and taste, and to manufacture baskets of exquisite workmanship. These were her tasks: and when they were accomplished, how joyfully did she bound off to the woods, or up the hills, to gather herbs and barks, such as observation and tradition taught the children of the forest to employ in the cure of diseases: she knew all the trees, shrubs, and roots which grew in that region, and was skilled in [Pg 86] domestic surgery, such as woman has ever practised where medical colleges are unknown. In her frequent and distant excursions for this purpose, she had attained one accomplishment not to be taught in schools; her voice was one of exquisite tone and great compass, peculiarly rich and mellow; and she had learned to imitate the birds in their varied warblings, so that frequently answers would be returned to her from the deceived songsters of the wood. Then, louder still would ring the notes, and the feathered tribe were excited to emulation by the young girl, singing in the gayety of her heart.

Thus passed the early youth of Orikama, in intercourse with sweet nature, under the kind protection of two of the best specimens of the Indian tribes, and almost debarred from any other society. Seldom did a moccasined hunter enter their wigwam, yet seldomer did a squaw pass through that lonely valley; and a white man, never. When she had attained the age of thirteen, a change occurred, which threw a shadow over her young life, and was greatly regretted by Towandahoc and Ponawtan. A detachment of their tribe having determined to migrate, fixed upon that beautiful and fertile vale for the place of their settlement, and soon an Indian village arose, where before had rested the holy, maiden calmness of a region almost untrod by man. Now, all was dirt, confusion, discord: the vices of civilized life were added to those of the savage, without the decency or refinement which seeks to throw a veil over their deformity. Orikama woke up as from a beautiful dream, to find that those whom she would love to think of as brethren, were vile and degraded: she saw lazy, drunken men, lounging about at the doors of smoky huts, or administering chastisement to yelping curs, or to women as noisy, reduced by ill- [Pg 87] treatment and domestic drudgery to be the cunning, spiteful slaves they were. Every thing shocked the noble and pure spirit of Orikama: there were none here that she could make companions and friends, nor would Towandahoc and Ponawtan have been pleased to have her associate with them. It could not be expected that she should be a favorite with the young girls of the tribe, who were jealous of her superior attractions, and hated her for her reserve; and their conduct made her feel sensibly that she was of another race, and of another nature. Their malice was perhaps quickened by the fact, that some slight hostilities had again arisen between the red men and the pale faces, in which their tribe had been very prominent.

So unpleasantly changed did the whole family find their beautiful valley, that it was resolved to remove to some distant spot, where they should not be crowded out by uncongenial companionship. Accordingly, Towandahoc departed for an absence of some weeks, to choose a situation for settlement; the less reluctantly, as all the warriors of the tribe had already left upon an expedition, which he had reason to suspect was aimed against the whites. None remained behind but old men, squaws, and pappooses, not to forget the Indian dogs, ever ready by their snarl to recall their unwelcome existence to your mind. One day during her husband's absence, Ponawtan departed early in the morning, with a view to gather some herbs which grew upon one spot alone, a marsh at a considerable distance: she left Orikama to take charge of the wigwam till her return, which would not be before nightfall. Soon after she had left, the crack of the rifle was heard, and the Indian village was startled from its repose by the shout of the white man, and armed backwoodsmen rushed in, expecting to meet their enemies: but the warriors were absent, and the rough but generous foe disdained to wreak vengeance upon old men, women, and [Pg 88] children. All were taken prisoners, and the cabins were fired: but how great was their amazement, upon coming to the larger, handsomer wigwam of Towandahoc, which they concluded from its appearance to belong to a sachem, to see there, shrinking back with terror, a fair young girl of their own blood! Few words could she speak in English, and but little could she understand of that tongue which for ten years she had not heard spoken, except by herself in prayer; she had even forgotten her own former name. Great was the excitement when the news flew through the band, that a lost or stolen child was recovered, and all rushed eagerly to see her. And she, what mingled feelings filled her heart! Childish memories of just such men crowded

into her mind. She was lost in wonder and vague remembrance. Just then, full of ardor, there rushed forward a youth of twenty, who exclaimed the moment his eyes fell upon her, "It *is* she! I knew she was living! It is little Emily Buckingham!" As she gazed upon his open brow, round which the crisp black curls were clustered, and heard the long-forgotten name, she was troubled —she thought of the boy who held her hand as she leaned over the edge of the stream to watch the mimic boat, and with faltering tongue she repeated her name.

"The voice and all! Do you not see, comrades, how she resembles her mother, Ellen Buckingham? Oh, hasten homeward, to give joy to the hearts of her father and mother!"

"Father, mother, dead. Towandahoc, Ponawtan, Indian father, mother."

After some difficulty, Roland Markley, for it was really he, succeeded in explaining to her that her parents still lived: and against her tears and prayers, determined at once to break all bonds with [Pg 89] her Indian home, they tore her away, without waiting for the return of Towandahoc and Ponawtan; but left their wigwam standing, out of gratitude for the care they had taken of the child. The Indians had made an incursion into the territory of the whites, and committed many ravages, and it was with the intention of breaking up their villages, and driving them away, that this expedition had been undertaken. The prisoners they had captured were ransomed on condition of their removal, and the whole tribe passed to the other side of the Alleghanies.

As the band travelled homeward, and first came across the beautiful Susquehanna, Orikama—or Emily, as we should again call her—started, and gazed eagerly around her: the broad stream called up memories of the past. And when they arrived at the cottage of Hopedale, and she beheld the house and grounds, the river and the woods, and the distant hills, she recognized her home, and her earliest recollections were vividly recalled. Soon was she folded in the arms of her mother, who so long had mourned for her; and by her father she was welcomed back as one from the grave. The news spread far and wide, and great was the gathering of friends and neighbors to wish joy to the parents, and to welcome back the pride of Hopedale: much to the confusion and distress of poor Emily. All noticed the strong likeness she bore her mother, in person, voice, and countenance; and if now she resembled her, how much more was this the case when she had exchanged her Indian garb for one more suitable to the American maiden! Soon were the bonds of love knit together most closely between the parents and their recovered treasure; her tongue relearned the lost language of her childhood, and happiness again brightened the hearth at Hopedale; the birds sang more sweetly to her mother's ears, and the sun shone more cheerfully [Pg 90] than it had done for years. Amidst all her new joys, Emily very often thought of her beloved Indian parents, Towandahoc and Ponawtan, and longed to see them again; but Indian life, as developed in the village, was abhorrent to her very soul, and here she enjoyed all the freedom and communion with nature she had once so highly prized, with society, and advantages for mental cultivation she was now at an age to appreciate. All were delighted to teach the docile and intelligent girl, so ready to take up ideas, so judicious in the application of them; but Roland Markley, the playmate of her childhood, installed himself as head tutor, and soon every setting sun saw him on the way to the cottage, eager to apply himself to the task.

Ten other years have passed; and near the cottage of Hopedale stands another, within whose porch, overgrown by the Prairie rose, at her spinning wheel, sits a beautiful young matron; perfect contentment is enthroned upon her brow, and happiness beams out from her radiant smile; golden curls cluster gracefully around her well-shaped head, and dark, lustrous eyes follow lovingly a little girl at play, although her skilful fingers do not forget their task.

"What is the matter, my little Ellen?" she said, as the child ran to hide her face in her lap.

"An Indian, mamma! An Indian, coming out of the wood!"

At these words Emily springs up; she will ever love the red man for the sake of those who nourished her childhood, and never will a son of the forest be sent away uncheered from her door. But times have greatly changed since her father built the neighboring cottage: seldom now does the Indian visit that comparatively thickly settled spot; his course is still westward, and ever onward, with the setting sun. When Emily emerged from the thickly shaded porch, she saw [Pg 91] indeed a red man approach from the forest; he was old, but his majestic figure was still erect, his eye bright and piercing; black eagle plumes adorned his stately head—it was Towandahoc!

He was soon clasped in the embrace of his long-lost Water-Lily, and Indian though he was, the old man wept over his recovered darling. He told her how Ponawtan had returned by nightfall, to find her daughter gone, and the village in ashes: their own wigwam had caught fire from the flying cinders, and was entirely consumed. She had lingered around the spot of her former happiness till his return; after a little time, as they could hear no news of Orikama, they had removed far away from the scene of desolation, to the valley of the Mohawk. Grief for the loss of her daughter had injured the health of Ponawtan, although time had now somewhat reconciled her to it: but Towandahoc said that the Wild Rose was drooping, that her leaves were withered, and her flowers falling one by one; and much he feared that another winter would lay her low in the dust.

When little Ellen understood that this was the dear Indian grandpa of whom she had so often heard, her shyness passed away, and soon she drew near to the aged hunter, handling his bow and arrows, and even presuming to climb up and scrutinize the feathers, that were at once her admiration and her dread. The old man took her upon his knee, and was showing her his bow, when Roland returned home; he eagerly seconded his wife's persuasions, to induce Towandahoc

to remain with them for some time, and then to return for Ponawtan, that both might pass the remnant of their days within their daughter's dwelling. But the aged hunter shook his head: [Pg 92]

"It cannot be," he said; "the Great Spirit has made the pale faces to dwell in houses, to plough the fields, and to listen to the voice which comes from the printed book, held up before his eyes; but he has made the red man to hunt the deer, and to live alone in the open air. When the Great Spirit created man, he made his red child first, out of the best clay: he then made the pale faces; and lastly, out of what was left he made the black man. And he placed before them three boxes; and because his red child was the favorite, he told him to choose which he would have. So he chose the box containing a bow and arrows, a tomahawk, and a pipe. Then the pale face chose; and he took the box which held a plough, carpenters' tools, a gun, and a book. And the black man took what was left: in his box was an overseer's whip, a spade, and a hoe. And this has been the portion of each ever since. I am a red man, and I cannot breathe where men are thicker than trees: to me belong the bow and arrows, the wild deer, and the open sky. The old man has returned to visit the graves of his ancestors; but soon, far away from them, he will drop to the ground, like the ripe persimmon after a frost. Orikama has returned to the ways of her fathers, and I do not blame her, for she is a pale face. But the old man cannot change, like a leaf in October; soon will his sun set in yonder western heaven, and he must now keep on his course. I have said."

When the moon arose, Towandahoc left the house, bending his steps to the forest: but he did not go without passing his word that he would bring Ponawtan to see her daughter. Before the winter set in, they arrived, and Emily's tender heart was grieved as she gazed upon the wasting form of her who had so often sheltered her in her arms: it was only too evident that another summer would not see her upon the earth. Ponawtan was greatly cheered by her visit; but could only be [Pg 93] prevailed upon to stay for a few days, when she departed, never more to return. In the spring, Towandahoc came alone; his sorrowful face and drooping form told the tale of sorrow before he opened his lips: his energy and vital powers seemed to have died with Ponawtan. He never came again; and doubtless he soon found a resting-place by the side of her who had been his life-long companion.

"So, you didn't kill any of your people off, but the two farm-servants, for whom we do not care a fig!" cried Charlie Bolton.

"Not I," replied Mary; "I'm not very partial to blood and murder; I would not have put them out of the way, except to please you; I lay the manslaughter at your door, Cousin mine."

"I'm very willing to bear the penalty: if it's a hanging matter, please to imagine that my neck has paid the forfeit—just consider me hung—as the man said at the crowded dinner table, when an irritable fool took offence at something he had spoken, and being too far off to throw his glass of wine in his face, told him '*to consider the wine as thrown at him*.' 'Very well, I will,' replied the first; 'and do you consider this sword as run through your body.'"

"A very good retaliation! And what did they do then? Did they fight?"

"Not they! They did much better—they laughed, shook hands, and were good friends ever after."

"And their honor was as well satisfied as if they had made targets of their bodies, I dare say: it was much more sensible." [Pg 94]

"But, Cousin Mary," said Amy thoughtfully, "I've been trying to find out the reason why Towandahoc did not take little Emily to the nearest white settler, instead of carrying her off into the wild woods; I think it would have been much better for the poor child."

"What do you think was the reason?" replied Mary.

"I know!" cried George. "The Indians are such dunces, that old Thunder-Gust, or whatever his name is, hadn't the sense to do such a straightforward thing as that, but must drag the child off through the woods, scratching her finely with the blackberry and whortleberry bushes, no doubt. I'll warrant she screamed and tried to get away, although Cousin Mary does try to made her out so gentle—I know I would."

"I declare you do not know how to appreciate my fine sentiment! Are you boys made of different stuff from us, I want to know?"

"I rather suppose we are," said George, laughing. "Well, am I right in my explanation?"

"Not in the least; some one else must try."

"I concluded," said Alice, "that it was the natural kindness of his heart, and his fondness for the little girl, which made him wish to have her for his own child. Of course, he did not realize that he was only a savage, and not fit to bring her up rightly."

"That's nearer the truth than the other guess," rejoined Mary. "But none of you have mentioned the great reason why Towandahoc carried her off."

"What can it be?"

"Simply this—if he had not, what would have become of my story, I'd like to know? I made him take her home with him, on the same principle that novel writers place their heroines in a thousand distressing situations—that they may extricate them from their difficulties, and make a longer tale." [Pg 95]

"But what's the moral of your story?" said practical, matter-of-fact John. "I don't see much use in a tale, unless there's a regular drawn moral in it, that everybody can discover at once."

"Oh nonsense! I do hate morals!" said Cornelia. "Just as if we were to be instructed the whole livelong day, and never to have amusement without a good reason being given! That's too tiresome! I always skip the morals and the *good talk*, when I read stories—if they're pleasant, that's enough: I hate to be cheated into a sermon when I want a story. I feel something as the man did who was fishing for a pike: he caught a cat-fish instead, and throwing it back into the river, exclaimed, 'When I go a-catting, I go a-catting; but when I go a-piking, I go a-piking.'"

"I'm afraid a good many people think as you do, Cornelia," said Mrs. Wyndham, laughing. "But perhaps we can find a moral for John, if we look sharply enough. Let's see—there are good, kind people in every race, of every complexion; and if we only make the most of our opportunities, there are means of education open to all who have eyes and ears, and willing minds. Do you see any other moral?"

"Oh yes, indeed!" replied Ellen. "When the Buckinghams were deprived of their child, it was a sort of punishment to them for disobedience to their parents; and they understood it in that way."

"True enough," said Mr. Wyndham. "And I have often noticed that disobedient children are punished in after life, by means of their own offspring: either by their suffering or death, or, still more frequently, by their ingratitude and disrespectful conduct. And then they feel themselves, as their parents did before them, [Pg 96]

> 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
> To have a thankless child!'"

"I have often remarked this also," rejoined Mrs. Wyndham. "And it appears to be consistent with all the dealings of the Disposer of events: He himself says that He will treat us as we treat our fellow-creatures: 'With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the just thou wilt show thyself just, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.'"

"And, when we notice these coincidences, is it not an argument for a superintending Providence?" said Tom Green.

"Undoubtedly it is," replied his uncle; "and although evil conduct here is frequently unpunished, being left for the more perfect retributions of eternity, yet it is so often followed by unhappiness, and by a reward in kind, that no thinking mind can doubt the moral government of God. And it appears to me that of all the commandments, that one which says 'Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee,' is the one taken under the especial protection of Providence. I have ever noticed that dutiful children are honored by the world, and honored in their own family circle, and that, on the other hand, it is ill with the rebellious and unthankful."

"Then there is another thing I was thinking of," said Amy; "the good uses of sorrow: you know it brought the Buckinghams to repentance; and Ellen's father being taken ill, he repented too—I think he had as much need of it as they. I'm glad my father is not cross and severe." [Pg 97]

"So am I, heartily. Would you run off, Amy, if he were?" said Cornelia.

"Oh! I hope not! I should think

> 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
> To have a thankless child.'

I shall not forget that passage, uncle, as long as I live: who wrote it?"

"Shakspeare: and as a general rule you may conclude, when you meet a particularly striking passage, that it is either in Shakspeare or Milton. But it is getting late: will Mary be kind enough to bring the Bible, for it will then be time to say, Good-night to you all!"

CHAPTER IV. [Pg 98]

PROVERBS.—TWENTY QUESTIONS.—THE SPECTRE OF ALCANTRA, OR THE CONDE'S DAUGHTERS, A TALE OF SPAIN.

Brightly and joyfully did the sun arise after the storm, like a prisoner released from dungeon and chains, again to look upon the faces of those he loved; and all nature put on a holiday garb to greet him. Every tree and bush was sparkling, as if with rapture. If a magician of superhuman power had waved his wand over the earth, it could not have been more changed. Long icicles were suspended from the fences and the overhanging roofs, and even the sheds looked brilliant and beautiful in their icy covering; but the trees! what words can describe them? The pines

bristled themselves up like stiff warriors arrayed in steel, their armor making a clanking sound when the cold winds whistled by; and the sycamores, with their little dependent balls, looked like Christmas trees hung with bon-bons and confectionery for good children. Every stray leaf that had resisted the storms of winter, every seed-vessel upon the shrubs, shone with beauty; the ground was one glittering sheet, like a mirror; the sky was of a deep blue, washed from all impurities, and the sun smiled down upon the beautiful earth, like a crowned king upon his bride, decked with sparkling diamonds. It was one of nature's gala-days, in which she appears to invite all her children to be happy; one of those scenes which forbid us to call winter a dreary time, and which outshine in brilliancy all the verdure of the tropics. [Pg 99]

At any time we enjoy the clear sky after a sullen rain, or a driving, impetuous storm, and young people especially feel the truth and beauty of Solomon's expression, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" but when, in addition, such a spectacle as this is presented to those long pent up within city walls, how does the heart swell with rapture! No introduction at court, no coronation, no theatrical exhibition, can for a moment compare with it in splendor; nature has shows more beautiful by far than any that man can produce, and all she asks for in exchange is the seeing eye and the feeling heart. Truly, the best gifts of heaven to man are free and universal, bestowed without money and without price, and maybe enjoyed by the penniless as well as by the millionaire, if the spirit be only opened to the impressions of happiness they were intended to convey—the Good God is daily blessing and feasting his creatures with impartial liberality. What exclamations of delight were heard in The Grange when the fairy scene was first beheld! Every room in the house was visited, to see which presented the finest prospect, and soon, with feet well provided with gum-elastics, and with old-fashioned socks, still better preservatives from falling, all sallied forth to enjoy the spectacle more fully. The clear sky and the keen air raised their spirits, and an occasional slip and tumble was only an additional provocative to laughter; youth and health, and merry hearts, that had never yet tasted of sorrow, made life appear to them, not a desert, not a valley of tears, as it is felt by many to be, but a paradise of sweets, a joyful festival.

To combine duty and pleasure, Mrs. Wyndham proposed that they should bend their steps to the humble home of Mrs. Norton, the poor widow for whom their fingers had been so busily plying the preceding day. Accordingly, laden with bundles, and with a basket of comforts which would [Pg 100] prove very acceptable to a sick person, they walked towards her little cottage. The boys, after a private consultation, declared that they did not intend to allow the girls to do all the charitable, and that they wished to invest some of their surplus Christmas cash in a pair of large warm blankets, for the widow's benefit. Their aunt heartily approved of the suggestion, and all agreed that a far better interest would accrue from a capital so laid up, than from shares taken in the confectioner's or the toymaker's stock; and the walk was considerably prolonged by a visit to the country store, where the desired purchases were made. Joy lighted up the sick woman's eyes when she saw this unexpected provision for her wants, and witnessed the kindly interest of the young people of The Grange: she thanked them with few words, but with overflowing eyes and heart. She was an interesting woman, kind and motherly, and looked as if she had seen better days: her little black-eyed children also were well trained, with manners much superior to their station. One little girl of about twelve attracted Mrs. Wyndham's particular notice; she appeared to have installed herself into the office of chief nurse, and the younger children seemed to look to her for help and advice: when not engaged in waiting upon them or the sick mother, she seated herself near the window, busily occupied with a piece of needlework. She was a very pretty child, of fair complexion and deep blue eyes, with the beseeching look that you sometimes see in the young face, when trouble and hard treatment have too early visited the little heart—like an untimely frost, nipping the tender blossoms of spring. Sad indeed it is to see that look in childhood, when, under the sheltering wings of parents and friends, the body and mind should expand together in an atmosphere of love and gentleness—such is the great Creator's will. Mrs. [Pg 101] Wyndham observed to her mother,

"That oldest child of yours does not resemble you and the other children."

The sick woman smiled: "No, ma'am, she is an adopted child, although I love Margaret as much as any of my other children."

"Indeed! with so many little ones, could you take another?"

"Yes, ma'am, she was thrown into our keeping by Providence, at a time when we wanted nothing; my husband was then living, and in excellent business as a saddler, and we enjoyed every comfort. Times are now sadly changed, but Margaret shall share our last crust; but indeed she is our main stay—I should be obliged to give up entirely, and perhaps to go to the Almshouse, if it were not for her help."

"I am glad to see that she makes herself so useful; is she any relation to you?"

"None at all. I will tell you her story, if you will hear it, some time when we are alone: it is rather a long one."

The young people left Mrs. Wyndham still conversing with Mrs. Norton, and returned homeward. After tea, various games amused the fleeting hours, and among them "Proverbs" was played as follows: While one is absent from the circle, all fix upon some well-known old saw or proverb; the absentee then returns and asks a question of every individual, to which an answer must be returned, embracing some one word of the sentence, care being taken not to emphasize it. The first proverb was this: "When the cat's away, the mice will play." Cornelia had been out of the

room.

"Cousin Mary, didn't you enjoy the clear-up to-day?"

"Yes, *when* it clears after a storm, one always does." [Pg 102]

"Charlie, are you tired from your long walk this morning?"

"O no, *the* day was so fine, *the* walk so pleasant, and *the* company so agreeable, that I did not feel *the* fatigue."

"Ellen, didn't you pity poor Mrs. Norton?"

"Yes, and I pitied her *cats*, they looked so thin."

"Cats! I thought she had only one. Cats? Hum! Tom, don't you hope we'll have a story to-night?"

"Yes, I enjoy it vastly, and will take care not to be *away* when it's told."

"Gertrude, don't you think *the mice will play* to-night?"

"Yes—but from whom did you take the idea? Who let that cat out of the bag?"

"Ellen, to be sure, with her plural number for Mrs. Norton's cat, which does not look starved at all—so go into the hall, Miss Ellen, while we think of a proverb."

"Let's have 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,'" said Amy, "I thought of that to-day at Mrs. Norton's."

"Very well, that will do. Come in, Ellen; Cornelia will bring in the first two words, as they are small."

"Cornelia, have you finished your crochet purse?"

"*It is* almost done."

"Amy, are you not almost roasted in that hot corner of the chimney?"

"It would be *more* pleasant further from the fire."

"George, you are so fond of skating, don't you hope to enjoy the sport to-morrow?"

"Yes indeed—I think we'll have a *blessed* cold night, and then we'll have skating."

"John, how many miles did you walk to-day?"

"*Two*," said John.

"That's not fair! That's not fair!" cried some of the younger children. However, it was agreed that playing upon words, where the sound was the same, was quite allowable. [Pg 103]

"Tom, do you like to ask questions?"

"Yes, I like to *give* a question to be answered."

"Aunt Lucy, what shall be our story to-night?"

"That is more easy to ask *than* to answer."

"Charlie, are you fond of mince-pie?"

"Yes, and of cherry pie *too*."

"Alice, are you not almost tired of this game?"

"Yes, I'd *receive* pleasure from a change."

"Let me see—George's *blessed*, and John's *two*—blessed too—Oh, I know, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Now let's play 'Twenty Questions.'"

"How is that played? It is quite a new game to me."

"It used to be a favorite game in distinguished circles in England; Canning, the celebrated minister, was very fond of it; and it really requires some knowledge and skill in the lawyer-like craft of cross-examination, to play it well—so have your wits about you, young people, for the more ready you are, the better you'll like it. One person thinks of a thing, and by a skillful questioning on the part of one, two, or the whole party, as you prefer it, your thought can always be found out. Twenty questions and three guesses are allowed. If Cornelia will think of something, I'll discover what it is, to show you how it is played."

"I have a thought," said Cornelia, "but you never can find it out."

"We'll see: does it belong to the animal, vegetable, mineral, or spiritual kingdoms?"

"The animal."

"Is it biped or quadruped, fish, flesh, fowl, or insect?"

"Biped." [Pg 104]

"Man, monkey, or bird?"

"Bird."

"Wild or tame?"

"Tame."

"Is it the species you think of, or one individual of it?"

"One particular individual."

"Is it used for the table?"

"The species is—but I doubt that this individual was ever used for food."

"Did this bird live in ancient or modern times—before or after the Christian era?"

"Very ancient; before the Christian era."

"Does this ancient bird belong to the goose, duck, chicken, peacock, or turkey tribe?"

"Turkey."

"Was it very thin?"

"Very, indeed—to a proverb."

"Job's turkey?"

"You've guessed it, and with ten questions too. Now you can think, Ellen, and the rest of us will question you, in turn."

"I have a thought," said Ellen.

"Treasure it then," said Charlie Bolton; "thoughts are very rare things with me. Animal, vegetable, mineral, or spiritual?"

"Vegetable."

"In its natural or prepared state?"

"Natural."

"Is it the whole, or only a part of the plant?"

"A part."

"Is it a part of a tree, a shrub, a vine, or is it of the grass kind?"

"A vine." [Pg 105]

"Is it the root, stem, leaf, flower, or fruit?"

"Fruit."

"Is it used for food?"

"The species is—this one was not."

"Is this fruit pulpy like the grape, or mealy like the bean?"

"Mealy like the bean."

"Is it a bean?"

"Yes—that's one guess."

"Was this bean an ancient or modern one?"

"Very ancient."

"I know!" cried Amy; "it was the bean Jack the Giant Killer planted, which grew up to the moon in one night, and fastened itself round one of the horns."

"You are right—eight questions and two guesses; that's pretty well. Now, Amy, 'tis your turn to think."

"I have a thought."

"Animal, vegetable, or mineral?"

"Animal."

"Quadruped or biped, fish, snake, or insect?"

"None of these; it is the production of a biped."

"In its natural or prepared state?"

"Natural—but a slight alteration was made in its shape at the time to which I refer."

"What time is it—before or after the Christian era?"

"After."

"Before or after the year 1500?"

"Very much about that time."

"Had it any thing to do with Columbus?"

"Yes; at least Columbus had something to do with it."

"Was it Columbus' egg?"

"The very thing. And now, shall we not vary the scene by having a story?" [Pg 106]

"Agreed, we are all ready to listen; but who shall tell the tale?"

"It is Alice's turn; and do give us a ghost story, for once, a nice frightful one that will make our teeth chatter and our hair stand on end—do, Alice!"

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed, but I'll tell you some sort of a tale, and hope that you will make allowances for a young beginner. I'm no Scheherezade."

"No *what*?" said Amy.

"Is it possible you have not read the Arabian Nights? Scheherezade was the princess who saved her life by telling such interesting stories; the tyrant of a Sultan intended to put her to death in the morning, but she left off in such an important part of her tale, that his curiosity led him to spare her head till she had finished the narrative. Of course she took good care to tell what the sailors call 'long yarns,' and the Sultan found out he could not live without her to divert him."

The Spectre of Alcantra, or the Conde's Daughters.

A SPANISH TALE.

The Conde de Alcantra was a Spanish nobleman, universally esteemed by those who knew him, as a man of high honor and moral worth. In person he was tall, dark, and commanding, in manner grave and dignified. The grandee of Spain is never one with whom you feel inclined to take a liberty, but the noble Conde was uncommonly reserved and serious, even sad, in the expression of his countenance. He was a widower, with two lovely children, daughters, of the ages of sixteen [Pg 107] and eighteen. Clara, the elder, a very handsome girl, strikingly resembled her father in appearance, save that a bright, hopeful, energetic spirit was displayed in her face and in almost every motion. Magdalena, the younger, and the cherished darling of both father and sister, scarcely looked as if she belonged to the same family: she inherited from her mother the transparent, delicate complexion, azure eyes, and fair, clustering curls, sometimes seen in Spain and Italy, and always so highly prized from their rarity. Gentleness, and an up-looking for love and protection, were the characteristics both of her face and mind; and doubtless her timidity and dependence upon others was much fostered by the loving cares and constant vigilance of her father.

Their ordinary residence was in Madrid, where the Conde was much engaged in affairs of state; his strict integrity, political wisdom, and fidelity in the discharge of duty, caused business of the highest moment to be committed to him by his sovereign. But, as is only too frequently the case, public cares engrossed him to the detriment of his private concerns, and some little entanglements in money matters made him resolve to look more closely into his account books, and see where the difficulty lay. It was certainly surprising, that the hereditary estates which brought in so large an income till within fifteen years, had so unaccountably decreased in value, and that the castellan, or mayordomo, who managed them, was continually complaining of the difficulty he found in raising from the peasantry the comparatively small sums he yearly transmitted to his master. But so it was: and although the Conde carried his confidence in his dependents, and his easiness of disposition, to such an extent as almost to become a fault, yet as he examined the accounts of some years' standing, a strong suspicion arose in his mind that [Pg 108] somehow he had been most egregiously cheated, and that while he had so skilfully managed the finances of the country as almost to double her revenues, he himself had been as completely managed by a cunning knave. Being a kind and a just man, he was anxious not to run the risk of wronging a faithful servant, who was always profuse in expressions of attachment to the family, and he determined to keep his suspicions within his own breast, until he had given the matter a personal investigation.

Great was the astonishment and delight of Clara and her sister when he announced to them his intention of paying a visit to the castle of Alcantra. It was there that Magdalena first saw the light, and it was there that her mother closed her eyes upon the world, leaving her husband almost distracted; he immediately removed with his little children from the scene of this great

affliction. It was soon after this sad event that the old and faithful mayordomo died; he had long been intrusted with the entire control of the estate, and was greatly beloved by his fellow-servants and by the peasantry. The Conde gave orders that the sub-steward, who had lately come into his service, and who was acquainted with the duties of the office, should take his vacant place; his feelings were at that time too much engrossed with his recent loss to institute the proper inquiries into his character and capabilities, and from that time it was that, from some cause, either from misfortune, negligence, or corruption, the entanglement of his affairs was to be dated. The Conde had never before been willing to revisit the castle; and his daughters, with the ardent curiosity of youth, longed to behold the place in which a long line of their ancestors had lived, and eagerly availed themselves of his invitation to accompany him. Their imaginations were fired by all they had heard of the old chateau; and the ruinous condition into which it had [Pg 109] fallen of late years, only added fuel to the flame. Clara remembered, or fancied that she remembered, a vast dark building, with huge towers and buttresses; she often tried to picture to her mind the home of her infancy, and to describe it to Magdalena, but these vague remembrances were all that she could recall.

Don Alonzo informed his daughters that the journey was to be commenced on the morrow, without much preparation, or any thing like an ostentatious style of travelling; they themselves would set out in the old family coach, accompanied by his secretary, Señor Roberto, and would be followed by another carriage containing their maid, Fernando, his valet, and Anselmo, a trusty servant. He intended to take with them a supply of comforts indispensable to persons of their condition, as it was probable that the castle might be destitute of them, having so long been without the presence of its master; and this was the more needful, as the castellan had received no intimation of the proposed visit. On the following morning they set out: the castle of Alcantra was situated in the north of Spain, among the wildest mountains, and as they travelled onward, scenery of the most diversified kind passed before their eyes. It was the time of the vintage; and the noble peasants of Castile, in their picturesque costume, came homeward laden with the rich purple grapes, singing the romantic lays of love and chivalry, which have passed down from one generation to another. The ballads of the Cid, and the laments of the Moors, formed the chief burden of their song. Every now and then they could distinguish some well-known passage in "Admiral Guarinos," "Baviaca," or "Don Roderick," or that sad-chorus, which sounds like a Moorish sigh,

"Woe is me, Alhama!"

[Pg 110]

At sunset, they would see the peasants seated at the doors of their cottages, cheerfully feasting upon bread and fruit, varied by the light wine of the country, preserved in goat-skins, as it is in the East: one leg of the skin forms the mouth of the bottle; and they noticed, what is generally reported by travellers, that even in this time of rejoicing, intoxication was nowhere to be witnessed. Many were the groups they met dancing upon the grass by the light of the moon; and a pleasant thing it was to see the white-haired grandsire looking on, and occasionally joining the merry band of his descendants in innocent sport and festivity, keeping a young heart under the weight of years. Clara and Magdalena were particularly struck by the native grace displayed by the youths and maidens in the bolero, a dance originally introduced by the Moors: with castanets in their hands, accompanying their steps with unpremeditated music, they would alternately advance and retreat, fly and pursue, until, exhausted by the exercise, they would rest upon the rustic bench or the green bank, and while away the hours with song and guitar. What noble-looking men are the peasants of Spain! Every one of them, from the dignity of his deportment, might well pass for a hidalgo in disguise; and the feeling of self-respect is so common, that it has passed into a proverb among the people that they are "as good gentlemen as the king, only not so rich." Proud and independent, and jealous of any encroachment upon their rights, they are yet scrupulously polite to others, and pay marked attention to strangers. While in Italy the foreigner will meet with imposition at every step, the Spaniard disdains to take advantage of his ignorance, and the significant reply, "Señor, I am a Spaniard," is sufficient answer to any suspicion of meanness or duplicity. Their tall, manly forms, wrapped in the ample cloak which the Spaniard [Pg 111] wears with unequalled grace, their oval faces, dark complexions, and flashing eyes, make them most interesting features in the landscape. Probably in no country does man, in the humbler walks of life, appear so universally clothed with the majesty suitable to his rank as lord of the creation, as he does in Spain. As they travelled through Castile, the scene was occasionally varied by meeting a band of strolling Gitanas, or Gipsies, whose swarthy hue, slender forms, and wild appearance, clearly pointed out their foreign origin; of course, they were anxious to tell the fortunes of the beautiful Señoritas, and on one occasion their father consented to gratify their curiosity. But he repented of his compliance, when he heard the woman predict to the timid and somewhat superstitious Magdalena, a speedy and imminent danger as about to befall her, and he noticed with concern the changing color with which she heard these hints of peril: but Clara, whose fearless and joyful spirit could not be daunted by such prophecies, soon laughed the roses back again into her sister's cheeks, and made the wrinkled hag retreat, full of rage at her incredulity. They also met some of those immense flocks of sheep, which form such an important item in the national wealth of Spain, and which are led southward early in the autumn, to enjoy the rich pasture grounds of Estremadura and Andalusia.

As they proceeded towards the north, the country became more rugged and mountainous, and changes in the costume of the peasantry showed that they had passed into another province: the black velvet cap of the Castilian, ever worn so as to display to advantage his noble, lofty forehead, was replaced by one of woollen material, of a brilliant red, long, and hanging down behind. The scenery every moment became more grand and sublime, and the young girls, who

had spent their lives chiefly in Madrid, were full of delight and admiration. "How can people live [Pg 112]
in the city," they exclaimed, "when such a free and happy life is before them? How can they prefer brick and stone to the everlasting hills, the soft green turf, and the majestic forests? Here, you can really behold the sky, with its beautiful fleecy clouds, ever changing in shape and hue, and you can see the starry universe spread out before you; there, you can perhaps catch a glimpse of a few stars, and a small piece of a cloud, but the rest is hidden by dead walls. In the city, our time is taken up, and our hearts are frozen, by ceremonious visits, stately dinners, and the rules of etiquette; here, in the country, a real, true life could be spent, free from insincerity and busy idleness. Dear father, will you not give up your offices at court, and live henceforth at Alcantra?" Their father smiled at their enthusiasm, and felt himself almost rejuvenated, as he listened to their raptures, flowing fresh from young and ardent hearts; but told them that they had not yet seen their ancestral castle, and that perhaps their expectations might be grievously disappointed; he would wait until they had spent some time there, before he gave them his answer.

As they approached the termination of their journey, the country became yet wilder, and the villages were more thinly scattered; while here and there a wooden cross appeared upon the roadside, with some simple inscription, calculated to inspire terror in proportion to its very simplicity. "Here they killed Iago," or "Here the robbers killed Señor Jose Blanco." They noticed, on their last day of travel, when they had entered into the territory of the Conde, that the roadside crosses became more frequent, and the cottages of the peasantry assumed a look of poverty they certainly did not bear in former times, when the lords of the manor resided upon [Pg 113]
their estate, and were able to see to the welfare of the people. When they entered the little inn of the village of Alcantra, about four miles from the castle, the garrulous old landlord greeted the Conde most warmly.

"And a good thing it is for the country that your Excellencia has returned once more to his estates. Now we may hope to have a little peace; now the peasants will not be ground down to the dust, as they have been; now some villanous upstarts I know of, will not dare to ride over them rough-shod, and to treat them as if they were beasts of the field. Viva! viva! The illustrious Conde has returned!"

The Count was much affected by the representations of this man, whom he knew to be an honest and worthy fellow, and was full of regret for what he now felt to be criminal negligence on his own part; and promised him that full investigations should take place, and that perfect justice should be done. The innkeeper asked him if his servants were well armed; "For," said he, "the nearness of the castle is no protection to you from robbery. Many travellers have left this inn, in high health and spirits, and with trunks laden with merchandise, but have never arrived at their destinations. The road is, as you well know, rough and precipitous, over-hung by huge rocks and dark forests, and the banditti have taken up their quarters somewhere in this neighborhood, though where it is none can discover. Many murders have been committed here, and many a poor fellow lies buried in unconsecrated ground, Heaven have mercy on their souls! but the murderers have never yet been caught. It is not thought that the band can be a large one, but they are very daring; it is now more safe than usual, for an atrocious murder occurred a few miles from this place within the last week, and a company of soldiers is expected here every moment; they will [Pg 114]
stay a week, and will try to capture them, but unless the Saints defend us, and all the Martyrs, Heaven only knows what will become of us all."

Don Alonzo assured him that he feared nothing, as including the coachmen they were six well-armed men, upon every one of whom he could entirely depend. "And," said he, smiling, "if matters come to a bad pass, I could count upon my daughter here, my brave Clara, as my seventh soldier; I have taught her to fire a pistol without shrieking, and to hit the mark, too, and with her protection Magdalena and I need fear nothing."

After this conversation, it is not wonderful that all were on the qui vive as they ascended the mountain road leading to the castle of Alcantra. Magdalena started at every sound, and even Clara, fearless as she was, felt relieved when she saw the lofty turrets and extensive battlements she had dimly remembered, spreading out before her, their dark outline relieved against the blue sky. If the approach was romantic and alarming, it was a good preparation to their minds for the castle itself; it was built in the times of feudal power and intestine wars, and its massive walls had well performed their part in the defence of its inmates during many sieges. And yet, strong as it was, and built, as it appeared, for eternity, a portion of this noble structure was going to decay; one wing had been very much battered in the last siege it had sustained, and the cannon-balls had done the work of centuries; but the main building looked very imposing, as if able to resist the lapse of ages, and appeared, from its elevation, to frown down upon intruders, and to scorn the very idea of danger. It was exactly such a place as was calculated to fire the imaginations and to win the hearts of young girls, brought up in a gay metropolis, from the very contrast to all they had ever seen before; there was a romance about its very gloom that was [Pg 115]
attractive to them. Associated as it was with much historic interest, and with many family traditions, they had ardently longed to behold it, and now that they saw it rise, in its dark grandeur, before them, they acknowledged that their expectations were more than realized.

There were no signs of life to be seen about the castle, and it was long before the loud, imperious knocking at the gate-way brought any one to open it; and then a man appeared, whose hesitating manner and vacant countenance plainly showed that he had never been gifted with a large share of mother-wit. With some difficulty he was made to understand that the party had a right to admittance, and the carriages entered within the courtyard. The rest of the household was by this

time aware of an unusual arrival, and came forward to receive them; but it was very evident that their visit was not only unexpected, but undesired, although the castellan and his wife strove very hard to throw into their hard, dark countenances, an expression of welcome. Señor Don Juan Baptista—so was the castellan called—was a man of most repellant countenance; his eye had a sinister, cunning look, and there was something in his large, shaggy, overhanging brow, that was really appalling; it was to be supposed that he had now put on his most amiable expression, but unless his face greatly belied him, fierce, ungoverned passions were accustomed to rule his being. His wife, Francisca, had one of those countenances that appear to dare you to find them out: hard, silent, and sullen, she looked as if the rack itself could not force her to speak unless she willed it; and her face reminded you constantly of a *wooden mask*, which not even the strongest emotions could make transparent, and allow you to catch a glimpse of the soul behind. Both were loud in their expressions of regret that their dear lord and the sweet, beautiful [Pg 116] señoritas had not let them know, beforehand, of their visit, that they might have had things more fit for their reception; the castle was rather disarranged, and not anticipating this honor, they had allowed most of the servants to depart, to enjoy a holiday for a few weeks—their household was at present very small. Don Alonzo cut short their apologies by telling them that he had attendants with him sufficient to supply the wants of himself and his daughters, although it was certainly unfortunate that it should have occurred just at this juncture; and entering the castle, he tenderly embraced Clara and Magdalena, welcoming them to their ancestral home. The girls almost shuddered, as they gazed upon the the huge hall, with its lofty carved ceiling, and its dark oak panelling. In ancient times, when it was crowded by armed retainers, or echoed to the joyful chorus of the feast and the minstrel's song, it must have been admirably suited to its purpose; but now it looked solitary and desolate, like a fit abode for the owl and the raven. At one end, a wide, substantial stone staircase led to the upper regions of the castle, branching off above in many directions; a long oak-table, capable of accommodating more than a hundred guests, extended for some distance along the hall, but it was scarcely noticed in the vast apartment. A large chimney, surrounded by stone settles, and richly ornamented with curious antique carving, formed a prominent feature in it; the tapestry on the wall, from which hunters and grim warriors appeared to look down upon our little party with surprise and displeasure, hung loosely, in many places was completely tattered, and waved in the wind as the keen air of the mountains whistled through, making Clara and Magdalena shiver with cold. Don Alonzo looked round with concern; "It is indeed many years since I have been here," said he, "and things look considerably altered; [Pg 117] but now, my daughters, let me advise you, with the aid of your waiting-woman, to make yourselves as comfortable as possible in your own rooms, and meanwhile Señor Baptista will be kind enough to have a large fire built in the hall, for it will really prove very acceptable."

Francisca showed them to their rooms: large, magnificent chambers, fitted up with massive furniture of the richest description; but the tapestry was faded and worn, and every thing showed neglect and desertion. Francisca, after escorting them to these apartments, told them that she would send Maria, the housemaid, to make up fires, bring water, and provide every thing else that they wished, but the girl was always out of the way when she was wanted, and was really not worth the salt she ate. Maria speedily appeared, however: a pale young girl of dejected aspect, with black hair drawn off from a forehead of marble whiteness, and large, sad eyes cast upon the ground. Her appearance greatly interested the kind feelings of Clara and Magdalena; she looked sorrowful and reserved, as if her heart had been chilled, and her spirit broken by harsh treatment; and the girls, who were very much of her own age, felt an instinctive pity, and resolved to win her confidence. They learned by their questions that she was an orphan, and had been brought up in the castle. She had never known any other home, and had no relations in the world, so it was not wonderful that she appeared unhappy.

As their maid appeared to be quite unwell from the journey, they dispensed with any further services from her for the day, and descended to the hall. Its aspect was considerably changed by a large, sparkling fire which blazed upon the hearth; and, after supper, Don Alonzo and his daughters drew around it, with a feeling of comfort they had not experienced since they had [Pg 118] entered the castle. As the Conde wished to discover the character of the castellan as much as possible from personal observation, he ordered him to be sent for, and invited him to a seat with them by the fire; and they were soon engaged in interesting conversation. Señor Baptista was undoubtedly a person of quick intelligence, and endowed with the gift of imparting a vivid, dramatic interest to any narrative: he told several ancient legends connected with the castle, in such a manner as to enchain the attention of his hearers. One story excited the deepest interest in Magdalena: we will call it

DOÑA INEZ; OR THE CASTELLAN'S TALE.

Several centuries ago, as my lord the Conde and the noble Señoritas very well know, this castle was in the possession of an older branch of the Alcantra family, long since extinct; and at that time the lord of the manor was a certain Don Pedro, a dark, stern man, whose portrait, clad in armor, the señoritas may see on the morrow in the old picture-gallery. Don Pedro was a man of unflinching bravery, and indomitable will; his word was law. His vassals obeyed his very looks, and flew to execute his behests. Accustomed from infancy to command, he became absolute and tyrannical; his gentle wife was all submission, and his fair daughter Inez was educated in the practice of the strictest obedience, so as scarcely to know that she had a mind of her own, when

her father was nigh. Is it wonderful that when the unnatural constraint was removed by his absence, her innate gayety of disposition broke out with all the impulsiveness of youth, and her young affections clung to the nearest object? Such an object was found in Bernardo, a handsome [Pg 119] and noble young man, an orphan, and distant relative, who had been reared in the castle: he had been the playmate of Inez in childhood; her comforter, companion, and teacher in girlhood; and now, as she advanced to woman's estate, they made the discovery that their hearts were knit together by a love which had grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength, till it had become a part of their very souls. But how dare to reveal their affection? Bernardo, although of noble lineage, and in himself every thing that the fondest father could desire for his daughter, had his fortune yet to win by his good sword; and Inez was heiress to broad lands, and might well aspire to a princely alliance. But love scorns all such distinctions: humble thoughts of herself, and proud thoughts of her Bernardo, filled the heart of Inez, and as she plighted her troth to him, she vowed she would wed none but him, and would patiently wait until the time should come when her betrothed could claim her as his own. Bernardo went to the wars, and greatly distinguished himself against the Moors: Ferdinand conferred upon him various marks of favor, and the noble and lovely Queen Isabel girded on the sword presented by the king with her own jewelled fingers.

And now, with a heart beating high with hope, and with the prospect of great advancement before him, the young man returned to visit the home of his childhood: it was his purpose, with the sweetness of a few weeks' holiday, to repay himself for all the toils, dangers, and privations of a year. But when he arrived, how changed was the whole aspect of the castle! Inez was in disgrace, and was ordered by her tyrannical father to be shut up in her room, and to be fed with the bread of affliction and the water of humiliation. Bernardo was deeply distressed: he at length succeeded, through the pity of the servants, in obtaining an interview, and the poor girl, weeping [Pg 120] upon his breast, where she had so often been comforted before, told him the sad tale of her trials.

Soon after he had left, a noble Marquis, of great wealth, had made overtures for her hand, which Don Pedro, without consulting her, had at once accepted, and promised that within a year the bridal feast should be celebrated. When he informed his daughter of her fate, she besought him with tears not to send her from her home; but his only reply was that the matter was determined, and that all she had to do was to submit and to prepare for the wedding. Dreading as she did her father's wrath, she dreaded yet more this hateful, compulsory marriage, and kneeling down at his feet, with streaming eyes, she prayed him in the humblest manner to spare his only child; she could never survive the union—it would break her heart—she was young, and wished still to remain for some years under the paternal roof. But tears and entreaties were unavailing. Don Pedro commanded her, in the most peremptory manner, to obey. Rising, with a dignity and composure of manner he had never seen in her before, for she had ever appeared in his presence only a timid and frightened child, she professed her readiness to make his will her law in every other point; she would serve him like a slave, die for him; she would never marry against his wishes, but would ever strive to approve herself a dutiful daughter. But in this point she must imitate his own firmness, and prove herself his child; a vow was upon her soul that she must not break, and she could not, she would not, marry the Marquis de Oviedo. As she stood there, so young and so determined, with all the pride of her race and all the dignity of womanhood rising up to aid the true love which beat in her heart, even her father was struck with admiration, and [Pg 121] for a moment hesitated. But vindictive passion triumphed over better feelings, and he ordered her to be placed in her chamber, under strict confinement. Once a month, since then, had he visited her apartment, to ask her if she were now ready to yield her submission; and, upon her reply that she would rather die than wed the Marquis de Oviedo, with an angry scowl he would leave her room. Poor Inez looked thin and care-worn, but was greatly comforted by seeing her betrothed; and they agreed that it was better, whatever the consequences might be, to inform her father of their engagement, and to endeavor to mollify his heart. As Bernardo had returned from the wars with such distinction, he had some slight hope that the crime of loving Don Pedro's daughter might possibly be forgiven.

They were still engaged in these discussions, when the door opened, and Don Pedro appeared; his face was wild with passion, black with rage. He roughly snatched Doña Inez from the arms of her lover, to whom she clung with all the energy of despair, as the shipwrecked mariner holds fast to the mast or beam which is his only hope of safety, or even to the anchor which will surely sink him to the lowest depths. Turning to his followers, who were trained to obey his every command without a question, he ordered them to convey Don Bernardo to the deepest dungeon of the castle, and to chain him to the wall; and then to bring the key to him. Doña Inez, in a phrensy of terror, knelt at his feet, and begged that all his anger might be visited upon her; but spurning her from him, he told her that she should feel enough of it yet, and need pray for no more—he had a punishment still in store for her, and in due time she should realize what it was to defy his power. He left her in a swoon, and did not see her again until after ten days, when he [Pg 122] entered her apartment, and grimly smiling, commanded her to accompany him, as he wished to conduct her to her lover; adding, with a peculiar look, that if it were her wish, as he was all devotion to her slightest whim, he would never henceforth separate them. Scarcely knowing what to think, but dreading the worst from the ironical tone of mock gallantry with which he spoke, she followed him with faltering steps, a vague terror dimming her eyes and chilling her heart. He led her through many winding passages, opening heavy iron gates, until they at length reached the deep dungeons which are found beneath this castle. There, in a damp cell, heavily chained to the wall, she beheld, by the light of the torch Don Pedro carried, her own Bernardo! But, oh, how changed! how emaciated! He seemed to be asleep. Her father told her to awake him; she took his hand, but started back—that icy touch had told her all—he was dead, starved to death by her own father!

That moment reason forsook the agonized mind of Doña Inez; the vaults were filled with her shrieks, and so awful was the spectacle of her despair, that even her father was terrified. He tried to soothe her, but it was too late; he carried her back again to her room, a raving maniac. A brain fever ensued, of the most violent description; and happily for the distracted girl, in a few days she was released by death from all her sufferings. And now it was that, in the consequences of his own actions, Don Pedro found his punishment; as he witnessed the agony of his afflicted daughter, as he heard her ravings, as he saw her toss her white arms and pitifully cry out for Bernardo, or tear her long, black, dishevelled tresses, horror and despair filled his heart. His conscience, so long torpid, at length awoke, and remorse preyed upon his soul like a vulture. And [Pg 123] when he beheld that form, lately so lovely and blooming, stretched out, pale and motionless, upon the bed of death, anguish seized upon him to such a degree that, rushing into his own chamber, he put a period to his miserable existence.

Queen Isabella, when she heard the particulars of these tragical events, ordered the lovers to be interred within one tomb; the señoritas may see it in the old chapel, in the north-east corner—their effigies are on the top, carved in marble, with clasped hands, with this inscription: Amor morte, or Love in death. The old branch being now extinct, having, as it were, burnt itself out with its fiery passions, the estates passed into the hands of your honorable ancestry; may it remain in the family for a thousand years!

But my tale is not yet done—would that it were! There would be more peace in this castle if this were the case! For people do say that Don Pedro cannot rest, even in purgatory. I am not one at all given to credulity, and it takes something to startle me; but I must own that I would never willingly be found in the old parts of the castle after nightfall. I myself have seen strange lights and startling forms, and have heard noises for which I could not account, groans, and shrieks, and the clanking of chains. None of the peasants in the neighborhood will venture here after night; and the servants can scarcely be induced to stay in, what they call, the haunted castle. The story runs, that about midnight Don Pedro begins his peregrinations, clad in armor, as he is represented in his portrait; in one hand he bears a flaming torch; in the other a large bunch of keys, and a chain which trails upon the ground. He has been seen bearing in his arms a female form, clad in white, with long black hair streaming to the wind, tossing her arms in wild despair, and uttering piteous cries. It is thought that his punishment consists in nightly visits to the cell in [Pg 124] which Bernardo died, and nightly endurance of the sight of his daughter's anguish; some also say that the skeleton of his victim is presented to his eyes, beaming with light, and that every ray eats into his soul like a canker. I do not answer for all these tales, but this is the universal belief. I merely relate to your favors the common talk of the peasantry, ever given to superstition.

"I dimly remember hearing some such story in my childhood, from the old castellan, from whom, I suppose, you have received the legend," said the Conde; "but old Don Pedro never walked in my day, and if he does now, his conscience must have become more tender with the lapse of years. Cheer up, Magdalena, light of my eyes! You look quite pale from this horrible tale. I'll answer for it that Don Pedro will not appear to you; if he does, I'll settle his uneasy spirit for him. Surely, you do not believe in ghosts? You are not so weak?"

"No, dear father; I know that it cannot be; and yet I own to feeling some nervousness on the subject. Much as I long to live here, if I thought there were any truth in such a spectral appearance, I would beg you to leave to-morrow."

"That would be a sad loss to this castle, señorita," said Baptista, furtively glancing at her pallid face from under his shaggy eyebrows. "We must hope that Don Pedro may not walk to-night."

"Another romantic tale is told about a daughter of our house," said Don Alonzo, wishing to draw off Magdalena'a thoughts from the subject which filled them. "If you feel inclined to hear it, I will relate it."

"Nothing would be more pleasant," said the girls, who delighted in these traditions.

DOÑA ISABEL, OR THE SECRET PASSAGE. [Pg 125]

About a hundred and fifty years ago, when our branch had been long-established at Alcantra, there flourished here a certain Don Alphonso, who also had a beautiful daughter, Isabel by name. Her portrait hangs in the gallery, and is remarkable for a sweet bravery of look, and for a merry, piquant glance of her black eye, which I greatly admired when a young man, and of which I have been often reminded when I looked at my Clara. I think, my daughters, that you will agree with me in seeing a strong resemblance in person, as I also do in character; you can judge of that as my story proceeds. And by the way, Clara mia, tradition gives the room you occupy to the Lady Isabel; it has ever since been called Doña Isabel's chamber; so, when lying upon her bed to-night, you can dream of your fair predecessor. Her father, also, was rather fond of having his own way, and in this the daughter fully sympathized with him; it is said to be a characteristic of our race, so we had better call this obstinacy a noble firmness, and thereby save our self-love. Don Alphonso, however, was not quite such a bloody-minded tyrant as Don Pedro: how could he be, as he was one of our ancestors? The matter is clearly impossible. And I wish you to notice, my

daughters, how, with the lapse of years, the race of fathers improves: beginning with a murderous Don Pedro, a self-willed Don Alphonso then walks upon the stage; and lastly, as a perfect specimen of a dutiful, obsequious papa, behold me, ladies—at your feet!

I have told you that Isabel had a mind of her own; she showed it very plainly by falling in love in a most unorthodox, unfilial, enthusiastic sort of way—with whom? You will be so shocked, my daughters, that I almost dread to tell you. If she had waited, like a dutiful child, till her father had [Pg 126] told her she *might* love, it would have been another thing! But this headstrong girl seemed to think she had as good a right to be happy in her own way as a peasant! True, the man of her choice was not a reprobate: he was not even a low-born, unmannerly churl: Don Fernando de Velasquez stood foremost among the young cavaliers of Spain, in gallantry and in that nobility of mind which, should ever accompany gentle birth. But yet it was in that very gentle birth that all the offence lay, for Fernando's ancestors had long been at enmity with the house of Alcantra, and this ancient feud had been embittered by years. But, sometimes, there appears to be a fate in the affairs of men, especially when a woman, and a pretty woman, is in question: so it happened that Don Fernando was, one day, riding at some distance from his home, when his good fortune enabled him to rescue a lady, whose horse, frightened by some object in the road, reared and plunged in a most alarming manner. It was Doña Isabel, who had out-ridden her attendants, and who now felt that she owed her life to this very handsome, polite, and noble-looking cavalier. Could he do less than soothe her fluttered nerves, guide her horse, and make himself as agreeable as possible? Could she do less than feel ardently grateful, and manifest it in every look and accent? Very improper it was, certainly, as I said before, for a daughter to think of a young man until her parents' permission is given; but I have heard of one or two other instances in which this occurred; and before either made the discovery who the agreeable companion was, when, of course, if they were dutiful, antagonism and animosity would have filled their bosoms, they were both unmistakably, undeniably, desperately in love!

Is it wonderful that Don Fernando escorted her to the gate of the castle? Or that proud Don [Pg 127] Alphonso did not invite him in, notwithstanding his daughter's imploring looks, even after he had heard from her lips of her deliverance? Are my daughters very much astonished that little perfumed notes, exquisitely written, doubtless with little kissing doves stamped in the corners, and signed 'Yours till death,' passed between the two castles? There was a prodigious waste of sentiment on the occasion, quite enough to set up twenty pairs of well-behaved, proper, respectable lovers. It came to such a pass that Fernando declared, and I believe the fellow was in earnest, that existence would be intolerable to him unless he could meet his Isabel; and the lady, although feeling some qualms of conscience about the matter, agreed to see him daily, when the evening star rose in the sky. So, while her poor old father—good easy man! thought that his daughter was in her chamber, or piously engaged in the oratory saying her *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters*, and singing a vesper hymn to the Virgin, the naughty girl had gone by a secret passage underground to a wood at some distance, where she met her betrothed.

This passage is said to begin in one of the chambers of the castle, and winding along in the wall, to proceed downward towards the dungeons underground, and then to pass away to the wood already mentioned. It was originally intended, no doubt, as a means of escape, or of communication with the outer world, in case of a siege; but, at that time, it had almost passed into oblivion. After the events I am relating, the outlet into the wood was stopped up, and where the passage is to be found no one knows: so that if Clara wishes to imitate the conduct of her beautiful kinswoman, and to arrange clandestine meetings, she will have to spoil the romance of the proceeding by quietly walking through the open gate. [Pg 128]

But at length, some prying eyes found out these nocturnal interviews, and great was the rage of Don Alphonso. The lovers were seized, brought back in tribulation to the castle, and imprisoned, one in her chamber, the other in a dungeon. But love finds many devices: whether it was a golden key that opened her door, or whether it was her eloquent tongue and pleading looks, I know not, but certain it is that in the dead of night, when all but two in the castle were sunk in profound slumber, a fair lady softly stepped into her father's apartment, drew a large bunch of keys from under his pillow, and proceeding down to the dungeons by the secret passage, set Don Fernando at liberty! Soon did they breathe the sweet, fresh air of freedom: soon did they find their way to the territory of the Count de Velasquez, and to the chapel where an obedient priest spoke over their kneeling forms those words which can never be unsaid, by which Holy Mother Church sanctions the union of loving hearts.

And the father? He stormed considerably—we fathers generally do in such cases. But, upon mature consideration, he concluded that amiability was, under the circumstances, the best policy: and being in reality a kind-hearted man, he forgave the young couple, and invited them to dinner! And thus ended the ancient feud between the houses of Alcantra and Velasquez!

After the termination of the tale, Señor Baptista retired, and the Conde and his daughters remained chatting by the fire for some time; at length the wasting embers, and the increasing chilliness of the air, warned them that it was time to seek repose. With a reverence unhappily too much wanting in our land of youthful independence, Clara and Magdalena knelt before their father, and as he imprinted the warm kiss upon their brows, and uttered the heart-felt "God bless [Pg 129] you, my daughters!" their feelings, both of piety and of filial love, feelings, how closely united!

were certainly freshened.

Taking their little night-lamps, they proceeded up the staircase, but soon parted, as their rooms were situated in different galleries. From the dim light, and the many branching corridors, Magdalena mistook her way, and was just convinced of her mistake, when a sudden puff of wind put out her lamp. Feeble glimmering as it gave, it yet would have enabled her to find her way, and she was just on the point of calling out for aid, when she perceived a light approach from an adjacent gallery. She thought it must be a servant, but upon stepping where she could command a better view of it, what was her horror to see a form advance like that described in the story of the castellan! It appeared to be a tall man, clad in complete armor, with visor down: in one hand he bore a torch, which seemed to emit a supernatural light and in the other, a bunch of keys, and a long chain, dragging upon the ground. She distinctly heard the clanking sound of the chain, and the ringing noise of his footstep upon the stone, ere she distinguished the figure, so exactly similar to that of the spectre of Alcantra, the vengeful Don Pedro which was so vividly impressed upon her imagination. She did not shriek, she did not faint; but quickly bounding along the corridor, she flew like lightning down the broad staircase, and found herself in the hall. She had hoped to find her father still there, but it was dark and deserted, and looked so vast and so gloomy, by the cold light of the moon, which streamed in at the furthest windows, that she felt a cold chill creep over her. At this moment the clock struck twelve: as she counted the strokes, which seemed to her excited fancy as if they would never cease tolling, she thought she heard the [Pg 130] ringing footsteps approach: in an agony of terror, she rushed through the darkness, which was indeed to her a darkness which could be felt, a palpable thing, towards the chimney place, hoping to find enough of flame to light her lamp; but in vain. The air felt to her so thick and heavy, as if her lungs could scarcely breathe it: she listened for the sound of a step, but heard only the beating of her own heart. At length she summoned courage to retrace her steps, to find either her own room or her sister's, for the silence and solitude of that vast hall were too oppressive to be endured. Softly and slowly she crept up the staircase, when suddenly she felt her wrist clasped by a cold iron hand: she gave one piercing shriek, and fell senseless to the ground.

When she came to herself, she was lying upon her bed, in the same clothes she wore the preceding day, and the bright sun was streaming in at the windows. She arose, with a sense of pain and confusion, as if some dreadful thing had happened, which she could not recall to her mind; but suddenly the whole scene of the preceding night flashed upon her. She thought, it is impossible: certainly it was a painful dream, caused by the exciting conversation of last evening, and by my impressions of the castle. But all the minute circumstances crowded so vividly into her mind, that she thought it could not be that a mere vision of the night should produce so powerful an effect. But what convinced her of the reality of these occurrences, was the fact that she had not undressed for the night: casting her eyes down upon her person, as she thought this, they fell upon her hand; and there she distinctly saw the marks left upon her delicate skin by that iron grip to which she had been subjected! As she saw this, all the crawling horror and choking fear of the preceding evening came back thick upon her, and a feeling of faintness which she could [Pg 131] scarcely resist: but just then her eye fell upon the crucifix, and with a sensation of self-reproach that she had so long forgotten the supports and comforts of religion, she knelt down, and fervently besought aid from on high. And never, under any circumstances, is such a prayer in vain: her mind, so fearfully tried, resumed its self-command, and calmness and peace stole back again into her heart. She opened her window: it was a lovely day, and the mountain air, so bracing and reviving, so deadly to sickly fears and nervous sentimentalities, had an inspiring effect upon her; she laved herself in the cold spring water, arranged her dress, and sought her sister's room.

When there, she felt her tremors return, as she related to her the events of the night; but Clara's brave and joyous spirit was not of the kind to yield, even for a moment, to supernatural terrors. With her arm around her sister, as if to shield her from all harm, she told her that the first thing to do was to remove all Magdalena's effects to her chamber, as she did not think she could trust her out of her sight for one moment, after such an adventure.

"But, surely, it must have been your excited imagination!"

"How then do you account for my finding myself on top of my bed, and dressed? And how do you make out these purple marks?"

"True; but it's very certain a ghost could not have carried you in his arms to your room—it makes me laugh, the very idea! You are not very heavy, but rather too substantial for a ghost, I should think! And he must have been a very smart hobgoblin to know so well which was your room—that seems to me as if he must be an acquaintance of our very earthly-looking castellan. And just as if a ghost could make such a mark upon your wrist! Bah! what a clumsy contrivance! I've read of [Pg 132] these amiable spirits *burning* their marks into your flesh, but the blue spots! they are made by good strong muscles. Was your *spook* polite enough to bring your lamp, as well as yourself, into your room?"

"I never thought of that! I am sure not, for I always put it on the dressing-table; come and see!"

They looked, and no lamp was there; they examined the staircase, and there was a large grease spot, but no lamp.

"See, sister! here is a corroboration of my tale!"

"Oh, I don't doubt a word of it; and I don't doubt the ghost put the lamp into the pantry this

morning, nicely trimmed. There is villany here, Magdalena; I believe that rascal of a Baptista—I must call him so, he has such a hang-dog look—wants to drive us away, for reasons of his own: I can never forgive him for frightening my poor darling so. We'll see if the ghost assail you, or pay you any polite attentions, while you are with me! I've never been so lucky as to see any of the creatures, and should like to try a few experiments upon them: I never even meet snakes in the woods, or any of those things that frighten others. So, Señor Hobgoblin, come and welcome!"

By this time Clara had completely chased away her sister's lowness of spirits, and they descended to the breakfast-room, pleasantly talking together. The castellan was in the hall, and Clara did not fail to notice that he fixed his eye searchingly upon Magdalena as they passed, and did not take it off while he asked, with an obsequious air, if the señoritas had passed a comfortable night in the cheerless old castle?

"An uncommonly refreshing one, owing to the hospitable cares of yourself and Francisca," said Clara, answering for both; "my sister had something like the nightmare, but otherwise we were very comfortable." [Pg 133]

When they were alone, they told their father the events of the night, and it was his first impulse at once to charge the castellan with villany, and to dismiss him from his post; but Clara persuaded him to wait yet some days, until the whole matter was well cleared up, before he took any action.

"But, Magdalena! I cannot have my little girl's cheek blanched, and her mind filled with ghostly terrors!" "Don't be afraid for me, dear father," said his daughter, smiling; "Clara's bravery has quite reanimated mine, and she has laughed me out of the belief of its being a spirit at all; I now wonder I could ever have thought so." "All very well, my beloved; but there is a great difference between breakfast time, when the sun is shining brightly into the room, and midnight, with dark corridors and a feebly burning lamp—especially when it goes out." "True, father," said Clara, laughing; "but I intend to provide for quite an illumination to-night, and do not expect to let poor Magdalena stir from my sight all day."

That day passed off without any incidents, and was very agreeably spent in an examination of the ancient castle, with its many relics of by-gone times, its collection of portraits, its spacious rooms, winding galleries, and magazine of armory and weapons. From the battlements they enjoyed a view of the country beneath them, unsurpassed in extent and grandeur: it spread out before their eyes a beautiful panorama, comprising hill and dale, forest and cultivated land; the little whitewashed cottage, with its ascending smoke, and the flocks of sheep scattered about, gave a lively interest to the scene, and endeared it to their hearts: man ever loves to see tokens of the nearness of brother man. Magdalena clasped her father's hand: "O, may we not always live here?" "But what about that ghost?" "O, I forgot; but if Clara lays the uneasy spirit of Don Pedro, [Pg 134] then will you not remove here?" "I think I will, my daughters, if you both desire it. I dreaded to come here, but find that time has so mellowed and softened my grief, that I can now feel pleasure in revisiting the spots made sacred to me by your dear mother's presence. And I also feel as if I had neglected my duty, through too great an abandonment to grief; here, in my ancestral possessions, it certainly lies. The peasants, I fear, have greatly suffered from my absence, and now they scarcely know me; and I am almost a stranger to the neighboring gentry. If we remove here, will you, my daughters, aid me in making this castle the scene of hospitality and kindness, and will you extend your care to the neglected poor and ignorant, who are scattered through these valleys?" The girls answered with joy in the affirmative, and already began laying plans for visiting the sick, reading to the old, and teaching the young.

That night Magdalena's fair head was encircled by Clara's arm, and their hands clasped together; the younger sister soon fell asleep, after some light confidential chat, such as sisters only can have, there being in that connection the sensation of perfect safety, of the fellow-feeling of youth, and of that entire understanding of every thought and allusion, resulting from intimate intercourse from birth. But Clara was wakeful; she thought over the strange events of the preceding night, and the more she reflected, the more convinced she was of some plan on the part of the castellan, for she connected together his looks, his tale, and the sequel of Magdalena's ghost, as the merry girl would call the spectral appearance. While engaged in these thoughts, the clock struck twelve: "the witching hour!" she thought; "I wonder if the illustrious Don Pedro is walking now!" Just then her sharp ear detected a little clinking noise on the opposite side of her [Pg 135] large, dark chamber; she was all attention, but not a motion did she make to disturb her sleeping sister; her arm still encircled her lovingly, her hand clasped Magdalena's. Gazing into the darkness, there suddenly appeared in the room a luminous skeleton, frightful enough, truly, to weak nerves; but Clara was gifted with a calm and fearless spirit, *mens sana in corpore sano*; and her unspoken thought was—"Ah, phosphorus! pretty well done that, for the country! it is really worthy of one of our Madrid conjurers!" Watching intently to see if any other show was forthcoming, the skeleton as suddenly disappeared as it had come, and she heard various sepulchral groans and sighs, with a running commentary of the rattling of chains and jingling of keys. At last this pleasing interlude, as she termed it, ceased altogether, and in a few moments she again distinguished that clinking sound, and all was silence in her chamber. "Well!" thought Clara, "the show is certainly over for the night, I might as well go to sleep. Very kind, certainly, to provide for our entertainment! But I am glad Magdalena did not wake."

The following day Clara told her adventure in such a mirthful manner to her father and sister, that it was impossible to avoid seeing it in a ludicrous light. However, arrangements were made to stop any further display of theatricals, if they should be attempted the ensuing night; and

Clara spent some time in her own room, examining the wall opposite her bed. The result was, that upon raising the tapestry, and carefully striking every panel, she observed that one gave a hollow sound: she tried to slide it up, she tried to slide it down, she tried to slide it sideways, but it was unavailing. Determined not to give it up, she felt in every part, and at last, after spending several hours in the search, her perseverance was rewarded; it suddenly flew open! she had at [Pg 136] last touched the hidden spring, and here, in her own room, as she had suspected, was Doña Isabel's secret passage! Greatly was she tempted to explore the dark and narrow way, and to descend the stairs she saw through the gloom; but prudence prevailed, and she comforted herself with the thought that she had made discoveries enough for one day.

Another awaited her, however: she had scarcely closed the panel and replaced the tapestry, when there was a knock at the door; it was Maria bringing in wood and water. Poor Maria appeared to be the general drudge of the house, and her slender, delicate frame was borne down with labor. Clara's bright and cheerful kindness had quite gained the young girl's heart, unused as she was to aught but harshness and reprimand. Her soul expanded, and her silent lips were opened under the genial influence—it was like the sun shining upon the little flower, shut up against the chilling dews of night, but spontaneously opening under his joyful beams. She told her her history: she was the only grandchild of the former castellan, the faithful servant of the house, so beloved by Don Alonzo: at his death she was a little child, and had ever spent her life in the service of his successor. When very young, she had met with kindness from the other servants; but they were soon dismissed, and for years there had been none in the castle but those she now saw—the castellan and his wife, the half-witted Sebastiano, and herself. But she said that occasionally Señor Baptista had company—and she shuddered as she said it—ferocious-looking men, armed to the teeth, and generally wearing masks. She always kept out of the way when they were about; but one thing she knew, that they did not enter nor depart by the gate of the castle, and that Señor Baptista must have some other way of admitting them. "Do you think they can be the banditti they talk of?" "I do not doubt it, and I have so longed to get away from this wicked place, [Pg 137] that I often lie awake at night thinking about it. They would kill me if they thought I had betrayed them;—will you protect me?" "[**missing words**] my poor Maria: and so you are the old castellan's grandchild! I remember hearing my father say that he yearly transmitted to Baptista a handsome annuity for this poor orphan: of course you never got any portion of it?" "Not a single quarto: but now I must go, I should be missed; á Dios, señorita querida!"

Clara lost not a moment in seeking her father, and in communicating to him her important intelligence. Cool action was indispensably necessary: for the first and the last time in their lives, there was a secret between the sisters. After dinner, Don Alonzo expressed a wish to ride, to see if any changes had taken place in the neighborhood, and his daughters declining to accompany him, as had been agreed between them, he invited his secretary, with the castellan and his wife, to accompany him—an honor which they gladly accepted. Soon after their departure, Clara sent a note Don Alonzo had written, by the hands of their trusty Anselmo, to the village of Alcantra, requiring the immediate attendance of the band of soldiers stationed there; and before the return of the carriage, they were admitted by Maria, and conducted to a room adjoining Clara's, the weak-minded Sebastiano being easily kept out of the way.

At night, a change of apartments took place: Clara and Magdalena slept, or rather waked, in their father's room, and he quietly awaited in theirs the progress of events. At twelve o'clock, he heard the slight sound described by his daughter, as proceeding from the opening of the panel. He waited a few moments, to allow the intruders to enter, and then, beholding forms arrayed in [Pg 138] flames and white winding-sheets before him, he raised the pistol he held in his hand, pulled the trigger, and the foremost fell groaning to the ground. Instantly the soldiers and servants stationed in the adjoining chamber rushed into the room with lights, and before the rest of the villains could recover from their surprise, they were all captured. Upon raising the wounded man, they beheld, gnashing his teeth with fury, Señor Baptista himself, the leader of the band! ten men were they in all, and as they subsequently discovered, this comprised the whole of the banditti. Entirely under the control of the artful Baptista, their object was not to injure, but to alarm the Conde's family, hoping thus to drive them away from a place filled with supernatural horror; whereas any harm done to them would have infallibly brought down upon their heads the vengeance of government.

Francisca, also, was secured, and the whole band was sent off to the nearest prison, to await their trial. The attempt was made to work upon the woman's fears of Francisca, to induce her to make confession, and to implicate her companions. Iron can be fashioned into any shape upon the anvil, but a will like hers no fire is hot enough to melt, no hammer hard enough to break or subdue. They promised her pardon, if she would open her lips; but her scornful smile showed that she would remain true to her own code of honor, be the consequences what they might. Abundant evidence proved the guilt of all concerned: the men suffered the penalty of offended justice, and Francisca was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, but managed to escape, and was never heard of more.

On the morning following the capture, the secret passage was thoroughly explored, and a discovery made, involving many important results. A number of the dungeons were found piled [Pg 139] up with merchandise of various descriptions, and whole chests of gold and silver were there deposited: information was immediately transmitted to government, but the king himself wrote a letter to Don Alonzo, thanking him for his many faithful and unrequited services, and begging his acceptance of the treasure found within his walls, much of which was no doubt his own. The Conde gratefully accepted this evidence of his sovereign's favor, and took great pains to discover

the relatives of those who had been murdered by the banditti, restoring to them fourfold. The treasure that remained was more than sufficient to disencumber his estates, and to restore them to the flourishing condition of olden times. He endowed hospitals, churches, and schools with the residue; and the peasants of all that region will long have cause to bless Doña Clara's bravery and Don Alonzo's munificence.

It is almost needless to add that Maria, in whom every day developed new graces under the quickening influence of kindness, was well provided for by the Conde; and upon her marriage with his secretary, Señor Roberto, he presented her with a handsome dowry. The old castle of Alcantra, delivered from its spectre, was soon converted by masons, carpenters, and upholsterers, into a most comfortable abode; and the hospitality of its noble master, and the charms of his fair daughters, attracted to it all that was worthy, intelligent, and lovely in the adjacent country.

"Is that all?" said Amy, who had been listening with glistening eyes.

"All? I hope so indeed; for do you know, my dears," said Mrs. Wyndham, "that it is past eleven o'clock? Hasten away now to your nests, and take care not to dream of the spectre of Alcantra."

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 140]

A SKATING ADVENTURE.—WHAT IS MY THOUGHT LIKE?—QUESTIONS.—THE ORPHAN'S TALE, OR THE VICISSITUDES OF FORTUNE.

Saturday morning was so bright and cold—such a frosty, finger-pinching winter day, that, at breakfast, George proposed the riddle, "What two fishes would you tie together on a day like this?" As none were able to guess it, he pronounced the assembled company intolerably stupid, and gave as the solution, *skates* and *soles*. He declared the weather was made on purpose for skating; and although his uncle expressed some doubts as to the thickness of the ice, George's eloquence and earnestness carried the point, especially as, from his own account, his experience was so great that you would have concluded he was at least sixty years old. So the boys set off for a large pond, at the distance of about a mile, accompanied by the girls, well wrapt up in cloaks, furs, and mufflers, of every description, all in the highest spirits, and quite ready for fun and frolic; and the quick walk through the frosty air, broken by many a hop, skip, and jump, certainly did not tend to repress the exuberance of their laughter and excitement. Is any one too grave and too wise to approve of such conduct? allow me to ask, reverend sir, or venerable madam, as the case may be, how many centuries are pressing their weight upon your silver locks? Methuselah himself might remember that he once was young, and sympathize with the innocent light-heartedness of youth: and surely you cannot have arrived at quite his length of years. 'Tis a great [Pg 141] mistake to suppose that dullness and moping gravity have any thing in common with either goodness or wisdom: they are but the base imitations, the spurious counterfeits, which can pass only with the undiscerning. Welcome, joyous laugh, and youthful glee! the world has quite enough of care and sorrow, without repressing the merry heart of childhood. Wiser would it be for you, oh sad and weary spirit, sick of the buffetings of the cold and selfish crowd, for a little time to come out of your unhappy self, and by sympathy with others, again to become a little child. Your soul would be refreshed and strengthened by bathing in the morning dews of youth; here would you find a balm for the wounds inflicted by the careless world; many a mourner has been drawn away from that sorrow which feeds upon the very springs of life, by the innocent caresses and gay converse of a child. Cleave then to your liveliness, young people! and throw away from you all vapors, megrims, and melancholic feelings! Believe me, real sorrow will come soon enough, and your groundless depression of spirits may have more in common with ill-nature than with thoughtfulness or earnestness of mind: true wisdom is both cheerful and loving.

The girls staid for some time admiring the evolutions of the skaters as they gracefully wound about in intricate figures, or cut their names upon the ice; but they declared at last that they must retreat before the attacks of Jack Frost, who pinched their noses, fingers, and toes in an unmerciful manner. The boys, ardent in the pursuit of sport, still persevered, and George especially, who was devoted to this amusement, distinguished himself by his skill. "Take care, George!" said his brother John, "you are going too far from the shore; it's hardly safe out there. [Pg 142] Please to recollect, that neither you nor I can swim, and we'd be in a fine case if you fell in." "Who's afraid? I'm not for one!" cried George, fearlessly dashing off to the centre of the pond: but at the very moment when he was raising a triumphant shout, and calling upon the rest to follow him, a sharp crack was heard, the ice gave way under him, and he disappeared in the water! A cry of dismay broke from the group of his companions: instinctively John rushed forward to save him, but was held back by the others, who well knew that two would then be lost, instead of one. But in an instant, before George rose again to the surface, Tom Green, the oldest of the cousins, and a tall, manly fellow, had stripped off his coat, and gaining the spot, had plunged into the water. It was intensely cold, and he was obliged to break away the ice for some distance round before he was able to seize hold of poor George, who had risen up only to find a glassy wall, impenetrable to all his efforts, between himself and the outer air, and who had given himself up for lost.

Tom at length succeeded in forcing his way to ice thick enough to sustain his weight, and giving

up his precious burden to the anxious group above, he reached the shore in safety. Both were chilled through, and almost numb, from the excessive cold of the water, and Tom's hands were cut by the ice, which he had been obliged to break: but they were not the lads tamely to give up, and moan over their condition, when they were able to act. "Now, boys, for a race!" cried Tom: "it's the only hope of putting a little life into us, and of keeping off the rheumatism—let us see who will be the first at The Grange!" They accordingly started, running as fast as the numbness of their feet would allow, and soon arrived at the house; but what remarkable objects were Tom and George, when they presented themselves before the eyes of their astonished aunt and cousins! Their dress, soaked with water, was now perfectly stiff, like a coat of armor, and the edges hung with icicles, as did their hair; Cornelia, concerned as she was for her brother and cousin, could not, when she thought of it, long afterwards, refrain from merry peals of laughter at the ludicrous appearance they made—they looked as if they had come from the North Pole, representatives from the regions of eternal ice and snow. Mrs. Wyndham very soon had beds prepared for them, where, wrapt up in blankets, and comforted by a warm drink, which the advocates of the Maine Liquor Law would not have altogether approved of, they speedily recovered their vital warmth, and the elasticity of their spirits. Uncle John assured the young party, who were full of fears for their health, that his anticipations of evil consequences had been scattered by seeing those piled-up plates at dinner-time return to him to be replenished: he thought that such fine appetites were very good symptoms. They spent the day in bed, but were so much recruited from their exhaustion by a sound sleep, that Aunt Lucy mercifully took off her restriction, and allowed them to join the family group at supper. Tom's hands were bound up, on account of "those honorable scars," as Cornelia called them, and the two, the rescued and the rescuer, were decidedly the heroes of the evening: the girls, ever full of admiration of gallant conduct, looked upon good-natured and pleasant Tom Green with a respect they had not felt before.

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One of the games this evening was "What is my thought like?" Mary went round the circle asking the question, and when she announced that her thought was *President Taylor*, there was some amusement at the incongruity of the replies. She then asked each one for a reason of the resemblance, and an answer was to be given immediately, or a forfeit to be paid.

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"Cornelia, why was President Taylor like a *sunset*?"

"Because his career was splendid like the sun, and his loss equally regretted."

"John, why was he like a *brick*?"

"So substantial."

"Amy, why was he like a *cat*?"

"Why—because he was so 'cute."

"Alice, why was he like a *sigh*?"

"He always excited so much sympathy in the hearts of the people."

"George, how did he resemble *cream*?"

"Because he was the very best and tip-top of all that was good."

"Tom, why was he like a *cow*?"

"Because he did not know how to run."

"Ellen, why was he like an *umbrella*?"

"Because he sheltered many."

"Gertrude, how did he resemble the *Alps*?"

"He towered aloft majestically above his fellow-men."

"Harry, how did you make him out like a *laugh*?"

"Oh, he was such a merry old soul."

"Then, how does Anna make him resemble a *tear*?"

"He was so sympathetic with the woes of others."

"Aunt Lucy, how was he like a *fire*?"

"He was warm-hearted, and the centre of attraction to so many."

"And, Louis, how do you make him like a *flower*?"

"His presidential career was bright, and short-lived, like a flower."

"Charlie, why was he like a *vine*?"

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"That's plain enough—his motto was *'A little more grape*.'"

Amy went round collecting resemblances for her thought, and then said that she had the watch-dog, Trusty, in her mind.

"Why is Trusty like *paper*?"

"Because he's white."

"Then, why is he like *ink*?"

"Because he's so useful."

"Why is he like a *table*?"

"Because he's a quadruped."

"Why is he like *Aunt Lucy*?"

"He is so good and faithful."

"Why is he like a *bed*?"

"His steadiness at his post enables us to enjoy undisturbed sleep."

"How does he resemble a *carpet*?"

"He generally lies on the floor, but is sometimes brushed off."

"How is he like a *lion*?"

"He is very fond of meat."

"How does he resemble *Cousin Mary*?"

"He has a collar round his neck."

"How is he like a *tree*?"

"He is so very full of bark."

Gertrude then proposed trying another game she had seen played, which was called "Questions." She said it was generally done by using playing-cards, but as she knew Uncle and Aunt had an objection to having them in the house, she had prepared a set of blank cards for the purpose. There were duplicates of every one, and she had numbered them, 1, 2, 3, etc., in large characters: one set was placed in the centre of the table, around which they drew up, and the [Pg 146] duplicates were shuffled and dealt to each in turn. When they were all supplied, one would draw a card from the table, asking some personal question; and all looking at their cards, the one who had the duplicate must throw it upon the table, and say, "It is I." It was found that the sillier and more impertinent the question, the more laughter it caused.

"Who comes down last to breakfast?" said Tom, drawing from the pack one marked 8.

"I do," replied Aunt Lucy, throwing down her corresponding 8.

"Who is the prettiest person present?" said Aunt Lucy, drawing out a 3.

"I am," said George, with a grin—being quite reconciled to the fact that he was decidedly the ugliest one of the party; at the same time mating his 3 with its companion on the table.

"Who loves mince-pie the best?" said Amy

"I do," replied Ellen, with a laugh.

"Which of us is the old maid of the company?" said Cornelia.

"It is I," cried Tom, in a tone of triumph.

"Which of us has a hole in her stocking?" said Alice.

"Oh, it is I myself."

And so it went on until the pack was exhausted, when all agreed that it was time for the daily story, which they seemed to think as much a matter of course as the supper. Aunt Lucy said that she would gladly tell them a short one, which should be called

The Orphan's Tale, or the Vicissitudes of Fortune. [Pg 147]

The early days of Margaret Roscoe were spent in the beautiful manse of Linlithgow, in the north of Scotland, where her venerable grandfather had for half a century been engaged in breaking the bread of life to a large congregation of humble parishioners. No wealth or grandeur was to be seen within the walls of the kirk where Alan Roscoe officiated: there were no waving plumes, no flashing jewels, no rustling silks; and when, as a young man, he accepted his appointment to this remote parish, his college friends grieved that his noble talents should be wasted, and his refinement of mind thrown away upon rough country folks, unable to appreciate him. But the young minister was convinced that his proper field of labor was now before him, and resolutely putting aside the temptings of ambition, he devoted himself in the most exemplary manner to his parochial duties. Although he and his family were debarred from the advantages of cultivated society, and from the mental excitement which only such intercourse can afford, they cheerfully

made the sacrifice, for the sake of the cause to which they were wholly given up; and they thought themselves more than repaid by the improvement and the reverent love of the people. It is a great mistake to suppose that plain, unlettered men cannot rightly estimate superior abilities, erudition, and refinement; where there is any native shrewdness and strength of mind, these higher gifts are quickly discerned, and add greatly to the influence which sincerity and earnestness of character will ever command. In Scotland this is especially true, for the [Pg 148] countrymen of Bruce and Wallace are distinguished for their sagacity; and their acquaintance with Scripture is so extensive that their natural intelligence is sharpened, and superficial knowledge and flowery discourses are not tolerated from the pulpit. Certain it is, that as years rolled on, and the white hairs became thicker on Mr. Roscoe's head, love and veneration were the universal feelings entertained toward him: and at the time when our story commences, when the infant Margaret and her young widowed mother removed beneath the shelter of his roof, he was the respected pastor, the beloved friend, and the revered father of all within the circle of his influence.

Malcom Roscoe, Margaret's father, was a young man of superior abilities, but of great original delicacy of constitution; he was retiring, studious, meditative, and in all respects a contrast to his older and only brother, Alan, who early developed those qualities which are necessary to the active man of business. A very warm attachment united these two young men, and a sad blow it was to Malcom, when his brother, with the energy and decision natural to his character, announced his intention of emigrating to America, where bright prospects had opened before him. An old friend had commenced a large commercial establishment in one of the Atlantic cities, and had offered him a clerkship, with the prospect of speedy admission into the firm: he regretted to leave his aged father, and his only brother, but such an excellent opportunity of advancing himself in life was not to be neglected, and he gratefully accepted the proposition. With many tears, he bade adieu to the beloved inmates of the manse, and set out for the New World: his industry and integrity had been greatly prospered, and in a few years he was an [Pg 149] honored partner of the house into which he had entered as a penniless clerk.

What, meantime, had been Malcom's lot? He had applied himself with assiduity to the study of divinity, for which both his character and his abilities had admirably fitted him, but his health was unequal to the demands made upon it. He passed his examination with great honor, was immediately called to a parish, and went there to settle, accompanied by his young wife, a delicate and interesting orphan girl, to whom he had been long attached. His zealous spirit saw much to rectify, and many labors to perform, in his new sphere: he entered with ardor into the discharge of his duties, but soon he found that his frail body had been overtasked by its imperious master the soul, and was no longer able to do his bidding. He faded away from earth, as do so many of the best and noblest of the race, when just ready to apply to the loftiest purposes the faculties so carefully trained. To us, such occurrences appear to be very mysterious dispensations of Providence: but the individual himself has attained the true object of his being, the full development of all his powers, and is prepared for a more elevated existence. And we may believe, since not even a sparrow falls to the ground unheeded by our Father, and since no waste is allowed in nature, so that even the dead leaf ministers to new combinations of being, that the noble gifts of the mind will not be unused after death. In other spheres, amid other society, they will doubtless be employed for the benefit of immortal beings. Mutual beneficence must form a large part of the business and pleasure of heaven.

After Malcom's death, his widow and infant child came to live with old Mr. Roscoe at Linlithgow. Happily for the young mourner, the household cares of the manse now devolved upon her, in [Pg 150] addition to the charge of Margaret; and these occupations, no doubt, aided greatly in restoring the serenity of her spirit. She had little time to brood over her sorrows—those small solicitudes and minute attentions to the feelings and comfort of others, which fill up so large a portion of a true woman's time, were with her a double blessing, cheering both the giver and receiver. She realized that it is woman's honor and happiness to be, in an especial manner, a ministering spirit; and thus she learned to resemble the bright hosts above, whom she hoped one day to join, and grow in the likeness of Him who declared, "The Son of man came not into the world to be ministered unto, but to minister." No wonder is it that the gentle young widow, whose face ever beamed with kindness, whose hand was ever outstretched to aid the unfortunate, was looked up to with a love and veneration only inferior to that with which Mr. Roscoe himself was regarded.

In such an atmosphere of affection, and under the best influences of unaffected piety and refinement, little Margaret expanded in beauty and goodness, like a sweet flower planted in a fertile soil, and refreshed by soft-falling dews and healthful breezes. She was something like her own Scottish heather—distinguished by no uncommon brilliancy of mind or person, but yet one upon whom your eye delighted to fall, and on whom your heart could dwell with pleasure. Her clear, rosy complexion showed that she had inherited none of her parent's delicacy of constitution; and large, deep, violet-colored eyes, shaded by long lashes, made her face a very interesting one. She was a most lovable little girl, gentle and thoughtful beyond her years; it seemed as if something of the shadow of her mother's grief had fallen upon her young spirit, repressing the volatility of childhood, and making her ever considerate of the feelings and [Pg 151] studious of the comfort of others. She was her grandfather's constant companion; and it was very beautiful to see these two, so widely separated by years, and so closely united by affection, entwining their lives together—the old man imparting instruction and guidance, and the child warming his heart with the bright hopes and sweet ways of her innocent age.

And so the three lived on, in perfect contentment and uninterrupted peace, until Margaret was

seven years old, when her grandfather was taken ill, and the manse, once so happy, was filled with sorrow. He lingered for some time, faithfully nursed by his daughter, who overtaxed her own strength by her daily toils and nightly watchings. He at last sank into the tomb, as a shock of corn, fully ripe, bends to the earth: he was full of years, and of the honor merited by a life spent in the arduous discharge of duty. His only regret was that he was unavoidably separated from his son; and he advised his daughter, as soon as she had settled his affairs, to accept Alan's pressing invitation to her to make her home with him, and to depart with her child for America, where she would be gladly welcomed.

After the funeral, as the new incumbent of the parish wished to take possession of the manse as soon as possible, Mrs. Roscoe made arrangements to leave the spot she loved so well: and disposing of the furniture, and settling the debts incurred by her father's illness, she found that no very large sum would be left after the passages across the Atlantic were paid for. In Alan Roscoe's last letter, he had entered into many details about his circumstances, in order to take from her mind the objections which delicacy might urge as to her dependent position. He told her that he had been eminently successful as a merchant in Charleston, and had amassed so [Pg 152] considerable a fortune that he intended very soon to retire from business; and that he had some thoughts of settling in one of the northern cities, as his health, and that of his family, had suffered from the climate. He said that a dear and only sister, as she was, ought to have no reluctance in sharing the superfluity of his wealth: she would thereby give far more than she received. And his brother's orphan should be most heartily welcomed to his heart and home: she should be taught with his children, and should share in every respect the situation and prospects of his own little ones, for he must receive Malcom's child, not as a niece, but as a daughter. He advised her sailing direct for Charleston, as it would save all trouble and difficulty: he should be on the wharf to meet her, and if, as was frequently the case with business men, he was unavoidably absent, his very attentive partner would be there to greet her, in company with Mrs. Roscoe.

She accordingly wrote, accepting his kind proposition, and stating that they should sail in the first vessel bound for Charleston, as she was anxious to have little Maggie again settled in a home; and the more so, as her own health was very delicate, and she knew not how long her dear child might have a mother to watch over her. Then taking leave of the humble friends, who would gladly have kept them ever in Scotland, Mrs. Roscoe and her daughter set off for the nearest seaport, where the shrinking young widow, entirely friendless and unknown, was obliged herself to make inquiries among the shipping offices and wharves. She found that no vessel would start for some weeks for Charleston, and she felt that every day was of consequence to her: but she was at last relieved of her distress by a bluff, good-natured captain, who told her that although he didn't hail from Charleston, it was exactly the same thing; he sailed to Boston, and the two places [Pg 153] were as close together as twin cherries on one stalk, or kernels in a nut, and that he would see to it she had no trouble in finding her friends. Being a Scotchman, and partaking of that ignorance of American geography which is so common both in Great Britain and on the continent, he naturally mistook Charleston, South Carolina, for which she was inquiring, for Charlestown, near Boston—an error which has frequently been made. Nor is it as gross a one as some others which have been perpetrated; as, for instance, that of the late Prince Schwartzenberg, minister of Austria, who directed some dispatches for our government to "The United States of New York."

And now behold little Margaret actually launched upon the stormy ocean of life! for her small bark was destined soon to be severed from its guide and conductor, and to be left, without a pilot, to the wildly tossing waves and bleak winds of a selfish world. Did I say without a pilot? not so! a hand, unseen, directed her fate, and although she was called to pass thus early through troubled waters, the end will doubtless show that all was well. But the present trial was a very bitter one. A few days only after the embarkation, Mrs. Roscoe's weak frame gave way, under the combined influence of sorrow, fatigue, and anxiety; she was only ill a week, then sank, and was consigned to a watery grave. Little Margaret could not be separated from her for one moment during her illness, but, clasping her mother's hand in hers, remained by her, smoothing her pillow, bringing her the cooling draught, and seeking, in a thousand loving ways, to cheer and relieve her.

Before her death, Mrs. Roscoe called the Captain, and committed little Maggie to his especial [Pg 154] care. She told him of her expectation that her brother, Mr. Alan Roscoe, a prominent importing merchant in Charleston, would immediately come on board to claim his niece, when the vessel arrived; but to guard against any possibility of a mistake, she gave him the number of the street in which he resided. The bluff, but kind-hearted man drew his red, hard hand repeatedly across his eyes, as he listened to her anxious directions about the little girl she was so soon to leave. He told her he didn't know much himself about either Charleston or the people who lived in it, as he had been engaged until very lately in the South Sea trade; but, of course, his consignees at Boston would, and if there were any difficulty, he should put the matter into their hands. He begged her to be under no uneasiness—her daughter should be well attended to.

On the last day of her illness, the little girl sat by her in the berth, and for the first time appeared to realize that her mother, her only earthly friend, was about to die. Her little cheek was now almost as white as the dying woman's, and she moistened the bed with tears: she could not restrain her sobs. Her mother passed her arm around her, and strove to comfort her: she told her that, although she must now leave her, and go where her dear father and grandfather awaited her, her little girl had one friend who would never cast her off, and who could never die, who had promised to be the father of the fatherless. Whatever should befall her, she must put all her trust

in Him who had said, "When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord shall take thee up." With all the energy which the love of a dying woman could give, she besought her child to cleave with perfect love to Him who was so kind and pitiful. She then placed around her neck a medallion, inclosing a portrait of herself and her husband, with their initials, the date of their [Pg 155] marriage, and locks of their hair, and told her never to part with it, but to wear it next her heart. She directed her to be in all respects obedient to her uncle, and ever to act toward him as if he were her own father. At last, exhausted by the the long conversation she had held, she sank back and fell asleep: it was so sweet and natural a rest, that Margaret long waited by her side, afraid to stir lest she should awake her mother. A happy smile seemed diffused over that face, lately so earnest and so anxious; it appeared to say, my troubles are now over, my work is done, I have entered into my reward. And so it was! the sorrow-stricken woman had gently passed away from earth, and little Margaret was watching beside the dead.

Shall I attempt to describe the grief of the child, deprived of all she loved? The rough, but kindly sailors were much moved by it, and strove, in their uncouth way, to comfort her. After the first few days of passionate lamentation, the motherless girl became more quiet in her sorrow, and then the demonstrations of sympathy ceased: but any one who gazed upon her wasted form, her white cheek, and languid steps, might have guessed the tears she shed upon her pillow at night. At last the vessel arrived in Boston, and Margaret's heart beat quick each time she saw a good-looking gentleman step on board, for every instant she thought her unknown uncle would arrive. She tried to fancy how he looked, and although she had heard that he and her father were very unlike, still her imagination brought up before her a face like that within her highly-prized medallion. So passed the day, in anxious waiting and nervous tremors, but her uncle came not; and as the night drew near, a sense of perfect loneliness and desertion came over her, and she leaned her head upon her hands, and tears, wrung from the heart, trickled through them. All [Pg 156] around her was bustle; every one had an object, all had a home, and a place in the world, and some to love them—all but she; she felt completely the orphan. Some think that children do not suffer mentally as their elders do—what a mistake! Their emotions are more transitory, but frequently more violent while they last. Many an angry child, if he had the physical strength, would commit deeds from which reason and conscience deter the man—and keen and bitter, although fleeting, are the sorrows they experience. As the little creature, so tenderly reared and now so utterly desolate, sat upon the deck, with no earthly being to look up to for love and sympathy, surely a pitying angel must have wafted into her heart her mother's dying words, "When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord shall take thee up." It stole into her soul like oil upon the troubled waters: it seemed as if a voice had said to the tempest within her, "Peace, be still." She felt that there still was one who cared for her—one who could neither die nor change; and the prayer of faith ascended from those young lips to "*Our father* who art in heaven." Soothing, blessed influence of religion! felt by young as well as old—how, in trouble, could we dispense with it? would not our hearts sink under their load? would not our spirits be crushed within us?

The next day the Captain set himself in earnest to fulfill his promise to the dying woman. The head of the firm to which his goods were consigned was absent from home, but a very kind-hearted young fellow, a junior partner, attended to the business during his absence, and accordingly he directed his inquiries to him. "Mr. Alan Roscoe, a merchant of Charlestown!" said young Howard, "why, I never heard the name—there is surely some mistake. I know all the business men of the place, and there is no such person. Have you the direction?" "Yes, sir, No. [Pg 157] 200 Meeting-street." "Why, Captain, here is a complete blunder! there is no street of that name in Charlestown. I should not wonder, now I come to think of it, if Charleston, South Carolina, were meant; Meeting-street is, I know, one of the most fashionable promenades. And I remember hearing of a Mr. Roscoe, a great southern merchant—either in Charleston, or Mobile, or New Orleans, I don't rightly know where—but somewhere in the South. I'll tell you what, Captain, you're full of business, and can't attend to her; I'll take her home with me, for she's a dear little thing, and then I can inquire about her uncle, and send her on by the first opportunity. Great pity such a blunder was made!"

Accordingly, Mr. Howard engaged a hack, which was piled up with little Maggie's trunks, and he was about jumping in, when he was nearly run over by his friend Russell. "Hallo, Howard!" "Is that you, Russell?" "No one else; but what on earth are you doing with such a heap of trunks? has a friend arrived?" "Only a little orphan, who came in one of our ships; her mother died on board, and to crown the misfortune, they got into the wrong vessel. They wanted to go to Charleston, S.C., where this child has an uncle, Mr. Alan Roscoe, a rich merchant; so they came to Charlestown by mistake. I'm taking the little creature home with me, until I find out about him." "The luckiest thing in the world! Why, I know Mr. Roscoe myself; he lives in Meeting-street; I became acquainted with him in Charleston last Winter. But he has either given up business, or intends to do so; he is in New York at this moment; I saw him the other day at the Astor House, and he told me he had some thought of removing to New York or Philadelphia." "In New York, is [Pg 158] he? what a piece of good fortune! How I wish I knew some one going on there. If I were not so uncommonly busy, now that Mr. Field is away, I would take her myself." "If you'd like it, my dear fellow, I'll take charge of the child—you know I always have acquaintances going on to New York—I know every one in the two cities, pretty much. I'll give her over to some safe person, and then she'll be with her uncle to-night." "Thank you, you're a real good soul; you can attend to it as well as I, of course. And I am anxious to get the poor little thing to her relations as soon as possible, so I'll be much obliged to you." "Good-by, then;—driver, go as fast as your horses can carry you to the New York depot, for we're rather late."

When they arrived, they were only a few minutes before the time. Mr. Russell walked through the cars, looking on either side, but, to his chagrin, he saw no one he knew. Any one who has ever sought for an acquaintance, while the steam was puffing, and panting, and screeching, as if in mortal pain until it was allowed to have its own way, and send the train along at the rate of forty miles an hour, can understand the flustered, bewildered feelings of young Russell, as, with the child in one hand, he perambulated the cars. "Is any gentleman here willing to take charge of this little girl?" said he. "What's to be done with her when we get to New York?" answered a man near him. "Her uncle, Mr. Alan Roscoe, is staying at the Astor House; all you have to do is to take the child and her baggage to him, and as he is a southern gentleman, and very rich, he'll see that you are well paid for your trouble." "I'll take charge of her; have you got her ticket?" "No; and I declare I have no more than half a dollar with me—can you advance the money? you will be paid tenfold when you get to New York." "I'll do it as a speculation: here, my pretty young lady, sit in [Pg 159] my seat while I see to your baggage." "Just got it in the baggage-car in time,—good-by, sir!" "Good-by—good-by, Miss Roscoe!" "Good-by, sir—I wish it were *you* going on to New York!"

Little Maggie did not like her travelling companion at all. Children are great physiognomists, and their simple instincts are frequently surer guides than the experience and wisdom of older persons, in detecting character. She could not bear to talk to him—his conversation, garnished with low cant phrases, was so different from any thing to which she had ever been accustomed. But when she looked up into his face, the repugnance she had at first felt became changed into aversion—the low, narrow forehead, the furtive, but insolent glance of his eye, and the expression of vulgar cunning about the mouth, formed a countenance which might well justify her in shrinking back into her seat, as far from him as possible.

When they arrived in New York, Smith, for that was the man's name, engaged a carriage, and drove with little Margaret to the Astor House; but, in answer to his inquiries, he was told that no one of the name of Roscoe was lodging, or had been boarding there for the past month. He muttered a curse, and jumped again into the hack. "What do you make of this? that uncle of yours is not there." "Oh dear, what *shall* I do? but, indeed, the gentleman said he saw him in the Astor House." "What is the gentleman's name, can you tell me?" "I don't know his name." "Don't know his name, don't you? I'm prettily bit! But perhaps he may be in some other hotel, we'll go and see." They accordingly drove round to the chief hotels, but no Mr. Roscoe was to be found at any of them. [Pg 160]

Smith flew into a terrible passion. "Cheated for once in my life! sold, if ever a fellow was! it's a regular trick that was played! They wanted to get rid of their beggar's brat, and palmed her off upon me, with that humbug story of the nabob of an uncle. I'll nabob her! And there's her ticket, which I was fool enough to pay for, and the carriage hire, and my trouble with this saucy thing, who holds her head up so high; if ever I am swindled again, my name's not Sam Smith!"

"I'm sure I'm very sorry; what are you going to do with me, sir?" "Take you home with me, until I can get rid of you, and pay myself out of your trunks, unless they're filled with stones. It wouldn't be such a bad idea to lose you in the streets, accidentally; but no, on second thoughts, it's better not; there are always some troublesome philanthropists about." "Oh, sir, if you can't find my uncle, won't you send me on to Boston again? The Captain told my mother he'd find him for me—or that good gentleman would." "The Captain's a rogue, and so is your *good gentleman*. Are you such an eternal fool as to think I'll pay your passage again? you're mightily mistaken, I can tell you. I don't believe you ever had an uncle, you little cheat—and if you don't hush up about him, I'll find a way to make you."

Little Margaret was too much frightened to answer, and they kept on their way, through narrow muddy streets lined with lofty warehouses, and alleys filled with low German and Irish lodging-houses and beer-shops, until they came to a wider highway, at the corners of which Margaret read the name of Chatham street. On each side of the way were shops of the strangest appearance—furniture, old and new, was piled up together, coats and cloaks hung out at the doors, watches and jewelry of a tawdry description made a show in the windows, and men with [Pg 161] keen black eyes and hooked noses, and stooping backs which looked as if they had never been erect in their lives, stood at the entrances, trying to attract the attention of the passer-by. As Margaret looked at them, she thought of the stories her mother had read to her of the ant-lion, stealthily watching at the bottom of its funnel-shaped den for its prey, which the deceitful sand brings within its reach, if once the victim comes to the edge of the pit; and of the spider, so politely inviting the fly within its parlor.

> "Will you walk into my parlor?" said the Spider to the Fly,
> "'Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy;
> The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,
> And I've many curious things to show you when you're there."
> "Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "to ask me is in vain,
> For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again."

At the door of some of the shops, she saw a man standing upon a box, with a hammer in his hand, and a crowd around him, eager, and bidding against one another. "Going, going, a splendid gold watch at five dollars—the greatest bargain in the world—tremendous sacrifice—going, going, *gone*!"

At last they came to his den; a shop like the rest, piled up with old brass andirons, sofas, bureaus, tables, lamps, coats and pants, ropes, feather-beds, and hideous daubs of pictures. Old-fashioned

mantel-ornaments, looking-glasses, clocks pointing to all hours of the day, waiters with the paint rubbed off, old silver candlesticks, and a heap of other trash, completed the furniture of the room. Stumbling through this lumber, Smith led her up to a little garret, where the bare rafters were covered with dust, and one hole of a window let in some light, enough to reveal the nakedness of the place. In one corner, upon the dirty floor, was an old bed; a piece of a mirror was fastened against the wall, which looked quite innocent of the whitewash brush; and a stool, [Pg 162] which had lost one of its legs, was lying in a very dejected attitude near the door. "Here you are to lodge," said Smith, with a sardonic grin, as he noticed the child's dismay at the announcement. "You can stay up here till I want you, and when you are hungry, you can go down stairs to the little back kitchen and get a slice of bread; but don't dare to show your face in the shop." "When will my trunks come?" said the little girl, whose wits were sharpened by the necessity of looking out for her own interests. "Never you mind about them trunks," replied Smith; "I advise you to keep quiet, and it will be the better for you." So saying, he descended into his shop, and left the poor child to her meditations, which were none of the pleasantest.

Two days passed without Smith making his appearance, and Margaret worked up her courage to the point of going into the shop, even if it did excite his anger, and insisting upon his taking her to her uncle, or sending her back to the ship. She walked in, unnoticed, and the first object that met her sight was one of her mother's large trunks, open and empty, with the price marked upon the top. Around the room she saw the others, and the contents, so precious to her from association with her deceased parent, were hanging about upon pegs, looking ashamed of their positions. Horrified, the little girl ran up to Smith: "these are my things," she said; "how dare you put them into the shop?" "You had better hush up, little vixen," replied the man, "or I'll take the very clothes from off your back. You don't think I am going to keep you without receiving board, do you?" "But I'm not going to stay here. I'll go back to the ship—the Captain will *make* you give me my things," cried the child, bursting into passionate tears. "Go—I'd like nothing better; go [Pg 163] back to Boston as fast as you can, cry-baby, and give my compliments to the gentleman who cheated me into taking you," replied Smith, with his odious smile. "Then why will you not take me to my uncle? I don't want to stay in this horrid place." "Take care, or you'll get into a worse—as for your uncle, I saw in the paper yesterday an account of his death, so you need have no hopes from him." "Dead! all dead!" said Margaret, sinking down into the nearest seat, for her head swam, and her knees trembled so that she could not stand. "Yes, he's dead as a door nail—no mistake about that. So you had better not be troublesome, or you won't fare as well as you do. Here, Jackson," he said to a rough, bloated-looking, elderly countryman, who had been purchasing some old furniture, and had now re-entered the shop, "didn't you say that you wanted a little girl to do your work?" "Yes, I did," replied the man, "my old woman is not worth any thing any more. But I must have some one that will not be interfered with: I intend to get an orphan from the alms-house, that will suit me best." "Here is an orphan, who is the very thing: she has no relations or friends in the world, and I'm rather tired of keeping her—I'll give her to you for nothing." "That would do, but she does not look like a poor child: she is dressed like a little lady, and her hands are small and white, as if she wasn't used to rough work." "She *is* dressed up more than she should be, but you can soon mend that; and I'll answer for it, she'll learn to do the rough work soon enough." "Well, I'll take her: have her bundle ready by the afternoon, and I'll call for her in the wagon, and take the girl and the other baggage at the same time." "Agreed—she shall be ready."

It would be hard to describe little Margaret's feelings during the preceding dialogue: she plainly saw that there was no escape for her, unless she rushed into the street, and claimed the [Pg 164] protection of any chance passer-by, and that honest Smith took pains to prevent, by locking her up in her room. When there alone, she threw herself down upon the bed, and sobbed as if her heart would break: "If my mother, my dear, dear mother, was living, *she* would take care of me. She would not let me stay in this filthy place—she would not let me eat dry bread and water—she would not let that ugly old man take me away, to do servants' work. Oh mother! mother! I wish I were dead too!" When her passion of grief was exhausted, comfort and hope began to dawn upon her, and she thought, "It cannot certainly be as bad in the country, where the old man lives, as here, in this vile hole, with all these disgusting smells and sights. And my mother said, that God is a friend who can never die or change, who will never leave or forsake the poor orphan. I will try to be a better child, and then God will love me: perhaps I deserve this, for being naughty. I certainly will try to be good."

In the afternoon, Jackson came for his baggage, as he called it, and after the furniture was stowed away, Smith brought down the little girl, and gave into her hand a very small bundle of clothes, bidding her tell no tales, or she should find she was in his power yet. She was put into the wagon, on top of the furniture, and the old man, whose face was red, and whose breath smelt of liquor, set off at a smart pace. It was late in the evening before they reached the solitary and desolate farm-house, which Jackson called his home: Margaret scrambled out as best she could, and entered the dwelling. Although it was now late in the autumn, there was no fire upon the hearth, and the room looked to the last degree dismal. It had something more of a habitable aspect when the furniture was brought in, but it was evident that no "neat-handed Phillis" had [Pg 165] been accustomed to range through the house; and the spiders had provided the only ornaments to be found anywhere about, by hanging the walls with tapestry, which certainly could not be produced in the looms of France. Margaret found that there were two other inhabitants of this neglected house—Jackson's wife, a sad, heart-broken woman, only too evidently in a dying condition, and a son of about fifteen, rude, stubborn, and rebellious, whose only good-feeling seemed to be love to his poor mother. Jackson brought out some food, of which Margaret stood greatly in need, and she was then happy to be allowed to retire to the loft allotted to her, as she

was exhausted by the ride and the agitation of mind she had gone through during the past week. Miserable as was her attic, she slept soundly until waked by the sun shining into her eyes: she quickly dressed, but did not escape a scolding from her sullen master, who commanded her to make a fire, and get his breakfast for him. Margaret was remarkably quick and handy for a child of her age, as her affection to her mother and grandfather had prompted her to do many little things for them which so young a girl seldom thinks of; but her delicate white fingers were unused to menial tasks, and to make a fire was quite beyond the circle of her accomplishments. Jackson then called upon his son to do it, but told her that he should not make it a second time, and grumbled and swore at her while he remained in the house.

It is astonishing how human nature can adapt itself to circumstances, so that the thing which we must do we can do: little Margaret, who had ever been so tenderly nurtured, soon learned to make the fire, to sweep the rooms, and cook the meals. Not in the most scientific manner, truly; her cookery would scarcely have been approved by Kitchener, Glass, or Soyer, but it was done to [Pg 166] the best of her slender ability. While poor Mrs. Jackson lived, Maggie had at least the satisfaction of feeling that her efforts to please her were understood: the grateful look, the languid smile, and the half-expressed pity for the little slave, who was now to fill her place, reminded the child of her mother, and made her more contented with her situation. But when, exhausted by the life of hardship and cruelty which the drunkard's wife must ever experience, Mrs. Jackson slept her last sleep, and went to the home appointed for all the living, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," then the little girl had none to feel for her. In a few days, the boy, Bill Jackson, told her that now his mother was dead, he wasn't such a fool as to stay there to be kicked and starved by his father; he intended to run off and go to sea, and he advised her too "to make herself scarce" as soon as she could. When he had gone, all the brutality which had been divided between the mother and son, was now visited on the innocent head of little Maggie; and unassisted even by counsel, she had to perform all the household tasks. If she had received kind words in payment, she could have overlooked many of the hardships of her condition; but these she never got. Let her be as diligent and pains taking as she would, severity and reproaches were all she met: Jackson was always sullen and morose in the morning, and at night, frequent potations from a large stone jug worked him up to a passion. Then he would knock the furniture about, throw chairs at Margaret's head if she came in his way, and swear in such a dreadful manner that the little girl was glad to seek shelter in her cold and cheerless loft, where at least she could be alone, and could pray to the One Friend she had left. [Pg 167]

As the winter advanced, the child's sufferings greatly increased. The cold was intense, the situation a bleak one, and the old farm-house full of cracks and crannies which admitted the winter winds. Her clothing was of a thin description, and nearly worn out by hard usage: at night also, in her airy loft, she was often kept awake by the cold, or cried herself to sleep. But the more severe the weather was, the more did Jackson think it needful to take something a little warming, and the stone jug was frequently replenished: of course his temper became more violent, and Margaret was the sufferer. She kept out of the way as much as possible, but had no place to which she could retreat, except her loft. Here she would frequently solace herself by bringing out her medallion, which, according to her mother's directions, she wore next her heart, and gazing upon the beloved countenances of her parents—this dying gift was the only relic she had left of former times. One day a snow-storm set in, which reminded her of those she had seen among her own Scottish hills, where the drifts are so great that the shepherd frequently loses his life in returning to his distant home. The wind was piercing, and the snow was so driven about that you could scarcely see a few feet before you; and by evening it lay in deep piles against the door, and around the house. Jackson had of course resorted to the whiskey jug very frequently during the day, for consolation; and little Margaret, seeing him more than usually excited, had sought refuge in the cold and dismal loft, wrapping herself up as well as she could. As she sat there, shivering, and thinking how differently she was situated on the last snow-storm she remembered, when she was seated on a little stool, between her mother and grandfather, holding a hand of each, before a large blazing fire, and listening to beautiful tales—she heard Jackson call her name in savage [Pg 168] tones. She hastened, but before she could get down the ladder which led to the room below, he called her again and again, each time more fiercely so that her heart trembled like a leaf upon a tree, dreading to meet his rage. He received her with oaths and abuse; called her a lazy little wretch, who did not earn the bread she eat, and commanded her to bring in an armful of wood from the pile, as the fire was going out. She ventured to tell him that she had already tried to find some, but ineffectually; in some places the snow was above her head, and the air was so thick with it, now that night had come on, that she could not see before her. But the violent man would take no excuse: he drove her out with threats, and long she groped about, vainly trying to discover the wood, which was completely hidden by the snow. Her hands and feet became numb, and she felt that she *must* return to the house, if he killed her—she would otherwise die of the cold. She came, timidly crawling into the room—the moment her master saw her, he started up; fury made him look like a demon. Seizing a stick of wood which still remained, he assailed her violently: the child, so tender hearted, and so delicately reared, who could be recalled to duty by one glance of the eye, was now subjected to the chastisement of a brutal, insensate drunkard! At last he stopped, but his rage was not exhausted. Opening the door, he told her never to darken it again—never more should she dare to show herself within his house. Falling upon her knees, the little girl besought him with tears not to expel her—she had no one to go to, no father, no mother to take care of her. If she was driven out into the snow, she should die with cold—if he would only allow her to stay that night, she would leave on the morrow, if he wished it! But tears and prayers were unavailing; all of man he had ever had in his nature was now brutified by strong [Pg 169] drink; as well might she have knelt to the tiger thirsting for blood, as to him. Driving her out with

a curse, he shut and bolted the door.

The depths of distress call up energies, even in the childish heart which have never been felt before. What was there upon earth to revive the spirit of the little orphan, so utterly deserted, so ready to perish? Nothing. But there was something in heaven—and within that girlish bosom there lived a faith in the unseen realities, which might well have shamed many an older person. With her uncovered head exposed to the falling snow, she knelt down, and this time she bent the knee to no hard, cruel master; but with the confidence of filial love, she uttered her fervent prayer to Him who is a very present help in time of trouble. She called upon her Father to save a little helpless orphan; or, if it were His will, to take her up to heaven—"*Thy* will be done." And she rose with a tranquillity and calm determination which many would have deemed impossible in one so young; but there is a promise, and many weak ones can testify to its fulfilment, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

Margaret went onward towards the public road: there was no farm-house nearer than about a mile, and the child greatly doubted her ability to reach it; but she had resolved to persevere in her efforts, while any power remained in her muscles, any vital warmth in her heart. Onward went that little child, painfully, but still steadily onward; she struggled against the drowsiness that attacked her, but at last she began to feel that she could do no more. But yield not yet to despair, thou gentle and brave orphan! One stronger than thou has come to thy assistance. For hearest thou not the subdued sound of horses' hoofs scattering the snow? thou art saved! [Pg 170]

A traveller approaches, made of other stuff than the crafty Smiths and the brutal Jacksons of the earth,—he sees that slight childish figure, that bare head, those failing steps,—he thinks of his own little ones at home, seated by the sparkling fire, and awaiting his return. He is not one of those who hold the creed of impious Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But, instead, he is a follower of the Good Samaritan, or rather, I should say, of Him who taught that lesson and practised it, seeking and saving those who were lost. He stopped his horse. "My little girl, what are you doing out of doors on a night like this? you will be frozen to death. Why are you not at home with your father and mother?" "I wish I were!" she said. "They are both dead—I wish I were with them!" "But, my child, you must have a home; why are you out on such a stormy night?" "I have no home, sir," replied poor Margaret. "I lived at the nearest farm-house, but my master was angry with me for not bringing in the wood, and beat me, and turned me out of doors; and I shall die of cold very soon, unless you take care of me, sir." "Poor little deserted one!" said the gentleman, jumping off from his horse. "Such a tiny thing as she, cannot have done any thing very bad—and to send her out to die! poor child! God sent me to you, and I will surely take care of you." So saying, he took off his cloak, lined with warm fur, and shaking the snow from her hair and clothes, carefully wrapped it around her, and placed her in front of him upon his horse. "My good, thoughtful wife!" said he; "when I laughed at you this morning for insisting upon my wearing this cloak outside my great-coat, little did I think it would save a precious life—I always do find it to my advantage to mind your womanly, wifely instincts. And now, little girl, we will go home as fast as we can—I will try to keep Jack Frost away from you with this cloak." Urging his [Pg 171] horse onward, Mr. Norton, for that was the good man's name, every now and then spoke cheerily to the child whom he sustained with one arm, striving to keep her awake, and telling her of the bright warm fire she should see when they got home. At last they arrived there: when Mr. Norton jumped off his horse, Margaret saw that they had come to a small town, which looked very pretty as the snow lay upon the roofs and fences. Before he could ring, the door flew open, and the warm light, which looked like an embodiment of the love and happiness of home and fireside pleasures, streamed out upon the pure, cold snow, revealing, to the group within doors, the father carefully holding his burden. "Dear father! are you not almost perished?" cried his oldest son, Frederic, a manly little fellow, muffled up in cap, and coat, and worsted scarf. "You must let me take old Charlie to the stable, and come in yourself and thaw—you see I am all ready." "Well, my son, I believe I will; particularly as I have a bundle here that I must take care of." "What has father got?" said the younger children, wonderingly. "Why, it as large as a bag of potatoes!" "I have brought you home a little sister, children," Mr. Norton replied, entering the sitting-room and unwrapping poor Margaret. "My dear wife, I found this child upon the road, almost perished with cold: she is an orphan, and was cruelly treated by the wretch of a master who turned her out of doors to-night. Only look at her thin, worn-out gingham dress—and at the holes in her shoes!" "Poor little lamb!" said Mrs. Norton, gazing on her with a mother's pity—blessed effect of paternal and maternal love, that it opens the heart to all helpless little ones! "Don't cry, my dear, you will not be turned out of this house!" "Indeed, I cannot help it, ma'am; you are so very kind— [Pg 172] like my mother." "But, wife and children, we must not stand here talking; we must get a tub of cold water, and keep her hands and feet in it for some time, or she will be all frost-bitten. Sally, my child, you need not place that chair for her so near the fire, for she cannot sit there: help your mother to bring the water." Sally, although rather younger than little Margaret, was a large child for her age, and while the latter was getting thawed, and the good mother was making a warming drink, she hunted up her thickest clothes, and begged that the poor stranger might wear them. "And may she not sleep with me to-night, mother?" "Oh no, mother, let her sleep with us," said Kate and Lucy, the two younger children. "I am glad to see you want to have her with you," replied their mother, "but as Sally is the nearest her age, and spoke the first, I think I must gratify her. But if Kate and Lucy wish it, she may sit between them at table." "Thank you, thank you, dear mother, that will be pleasant. Oh how glad we are we have a new sister!"

Soon was the story of the orphan's trials confided to the sympathizing ears of those who had now adopted her as one of themselves, and soon did the little girl feel at home in that household of love. Every day, as it developed her warm feelings, her lively gratitude, and the intrinsic worth of

a character which seemed to inherit the virtues of her pious ancestors, attached her new friends to her more closely. Mrs. Norton declared that Margaret was the best child she had ever seen, and perfectly invaluable to her: if she did not keep her because it was her duty, and because she loved her, she certainly would as a daily pattern to her own children. And besides, she had such pretty manners, and knew so much, that it was better than sending the children to school, to have them with her. [Pg 173]

If I were making up a story for your entertainment, my dear nieces and nephews, I should tell you that Margaret always lived with this admirable family, in perfect happiness, and that when she became a woman she married Frederic, the oldest son, thus keeping the place of a daughter in the house. But I am telling you the truth, which, you know, is often stranger than fiction, and often sadder also. In stories, good people are generally rewarded with uninterrupted prosperity, just as some very judicious parents give their children plum-cake and sweetmeats when they say their lessons well and do not scratch each others' eyes out. But it is not so in the real world: the all-wise Father above, acts on other principles. He knows that his children require evil, as well as good, and that the best soil will become dry, hard, and sterile, if the sun always shines upon it;—therefore it is that He sends dark, heavy clouds and gloomy days. Unwise and unthankful as we are, we grievously complain; but the showers still descend, and when we least expect it, behold the beautiful sun! All nature is again gay and joyous: the birds sing cheerily, the flowers raise up their dripping heads, new blossoms are put forth, and, to use the language of Scripture, the little hills skip like rams, the valleys shout, they also sing, and all the trees of the field do clap their hands. My heroine is still under the cloud of adversity, sharing in the fate of her protectors, and lightening their trials by her ready hand and most affectionate heart. Two years after she entered Mr. Norton's home, her benefactor was taken ill, and lingered for some months before he was transferred to that better mansion which is provided for each one of the faithful. Sad was the desolation caused by his death. I will not speak of the sorrow of the widow and of the orphans—you can all imagine that—but, in addition, they were deprived of their home, and cast out upon [Pg 174] the world. After the bills were paid—the physician's, the apothecary's, and the undertaker's, in addition to those necessarily contracted for the household while the father was earning nothing, Mrs. Norton found that not a penny was left her. Selling what she could, she removed to Philadelphia, where she had resided in her youth, thinking that she could easily obtain employment for her needle, and so support her young family, while they shared the advantages of our excellent system of public schools. But she found herself friendless and unknown in the great city, with many competitors for a very little sewing; and she came to the conclusion that it is the very poorest way by which a woman can support herself. She obtained a situation for Frederic in a store, where he receives rather more than is necessary for his own wants; and, removing to the country, she took a little cottage for the sum which one room would have cost her in town. Frederic is able to pay her rent: and when she is well, with the aid of our little Margaret, she can maintain herself and her helpless children in tolerable comfort. Thus the orphan has it in her power to repay the kindness shown to her, and by exercising the noble virtue of gratitude, to rise daily higher in the scale of being."

"Dear Aunty!" cried Amy, with all eagerness, "have you not been telling us the story of *our* Mrs. Norton, and that pretty little adopted daughter of hers, with the large, deep blue eyes?"

"You have guessed my riddle, Amy," replied her aunt, smiling. "I called there this morning while you were all out—while George was amusing himself by falling into the pond—and heard the whole history from the sick woman's lips. I felt so deeply interested in it, that I thought you could spend an hour worse than in listening to the simple tale." [Pg 175]

"Are you sure that you have not embellished it?" asked Mr. Wyndham, with a smile.

"Quite sure: for, although I filled up a few gaps in the narrative by using my very common-place imagination, I assure you that all the facts are substantially the same. And I don't doubt that if I had witnessed the scenes described, I should have been able to make my story far more pathetic, and far more romantic, because it would then have been a daguerreotype of the truth. I have talked with little Margaret herself, and certainly I have never seen a more engaging and lovely child. At my urgent request, she consented to lend me her precious medallion for a few days—and here it is."

"What a spiritual, poetical face!" exclaimed Mr. Wyndham. "I declare it reminds me of a portrait of Schiller which I once saw."

"And the mother, too—there is no doubt of that woman being a real lady," said Ellen. "Did you ever see a sweeter, gentler countenance?"

"Never," replied Alice. "But, uncle, do you not know that I have an idea? I guessed all along that Margaret Roscoe was *our* little friend—but I feel sure that rascal of a Smith was lying, when he said he had seen her uncle's death in the paper. It's not very likely such a fellow as he was, would object to telling an untruth! He only wanted to get her trunks, and to quiet her, you may be sure. And I believe that Mr. Alan Roscoe is now living in Philadelphia—and I believe that I know him, uncle!"

Her uncle started, and exclamations of surprise and delight burst from all the circle. "It might very well be," Mr. Wyndham said; "I remember thinking our amiable friend Smith was speaking an untruth, at the time, although I did not carry out the idea. But do you know any one of that [Pg 176] name, Alice? Surely, it cannot be Mr. Roscoe, the retired merchant, who is so prominent for his benevolence and liberality?"

"Yes, sir, it is—I am intimate with his oldest child, Carrie. And I know that he is a Scotchman, and they used to live in Charleston, and his name is Alan, and his little boy is called Malcom! that's after Margaret's father, I am sure. Carrie told me he had been named after an uncle in Scotland who was dead!"

"Is it possible?" replied Mr. Wyndham. "It really does look like it—if it be actually so, my dear wife, here is another reverse of fortune for your heroine, which you did not expect. The contrast would be great indeed, between the little whitewashed cottage, and the magnificent mansion on Walnut-street!"

"I hope it will not turn her head!" said Charlie Bolton.

"There is little fear of that, I think," rejoined Mrs. Wyndham. "Margaret has early been tried in the furnace of affliction, and she has come out gold: I believe she really possesses that gospel charity, one of the marks of which is, that it is not, and cannot be, puffed up. But what shall we do? shall we tell her of our hopes?"

"By no means," replied her husband. "It would only excite expectations which, after all, may be disappointed—although I am strongly convinced that our suppositions are correct. For the first time in my life, I regret that to-morrow will be Sunday; but early on Monday morning I shall set out for the city, and for Mr. Roscoe's house or counting-room. With my good wife's permission, I will take this medallion with me, and show it to Mr. Roscoe—then I shall know in a moment if he is really Margaret's uncle." [Pg 177]

"Will you be so kind as to take me with you?" asked a dozen voices at once.

"No, I will not," replied Mr. Wyndham, laughing. "The carriage cannot possibly hold you all. If Alice wishes it, I will take her, both as a reward for her quickness in making this discovery, and as a means of introduction to Mr. Roscoe, with whom I am not acquainted. And if our surmises prove correct, I expect to bring Mr. Roscoe back with me, which is another reason for not riding twenty or thirty in a carriage."

"Oh, uncle! uncle! twenty or thirty!"

"Well, you are a baker's dozen, at least, that you cannot deny. I quite long to get to town! I believe I am as much of a boy as Harry, there, or Lewis—I *really* wish I could put off Sunday just for one day, I am so impatient!"

"It will be an admirable exercise of your noblest faculties, uncle," said Cornelia, slyly. "I am rather impatient myself, even at my mature age. But the *moral discipline*, uncle, that is so invaluable that we ought not to wish it to be otherwise."

"Ah, you witch! I believe in my heart this is your revenge for my refusing to take you to town with me," rejoined her uncle.

"Not a bit of it—I bear no malice—it is only my native and unconquerable pertness, which I sometimes fear may get me into a difficulty with some one yet. But I am not at all afraid of you, dear uncle; I know you understand that it's only my way."

"Certainly, certainly; I should be a cross old fellow if I wished to repress your youthful spirits."

"But, uncle," said Charlie Bolton, "couldn't you put off Sunday as Dean Swift, or somebody or other, put off the eclipse? That would obviate all the difficulty." [Pg 178]

"I never heard that story," cried George Wyndham, "But every one knows about 'Hail Columbia' *putting on* an eclipse."

"I don't, I must own," replied Cornelia, laughing. "Do tell it straight, if you can, you monkey."

"I'll try, my own true sister. If it wasn't Hail Columbia, it was Columbus, and that's all one, the whole world knows. When the Indians began to discover that the Spaniards were not gods, as they at first thought, they became a little obstreperous, and wanted to starve them out—quite natural, under the circumstances. But Columbus, from his knowledge of astronomy, was aware that a total eclipse of the moon would take place the next night. So he called a meeting of the natives, and informed them that they had brought upon themselves the vengeance of the Great Spirit by their conduct—that at a certain hour, the light of the moon would be nearly put out, and its orb would look like blood, as a sign to them of the displeasure of Heaven. And when the poor creatures really saw it happen as he had said, they were nearly frightened to death, and came to him, laden with provisions, and begging him to pray to the Great Spirit, that he might remove his wrath from them. Now I call that putting on an eclipse."

"The funniest circumstance in relation to an eclipse, happened to me," said Mrs. Wyndham. "When I was a very small child, I thought that quite as great a miracle was about to happen, as the Indians did. You must know that there came to Philadelphia a certain famous race-horse named Eclipse, of whose speed great marvels were told. Handbills about him were thrown into the house, and I thought he must really be a wonderful animal. Just at that epoch, I heard my father say something about an eclipse that night, and the moon in connection with it. My [Pg 179] imagination was instantly fired. "Did you say, father, that Eclipse would go over the *moon*? why, can that be true?" "Oh yes, my dear, the eclipse is really going over the moon: if you wish it, you can stay up till nine o'clock, to see it." "Thank you, thank you, I should like to very much. But I don't see how it can be!" "More wonderful things than that happen, my child: you'll understand it

better when you are older; but you shall see it to-night, if you are not too sleepy." "No danger of that—I wouldn't miss it for the world!" "How much interest little Lucy seems to feel in the eclipse, mother!" said my father. "We must certainly let her stay up."

Night came on, and the show began. The best seat at an upper window was reserved for me, and I looked at the moon constantly, afraid that if I turned away my eyes for one moment the wonderful event might take place without my observing it. All were interested in my seeing it. "Lucy, do you see it, dear I do you see the moon getting dark?" "Oh yes, I see that, but I don't see Eclipse." "Why, that's the eclipse—when the dark shadow goes over the moon, that is an eclipse of the moon." "But I don't see the horse jumping over the moon, at all." "The *horse*? what do you mean, child?" "You said that Eclipse was to go over the moon, but I can't see him in the least!"

"Oh, Auntie! were you, really, such a *green* child as that?"

"Yes, it is a literal fact. I thought it a most astonishing thing that it could happen; but since my father so gravely said it would, my faith was equal to the demand made upon it. When I found it was only something about the shadow of the earth falling on the moon, I went to bed, grievously [Pg 180] disappointed and quite disgusted: I felt somewhat as the amiable Smith did, that I had been *sold*."

"Ah, Auntie, we children could not be taken in so now, I can tell you!" said Lewis.

"I know it," replied his aunt, smiling. "I am quite aware that the age of faith has passed away, and that republican institutions have made the young ones as wise and incredulous as their elders. I don't half like it myself!"

CHAPTER VI. [Pg 181]

SUNDAY.—BIBLE STORIES.—CAPPING BIBLE VERSES.—BIBLE CLASS.

Sunday morning arose upon the earth, so clear, and calm, and beautiful, that it almost seemed as if it were conscious of the blessings bestowed by it upon millions of the human family. Happy day! when the man bent under the heavy load of oppressive labor and corroding care, may take the rest which the Maker of his frame intended for him, from the very beginning. Now, throwing off the weight, he can realize that he is a man—made in the image of his Creator, and made for happiness and immortality. Now, he can afford to think: he is no longer the mechanical drudge; he is no longer one little wheel in the great social machine; he is to-day a reflecting being, and the desire for mental and spiritual elevation throbs strongly within his heart. He sits at his hearth, whether in the proud palace or in the humble cottage, for the working-man is equally to be found in both, and feels himself to be the centre of the home. He enjoys sweet converse with the wife of his youth, and his children cluster round him, delighted to have his society. He walks to the House of Prayer, surrounded by those he loves, and joins with his fellow-men in adoration of the Great Supreme. He is happy, and is prepared by the sweet Sabbaths below for the bliss above.

Nor should we forget, on this day, the numerous attractive circles to be found throughout our [Pg 182] highly-favored land, gathered together for Sunday-School instruction. Here, the voluntary system works to a charm: both teachers and scholars, drawn together by love, assemble, with sparkling eyes and kindly words, in their respective classes. Here, all ages can find something to interest them: the rosy-cheeked, chubby child runs along to its Infant School, fearing to be one moment behind the time, and singing,

"Oh, let us be joyful, joyful, joyful,"

with a full understanding of at least that part of the duty to be performed. And the adult walks quietly to the Bible Class, where mutual study and conversation about some passages of the Sacred Word elicit its meaning, and throw new light upon the holy page. And, in the ages intermediate between these two extremes, how bright and joyous are the groups clustered around each loving teacher! If the toil be great, how much greater the reward! how delightful is it to see the young mind expand, and the warm affections glow, beneath the hallowing influence of religion! And how pleasant and how good is it to find the hearts of adults and of children, of rich and poor, knit together by a common feeling of interest in the common cause!

Some such thoughts arose in the minds of our party at The Grange, and were fostered by the lovely calm of nature, which is so observable on Sunday in the country, where the very animals seem to know that they are included within the merciful commandment of rest. Mr. Wyndham was religiously observant of the day, but exceedingly disliked the gloom by which many worthy people think it a duty to lessen their own happiness, and to throw a chill and constraint upon that [Pg 183] of others on this joyful festival. He thought that the weekly commemoration of the Saviour's resurrection should fill us with bright hopes and an enlivening piety; and that an air of cheerfulness should be thrown around it, which might say to all who had not yet entered within the gates of Zion, "Come ye, and taste that the Lord is gracious." People are doubtless much affected, in these minor shades of difference, by their natural temperaments. Mr. Wyndham's frame of mind was so kindly and hopeful, and so open to all that is pleasant and animating, that

his religion partook of the genial influence. On Sunday, his face beamed with a more radiant smile than on other days, and he appeared to realize that it was indeed the foretaste of eternal joy.

In the morning, both old and young repaired with one consent to the little country church, in which they filled up quite a number of pews. Being the last Sunday in the year, the venerable clergyman, whose earnest manner and silver hairs made his message doubly impressive to the hearts of his hearers, exhorted all, of every age, to bring back to their minds the fleeting days of that division of time which was so soon to pass away, and to be numbered with those laid up against the Judgment. When that year had begun, what resolutions of improvement had been formed, what vows of greater fidelity had been made? And how had they been kept? All had, during the seasons past, received new proofs of the kindness and long-suffering of the Father above; but had the goodness of the Lord led them to repentance? or had it fallen upon hard, unfeeling hearts, which it could not penetrate? How stood they in their accounts? Not their ledgers, not their cash-books did he now call upon them to examine; but records of a far higher character, which affected their heavenly interests, as well as their temporal prosperity—the [Pg 184] deeds, the words, the cherished feelings of that year, which had left an impress upon their souls forever, and made them richer or poorer for eternity. They owed debts to their Maker and Redeemer, and to their fellow-men: how had they paid them? They continually received—did they also dispense the goodness of God? If unwilling now to think of these unsettled accounts, they should remember that one debt, notwithstanding all their reluctance, they would be obliged to pay—the debt of nature: and then would follow the final adjustment of all things—then would each one reap as he had sowed below.

All listened with deep attention to the discourse, which was well calculated to arrest the most careless trifler; and thoughts were suggested, and resolves were formed that day, which acted, long afterward, as a stimulus to the discharge of duty. The hand which scattered that precious seed has since been laid low in the dust; but the "winged words" did not fall to the ground: they still live, and produce results, in immortal spirits.

There was no service in the afternoon. "Oh dear!" said George, "I suppose it's not right to say so, but it's rather stupid, I think. How we do miss Sunday School! We can't play to-day, and a fellow like me doesn't want to read the whole time: what on earth can we do? Cousin Mary, are you too much engaged with your book to help us poor souls?"

With a smile, Mary shut it up. "How would you like Bible stories?" said she. "If you please, I'll tell you one, keeping to Scriptural facts, but clothing them in my own language, and omitting the name, or giving a false one. And then you are to find out whom it is I have been telling you about, [Pg 185] and to answer the questions I may ask you. How would you like that?"

It was agreed that it would be delightful: so Mary began by telling the story of

The Good Grandmother.

In ancient times, in a country of the East, there lived a Queen Dowager, whose heart was eaten up by ambition. She was a king's daughter, and had ever been accustomed to rule. While her husband lived she had exerted great influence at court, and had turned away his heart from the true and established religion of the state to the cruel worship of the idols of her native land; and this she accomplished, although he had been religiously educated, and was the son of an eminently good man. Little did it affect her, that a highly-distinguished prophet of God wrote a letter to the king her husband, foretelling the evils that should befall himself, his family, and his kingdom, and that this prophecy had been literally fulfilled. Little did it humble her proud spirit, that by the common consent, her degenerate husband, who, through *her* persuasions and example, had been led away from the path of duty, was judged unworthy to be interred within the sepulchres of his ancestors, and was buried apart. She had too much of her mother within her to be daunted by such trifles as these; for both of her parents had acquired an eminence in wickedness which have made their names by-words: but her mother's especially is considered almost a synonym for every thing that is unlovely in woman. [Pg 186]

After her husband's death, her son succeeded to the throne, and he also did wickedly, for he had been educated under his mother's eyes, trod in her footsteps, and courted the society of her connections. And this was the cause of his death; for while paying a visit at the court of his uncle, her brother, they both were killed together in a successful insurrection. And now, if ever, if any thing of the woman was left in her nature, the queen's heart would be softened and humbled: at one fell swoop, death had carried off her only son, her brother, and every member of her father's house; she only was left, of all that proud and numerous family. Her aged mother, aged, but not venerable, although now a great-grandmother, had met her fate in a characteristic manner. Determined, if she must die, to do so like a queen, she had put on her royal robes, and adorned herself with jewels, and caused her withered face, upon which every evil passion had left its mark, to be painted into some semblance of youth and beauty. Her eyelids were stained with the dark antimony still used in the East, to restore, if possible, the former brilliant softness to eyes of hard, blazing, wicked blackness. Gazing from an upper window of the palace upon the usurper, as he drove into the courtyard, the fearless woman, resolved to show her spirit to the last, railed

upon him, and quoted a notable instance from history of one who, like him, had been a successful rebel, but had reigned for only seven days. Enraged at her insolence, her enemy, looking up, asked, "Who in the palace is on my side?" At these words, some officers of the household cast her down from the window: thus ingloriously she died, and the prancing horses of the chariot trampled over her. He who now was universally acknowledged to be the king, soon gave orders that she should be buried, observing that, wretch as she was, she was of royal blood. But the [Pg 187] vulture and the jackal had been before him: naught remained of that haughty, revengeful, and heaven-defying woman, save the skull, the feet, and the palms of her hands. Thus, to the very letter, was fulfilled the prediction of a prophet, one of her contemporaries: it was the same individual who had sent an epistle to her son-in-law, the late husband of our heroine, announcing his fate. This fearless reprover of kings did not live to see the accomplishment of the divine messages he was commissioned to deliver, and yet he had not died: read me that riddle, if you can.

When the queen, who, from one distinguishing act of her life, I have called *the good grandmother*, heard the sad tidings of the death of her only son, of her mother, and of all her kin, what did she? mourn, and weep, and give herself up to melancholy? she was quite incapable of such weakness. If she had no children left, she at least had grandchildren—she must take care of them—the tender little playful babes, her own flesh and blood, and all that was left upon the earth of her late son. And she did take care of them—the care that Pharaoh took of the Israelitish infants—the care that Herod took of the nurslings at Bethlehem—the care that the tiger takes of the lamb. She was worse than the tigress; for the latter will at least defend her young ones from all attacks, even at the peril of her own life. But she—shame of her sex!—commanded the immediate execution of all the children of her son, that she might reign alone, and never be called upon to resign the sceptre to a lawful heir.

They are slain! The shouts and laughter of that band of little ones is stopped forever—the galleries will never more re-echo to their youthful voices; vainly did they rush into the arms of their nurses for protection. They are slain; all save one! For if they have a grandmother they also have an aunt, and one who is ruled by different principles. She is the sister of their father, but [Pg 188] probably had not the same mother as he: she early chose the paths of piety and goodness, and was wedded to a man of uncommon firmness and of the noblest character—the high priest of the nation. Soon as she had an intimation of the intentions of the queen, she hastened to the palace. But one only could she save—a little crowing babe, whom, with his nurse, she secreted in a safe place, until, under cover of the night, she was able to convey them to her own abode.

There, in the house of the Lord, the young child was reared. For six years he was hidden, and tenderly and carefully trained in the fear of God, while his grandmother reigned supreme in the land, to the subversion of all law and order. But when the prince was seven years old, the high priest, his uncle, took measures to secure to him the possession of his rights. He consulted with the wisest of the nation, and brought together the Levites from all parts of the land, and divided them into bands, giving each a particular post, to guard against surprise. He then brought forth from the treasuries of the temple the spears, shields, and bucklers which had belonged to King David, and distributed them among the captains of the several divisions. When all arrangements were made, and the people who were gathered together in the spacious courts for worship, waited to see what was about to happen, he retired; and came back, in his priestly garments, with the mitre upon his head, on which was written, on a golden plate, HOLINESS TO THE LORD—this sentence showing the intention of the priestly office. His robe, or under-garment, which hung in rich folds down to his feet, was of deep blue, and around the hem were alternate pomegranates of brilliant colors, and little golden bells, which made a tinkling sound as he moved along. Above [Pg 189] this was worn the ephod, splendidly embroidered in gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with a long and broad girdle at the waist, manufactured of the same gorgeous materials. Upon his bosom flashed the breastplate, composed of twelve large precious stones, all different, upon each one of which was engraved the name of a tribe of Israel; so that the High Priest bore them all upon his heart, when he ministered before the Lord. Well was this magnificent dress, which was made "for glory and for beauty," calculated to set off the dignity of the holy office, and to make the people gaze in admiring awe. But it was not the splendor of the pontifical robes, it was not the inspiring person of the high priest, at which the assembled multitudes eagerly gazed, when the Head of the Church again appeared before them. It was a little boy, of seven years old, who now attracted their attention—a pretty child, arrayed in royal garments, who was led forward by the venerable man. His stand was taken beside a pillar, and the guards, with drawn swords, gathered round him: his uncle placed upon his clustering curls the golden circlet, the symbol of how much power, what heavy cares, and what fearful responsibility! And when the people, long crushed to the earth by tyrannical rule, beheld it, hope again awaked in their hearts, and, with one accord, they clapped their hands, and shouted out, "God save the King!" And the trumpeters sounded aloud, and the harpers struck up the notes of praise and joy, and the full choir of trained singers joined in the jubilee. And thus was the young king proclaimed—while, in the innocence of childhood, he wonderingly looked on.

But the queen heard the shouts in her palace. For the first time in her life, it is most probable, she came to the house of God—but she came not to worship. "What means this riotous assembly?" [Pg 190] she thought. "Can it be, that the vile rabble dare to think of revolt—against *me*? I will go, even alone, and awe them by my presence: it shall never be said that my mother's daughter feared aught in heaven above or the earth beneath." She went, that audacious woman, with all her crimes upon her head, and entered alone into the temple of the Holy One. She went to her death. The people made way for her, although they gazed upon her with loathing; and within the

sanctuary she beheld the grandson, whom she had long thought to be numbered with the dead, in royal array, with the crown upon his head. When she saw this, she rent her clothes, and cried loudly, "Treason! treason!" But none joined in the cry: an ominous silence pervaded that vast assembly, and looks of hatred were cast upon her from the crowd. Seeing plainly that all were against her, her insolent pride gave way, and she turned to flee from that mass of stern, relentless eyes, all gazing, as it were, into her black and blood-stained heart. As she passed along, the people shrank back, as if an accursed thing were near them; and when she had passed from the consecrated limits, she was slain. None shed a tear over her grave, but the people enjoyed rest and peace, now that her tyranny was terminated.

"And that was the end of her!" said George. "And well she deserved her fate. A good grandmother, indeed! But who was she?"

"That's the very thing I want to know," replied Mary. "But perhaps some of you can tell me who her very lovely mother was?"

"There is no mistaking her," said Amy. "There is only one Jezebel in the world, I hope. Think of the horrid old thing, painting herself off, and trying to look like a beauty! I wonder if she thought [Pg 191] she could possibly captivate the murderer of her son!"

"Hardly that, I should think. Perhaps it was on the same principle that Julius Cæsar drew his robe around him, before his death—an idea of the proprieties becoming the station they occupied. It reminds me of a passage in Pope, describing 'the ruling passion strong in death:'

> "'Odious—in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke,'
> (Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke;)
> No, let a charming chintz and Brussels' lace
> Wrap my cold limbs, and shade my lifeless face;
> One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead:
> And—Betty—give this cheek a little red.'

And now, can you tell me who was that prophet that sent a letter to the husband of 'the good grandmother,' and who predicted the fate of her parents, Ahab and Jezebel?"

"He who did not *live to see* their accomplishment, and yet was not dead," said Cornelia. "Oh, I remember well about that: it was Elijah, the Tishbite, who had ascended to heaven without dying. By the way, how do you understand that saying of Elisha's, Mary—'My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof?' I never knew rightly whether the latter part of his exclamation referred to the ascending prophet, or to the chariot and horses of fire."

"I once asked our clergyman that very question; and he told me that it alluded to Elijah himself, and meant to say, that he was the defence of the country, and a whole host in himself: comprising cavalry, and those heavy chariots filled with warriors, and armed with scythes on either side, which did such deadly execution in ancient warfare. I suppose Elisha thought, How can *I*, how can our country exist without you!" [Pg 192]

"I remember now the name of 'the good grandmother,'" said Ellen, smiling. "It was Athaliah—and a worthy daughter she was for Ahab and Jezebel to leave as a legacy to the world. And her son was Ahaziah, who was killed in Samaria, while on a visit to his uncle, King Jehoram. And now I think some one else should tell who the usurper was, under whose chariot-wheels the wicked Jezebel was slain."

"It was Jehu, the furious driver," answered her brother Tom; "the same eminently pious individual who invited a friend to 'go with him and see his zeal for the Lord,' when he intended to murder the rest of Ahab's relations. A fine way of showing goodness, that!"

"And who was the good aunt?"

"You must really let me look for that," said Amy, getting a Bible. "It was Jehosheba, and her husband, the high priest, was named Jehoiada, and the little king was Joash, or Jehoash. I'm sorry to see that he was only kept straight by his uncle: as soon as he died, the young monarch, appears to have become as bad as any of them."

"And now, Cousin Mary, tell us another story!" said Harry.

"Very well, if you wish it. I'll call this tale

The Prophet and the Fortune-Tellers.

In former times there was a king of Judah, an excellent man, who, through some unaccountable ideas of policy, had entered into an alliance with a very wicked king of Israel, and had even encouraged his son to marry the daughter of his idolatrous neighbor. On one occasion, he was paying a visit to his ally, when the latter proposed to him that they should join together in [Pg 193] recovering a city which had formerly belonged to the Jewish nation, from their enemy, the King of Syria. He replied, that they were of one blood, and had but one interest, and that he should most gladly aid him; but cautiously added, that it was his particular wish that God's oracle should be consulted, as he did not like to undertake any thing without His direction. To gratify this superstitious whim, as he considered it, the Israelitish monarch collected together about four hundred false prophets, who were ready to say any thing that would give him pleasure, and asked whether he should or should not go up against the city. Of course, they obsequiously replied, "Go

up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

But the King of Judah wag not satisfied. He had seen real, true prophets of God, and they had neither looked nor acted like these very smooth, courtier-like men. He mistrusted these pretenders, and said to his brother-monarch, "Is there not another, a prophet of Jehovah, of whom we could inquire the Lord's will?"

The latter answered, "Yes, there *is* another man; but I did not send for him, for I hate the very sight of his face. Instead of predicting good, he makes a point of foretelling evil; I detest that man." But his more amiable and pious friend said, "Pray, do not speak so, your Highness: it is not right." Seeing that he was unwilling to go until he had consulted the prophet, the King of Israel ordered the latter to be sent for. The two sovereigns awaited him in state, in their royal robes upon their thrones, at the large open space always left in Oriental cities at the entrance of the gates, for public meetings, business, and courts of justice.

Before the messenger returned, the false prophets had renewed their predictions of a safe and successful career to the two kings; and one of them had distinguished himself by making horns of iron, which he placed upon his head, agreeably to the allegorical style of the East, and said: "Thus shalt thou push against thy enemies, and shalt overcome them, until they be utterly consumed." [Pg 194]

Meanwhile, the royal messenger approached with the prophet; and being a good-natured man and a courtier, he begged the latter not to affront his master, by speaking differently from the other seers, who all, with one accord, joined in predicting peace and success. But the undaunted man of God replied, that what Jehovah revealed to him he would speak, neither more nor less.

At last, they arrived in the presence of royalty; and the King of Israel said to him, "Speak, and declare the counsel of God: shall we go up against the city, or shall we abandon our undertaking?" With a manner of cutting irony—for he well knew that the monarch neither cared to know the will of the Lord, nor would obey it, when known—the prophet answered, quoting the language of the fortune-tellers around him: "Go up, and prosper; for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king." But it was so evident that there was something behind this satire, that the idolatrous prince replied to him, "How often must I be compelled to tell you to speak the truth, and to declare the will of Heaven?"

Then the prophet spoke, and this time the mockery had vanished from his tone and manner, and his voice was serious and sad: "I see a vision that distresses me: all Israel is scattered upon the hills, like sheep which have no shepherd. And Jehovah says, 'These have no master: let each one return to his house in peace.'"

When he heard this, the King of Israel turned to his friend: "Now you see a proof of my words," said he. "Did I not tell you that he would never predict aught but evil of me?" [Pg 195]

But the prophet still spoke on: "I have a parable to tell thee, O mighty King. I saw, sitting upon his lofty throne, one mightier than thou—the King of kings; and upon his right hand and upon his left were ranged all the host of heaven. And he said, 'Who shall persuade the Lord of Israel to go up against Ramoth-Gilead to his destruction?' And various counsel was given from different sources. At last, a Power spoke, and offered to go forth as a lying spirit in the mouth of all the king's prophets. The Lord answered him, 'Go, and thou shalt likewise succeed.' This, O monarch, is my parable: a lying spirit has gone forth into thy prophets; for truly, Jehovah hath spoken evil concerning thee."

At these words, the man who had made himself so especially prominent in predicting good fortune to the expedition came up to the prophet, and struck him upon the cheek, with an insulting speech; and the king commanded that he should be carried to the governor of the city, and kept closely confined, upon bread and water, until he returned in peace and triumph, having conquered all his enemies. But the prophet answered, "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me."

But, unrestrained by any thing he said, the two princes went forth to the battle. More completely to insure his safety, the Israelitish monarch disguised himself, and requested the King of Judah to wear his royal robes, which he accordingly did. But the Syrians had received orders to aim only at the enemy's head and leader, and not to attack the common people. This nearly caused the death of the King of Judah, who wore his friend's conspicuous garments, and who was pursued, and almost slain, before the mistake was discovered. But notwithstanding his precaution in wearing a counterfeit dress, the fated king did not escape. An arrow, shot by chance, struck him in a vital part, and he died. When the death of their lord was known, all Israel fled in dismay, and every man sought the shelter of his own home. We may presume that the true prophet was liberated from his confinement, and that the base and impudent impostor was punished as he deserved. [Pg 196]

"Are not these kings near relatives of 'the good grandmother?'" said Charlie Bolton.

"You are right," replied Mary. "They are her father, Ahab, and her father-in-law, Jehoshaphat. Who was the true prophet, and who the false?"

"The true prophet was Micaiah, the son of Imlah; and the other—I think his horns should have been made of *brass*, impudent fellow that he was—was called Zedekiah."

Other Bible stories were called for, which were found so interesting, and, as the younger children

confessed, so *new* to many of them, that all agreed to begin a more systematic mode of reading the Scriptures—that treasury of historic truth, of varied biography, and of poetic beauty. John Wyndham remarked that the best thing about the romantic incidents in the Bible was, that you could be sure they had all really happened: and the events were told with so much simplicity, and the characters were so natural and life-like, that even a dull fellow like him, who had no more imagination than a door-post, could see it as if it were passing before his eyes. And another thing that struck him was, that all was related without the exclamations, and the comments upon the incidents and the people, which you find in common books: you were treated as if you had both [Pg 197] sense and conscience enough to find out the moral intention of the narrative, and that made you think a great deal more than if it was explained out in full. The young people all got their Bibles, and counting the chapters, formed a plan for reading through the whole book once a year. They found that if they read three chapters a day, and occasionally an extra one, they could accomplish it: and resolved to begin in Genesis, the Psalms, and St. Matthew's Gospel, in order to give more variety. When this point was settled, Amy proposed capping Bible verses: she said they could have their books before them to help them a little, if their memories failed. One was to recite a verse, and the next another, beginning with the letter which ended the preceding passage; and if the person, whose turn it was, hesitated, any one else who first thought of a suitable sentence should recite it. But it ought to be something which made good sense, when disconnected from the adjoining verses: and it was a rule of the game, that if any one present did not understand the meaning of a quotation, they should talk it over until they got some light upon the subject.

Amy began: "'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'"

"Stop!" cried Lewis. "For if that means that gentle, patient, forgiving people, shall become rich and great, I don't understand it at all."

"Certainly it cannot mean that," replied his sister Ellen. "I have heard it explained in this way:—they shall possess the best blessings of earth, by living in love and peace, and having easy consciences."

"That makes a very good sense, I think," said Tom; "but I have heard another explanation given, which I like better. The earth, in that place and in many others, can be translated *land*, with [Pg 198] equal propriety; and as the land of Canaan was promised to the Jews as a reward, the heavenly Canaan is held out as a recompense to Christians."

"I'm satisfied," said Lewis. "Let me see—h—'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken.'"

"'Never man spake like this man,'" added George.

"I think there are some words in the verse before that N," said Gertrude.

"But that is of no consequence," replied Amy. "When a clause makes a complete sense in itself, that answers, even if it is not at the beginning of a verse. You know that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses is quite a modern thing."

"Indeed, I did not know it," said Gertrude. "Are you quite sure?"

"Oh, yes, certain. I don't know when, or by whom it was divided into chapters—but my Sunday-school teacher has told me that the books of the Old Testament were not parcelled out in that way among the Jews. They had other, and longer divisions, one of which was read every Sabbath day in the synagogues, so that the whole was heard by the people, in the course of the year. She told me that the New Testament was first distributed into chapters—it was not originally written so—and then the Old; and that in some places it would make better sense if the end of one chapter was joined to the beginning of the next."

"And how is it about the verses, Amy?"

"It was first separated into verses by Robert Stephens, a publisher, when riding on horseback between Paris and Lyons: he marked it thus as he rode along. He was about to publish an edition of the Bible, and a concordance, and divided it for facility of reference. This was in the middle of [Pg 199] the sixteenth century."

"There is one thing I've always wanted to know," said John. "Along the margin, among the references, every now and then there are a few words—generally, *or* so and so. What is the meaning of that?"

"That occurs when the translators were doubtful which of two words gives the right meaning," said Mrs. Wyndham, coming forward. "And I have frequently noticed, that the one in the margin is preferable to the other."

"Another point I wish to have explained," said Cornelia. "Why is it that in all Bibles some words are put in Italics? There must be a reason."

"Yes, my dear, there certainly is. The translators did not find these in the original text, but thought them necessary to make up the sense. You know that you are obliged to take such liberties in rendering any foreign language into English. But they very properly distinguished *their* words from those found in the original; and occasionally, when the former are omitted, the passage is more forcible, and gives a slightly different sense. It is well to remember this."

"But we have wandered very far from our game," said Charlie Bolton. "'Never man spake like this

man,' was the last—another N—'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.'"

"'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.'"

"'Divers weights and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination unto the Lord.'"

"'Drink waters out of thy own cistern, and running waters out of thy own well.'"

"'Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty.'" [Pg 200]

And so the game went on, until, to the surprise of all, Cæsar announced that tea was ready, and they found that the afternoon had quite passed away, in pleasant and profitable talk.

In the evening, Ellen Green asked her aunt if she would not consent to convert them into a Bible-class, as an hour could be spent very agreeably in that way. Of course, Mrs. Wyndham agreed to the proposition, and requested the young party to bring Bibles in as many different languages as they could understand. They had Latin, Greek, and German versions in the library, which the boys would find useful, as all the older ones were pretty well versed in the classics, and Tom Green was studying German; and as she had seen Amy reading her French Testament, and Ellen the Italian, she knew they were provided for. Accordingly, they ran to get their books; and by comparing the various translations, they found that the sense was frequently made clearer. Each one read a verse; and then, before the next person proceeded, Mrs. Wyndham explained it, and asked questions, which frequently led to the most animated conversation. By requiring a definition of all words which were not perfectly familiar, she arrested their attention. When she, or any other member of the class, thought of a passage in Scripture which threw light upon the subject, all searched for it, with the aid of the Concordance. Any peculiarity of rites, manners, customs, etc., was made more intelligible by the Bible Dictionary; and when the whole lesson was finished, the young people gave a summary of the religious truth, and practical inferences to be deduced from it.

A quotation from the Book of Daniel led to some pleasant talk about that prophet, his greatly diversified life, and the important changes in the world's history which he witnessed. Mrs. [Pg 201] Wyndham remarked that the Jews have a tradition which in itself is very probable, that the venerable man pointed out to Cyrus, after his conquest of Babylon, the verses in Isaiah, wherein he is spoken of by name, as conquering by the power of the Lord, and giving orders to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple: and also that other passage, in which the destruction of the Babylonish empire by the Medes is foretold, both prophecies being recorded more than a hundred years before the birth of the mighty king by whom they were accomplished.

"I never heard of that," said Cornelia. "But, of course, it would be the most likely thing for Daniel to do. You can imagine the interest with which Cyrus would listen to these predictions about himself—and from the lips of such a noble, lovely, white-haired man as Daniel must have been. I don't wonder at all that he gave the decree to rebuild Jerusalem."

"This reminds me of another Jewish tradition, recorded in Josephus," rejoined Mrs. Wyndham. "This one, I think, is not at all probable; but as it would interest you, I will narrate it. Alexander the Great, while engaged in the siege of Tyre, sent orders to the high priest at Jerusalem, to furnish his army with provisions, as they had been in the habit of doing to Darius. But Jaddus, the high priest, gave answer that they were still bound by their oath to the King of Persia, and that, while he lived, they could not transfer their allegiance to another. This noble response awakened the rage of Alexander, who, as soon as Tyre was reduced, marched towards Jerusalem, determined to inflict signal vengeance upon that city. The inhabitants, totally unable to withstand the conqueror, were filled with consternation. Their town was, indeed, admirably fortified; but since Tyre, the Queen of the Sea, had been subdued, how could they hope to escape? Weeping [Pg 202] and loud lamentations were heard throughout the streets. The high priest knew that his only hope was in help from on high: he ordered prayers and sacrifices to be offered up, and awaited the result, confident that he had at least discharged his duty.

"But on the night before the mighty Greek arrived, Jaddus received directions, in a dream, to array the streets with flowers, and to go forth, in his pontifical robes, to meet the victor, followed by the people, dressed in white. He awoke, with fresh hope and energy, told his dream to the assembled populace, and gave orders that the city should be decked with garlands, triumphal arches, and gay streamers, and that the gates should be left open. When all preparations were made, he marched out, agreeably to the commandment, at the head of the priests and people, and awaited the approach of the invaders, at a point commanding a beautiful view of the city, with its open gates, unarmed walls, and smiling environs. At last, the clank of weapons was heard; and, with military music, the victorious army moved along, anxious for fresh conquests. But how different was their reception from that they had anticipated! Many, it is true, had come out to meet them, but all in the garb of peace; dressed in white, and crowned with flowers, as if for a festival. Hostility died away in the bosoms of the warriors, as they gazed on these defenceless men,—few are so brutal as to attack the unresisting and the friendly. But what was the astonishment of the whole army, when they beheld the fiery Alexander himself go forward towards the Jewish high priest, who headed the brilliant procession, and humbly kneel down at his feet! Then rising, he embraced him. The Israelites themselves were amazed, and acknowledged the merciful interposition of God. At length, Parmenio addressed the king, and asked why he, before whom monarchs and nations trembled, and at whose feet all were ready to [Pg 203] fall, should condescend thus to do homage to a man? Alexander replied, 'that he did not bow down to the man, but to the mighty name which was written upon his forehead—to the great God

to whom he was consecrated. For that, while he was yet in Macedon, meditating the expedition to Asia, he had been favored with a remarkable dream, in which he had beheld this very man, in his pontifical robes, who had addressed him, encouraging him to persevere in his undertaking. He told him that he, Alexander, was acting under the immediate guidance of God, and that he should prosper. And now,' continued the king, 'I do not pay obeisance to the man, but to the God whose high priest he is, and who has given success to my arms.'

"The Jews escorted him into their capital with shouts of applause and loud rejoicings. The Grecian monarch then entered the temple, and offered sacrifices, complying with all the requirements of the law: and Jaddus showed him, in the Book of Daniel, the prophecy concerning himself and his kingdom overcoming the Medo-Persian realm. Mary, will you be kind enough to read it?"

Mary opened the book at the 8th chapter, 3d verse: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

"I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beast might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

"And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. [Pg 204]

"And he came to the ram which had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

"And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

"Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones towards the four winds of heaven."

And at the twentieth verse it says: "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.

"And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn which is between his eyes is the first king.

"Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power."

"This is very plain, Aunt Lucy," said Mary; "and I suppose that the larger horn of the ram, which came up last, refers to the power of Persia, which overshadowed Media, originally so much its superior. If you notice, the ram comes from the east, and pushes westward, northward, and southward: while the he-goat comes from the west to attack the ram, and so rapidly, that he is represented as not touching the ground."

"I suppose that is a poetical expression," said John; "but if it were anywhere else but in the Bible, I'd say it was far-fetched." [Pg 205]

"It is exactly in unison with the figurative language of the East," replied Mrs. Wyndham. "The Arab praises the swiftness of his steed, at this day, by saying, that before his hoof touches the ground, he is out of sight. That's a bold figure for you."

"I love poetical expressions," said Amy.

"And I prefer plain English, not Arabian," answered John.

"I think I can answer for one thing," said Charlie. "When Jaddus showed Alexander that prediction, he did not lay much stress upon the verse about the great horn being broken while it was yet strong, and four others coming up in its place. It all came true enough, but Alexander would not have liked that part as well as the rest, about his conquests."

"Do you, who are fresh from school, remember the names of the four generals and kingdoms who succeeded him?" rejoined Mrs. Wyndham.

"Ptolemy seized Egypt; Seleucus, Syria and Babylon; Lysimachus, Asia Minor; and Cassander took Greece for his share of the plunder. But though these were notable horns, they were none of them in *his* power—none could compare with Alexander."

"Auntie," said Amy, "don't you think Alexander must have seen these predictions—you know how much he favored the Jews, and what especial privileges he gave them in his city, Alexandria?"

"Well, perhaps so," said Mrs. Wyndham, smiling. "I see you want to believe it, at any rate. There is no proof to the contrary, so you might as well indulge your organ of wonder."

CHAPTER VII.

SEQUEL TO THE ORPHAN'S TALE.—WHO CAN HE BE?—ELEMENTS.—THE ASTROLOGERS.

On Monday morning, our merry party at the Grange breakfasted rather earlier than usual, and Mr. Wyndham and Alice Bolton set off for Philadelphia, full of eagerness to hunt up an uncle for little Margaret Roscoe. Charlie told him, laughingly, that he was sure he would persuade some one to be her uncle, if rich Mr. Roscoe did not prove to be the right man: he could pick one up somewhere along the streets. But Mr. Wyndham replied, with an offended air, that he was sorry he had not yet learned his worth: good uncles, like him, were not to be met with every day—they should be valued accordingly.

"Do you remember the anecdote about Frederic the Great, of Prussia?" asked his wife.

"There are many funny stories told of him," answered Mr. Wyndham; "which is the one you refer to?"

"One Sunday, a young minister preached an admirable sermon before him, showing uncommon talent and erudition. Frederic afterwards sent for him, and asked where he was settled. 'Unfortunately, Sire, I have had no opportunity of being installed anywhere: I have never had a living presented to me.' 'But what is the reason?—you preach an excellent discourse, and appear to be an active young man.' 'Alas! Sire, I have no uncle.' 'Then I'll be your uncle, said Frederic. [Pg 207] And he kept his word: the next vacancy in the ecclesiastical appointments was filled up with the name of his adopted nephew."

"But, Aunt," said Harry, "I can't see what his having no uncle had to do with it."

"You know that in most other parts of Christendom, where the stars and the stripes do not float in the breeze, what we call the voluntary principle in church maintenance and government is not the rule at all. Here, people choose their own clergymen, and of course it is their business to support them. But in nearly the whole of Europe, rulers are so very paternal as to take that trouble and responsibility off the shoulders of the people: they are kind enough to do all their thinking for them. The subjects pay very heavy taxes; and from these, and from old endowments, all the expenses of the national establishments are discharged. They look at it in the same light as your parents do, when they pay your school-bills—it's a duty they owe you to see that you are properly taught; but it would be very weak in them to consult you as to which teacher you preferred, and what school you chose to go to—they're the best judges, of course."

"But, Aunt Lucy! you surely don't mean to say that the governments are the best judges as to what church the people shall attend, and what ministers they shall have?"

"I do not mean to say that is my opinion, of course—that would be rather anti-American, and not at all Aunty-Lucyish. No, no; I stand up for the rights of conscience, and approve of treating grown men, and children too, as if they had reason and common sense; and then they will be far more likely to possess it, than if they are always kept under an iron rule. But, on the other side of the water, they have not so exalted an opinion of the mass of the people as we have; and the [Pg 208] government, in some form—either through ecclesiastical boards, or inspectors of churches, or members of the aristocracy—exercises the power of filling vacant churches. This is the reason why it is important to have an uncle; in other words, some influential person to aid you in rising."

"Even the *memory* of an illustrious uncle is sometimes a stepping-stone," remarked Charlie Bolton. "The late Emperor Louis Napoleon is an example—lucky fellow; his uncle's name and fame got him a throne—with the help of considerable cheating."

"Not so lucky, if you look at his end," said John. "But from other and quite disinterested motives, I intend to keep as close to *my* uncle as he. I shall very soon begin to subscribe myself John Wyndham, Junior, and I am determined to be like you, uncle—as like as your own shadow."

"Then you will be an illustrious example of failure, my boy—for my shadow, although always near me, is generally cast down, which I never am—and it always looks away from the sunny side, you know, which I don't do. Besides, a shadow has no particular character: any one's shadow would suit me as well as my own."

"I intend to be an original, for my part!" cried Cornelia, laughing. "I won't be cast in anybody's mould, as if I were a bullet—not I!"

"That's right, my dear original!" said her uncle, pinching her rosy, dimpled, laughter-loving cheek. "The grave world always wants a pert little Cornelia to tease it out of its peculiarities: people in old times kept their jesters, and you're nearly as good!"

"Why, uncle! you insult me! you've quite mistaken my character; I intend to be the dignified Miss Wyndham!"

"Oh, pray, spare us that infliction!" replied her uncle, laughingly, jumping into the carriage. [Pg 209]

Mr. Wyndham met with good success. He arrived at Mr. Roscoe's door at the moment that gentleman was about to leave home. Alice Bolton, who was an especial favorite of his, introduced her uncle; and when he understood that they had private business with him, he led them up to his

library, where, hanging over the mantle-piece, Mr. Wyndham immediately saw a portrait, the counterpart of the one in his possession, although evidently taken some years before the miniature. Involuntarily, he stopped before it, and gazed earnestly. Mr. Roscoe sighed. "Here is all that remains," said he, "of a dear and only brother. I value this picture more than any thing else in my house, except its living furniture." "Had your brother no family, sir? no wife or child?" rejoined Mr. Wyndham. "That is rather a tender subject, my dear sir," answered Mr. Roscoe: "one that has caused me much sorrow, and some self-reproach. He left a wife and child, indeed, who were to join me in America. I have reason to think they sailed; but from that day to this, I have heard no tidings from them. Would to God I knew their fate! whether the unknown ship in which they took passage went down at sea, or what else may have happened, I know not. All my efforts to unravel the mystery have been in vain." "Perhaps I can help you," said Mr. Wyndham, with that peculiarly benevolent smile, which opened all hearts to him, as if by magic. "You recognize this countenance?" continued he, holding up to him little Maggie's medallion. "My brother Malcom! tell me, sir, tell me where you got this; it was his wife's!" "His sweet little daughter—your niece, Margaret Roscoe—handed it to my wife a few days ago. She knows not she has an uncle living: her mother is dead, and she is dwelling in comparative poverty near my house." "I cannot doubt it, from this picture—although it is all a mystery still. But I must see her—my dear brother's child. [Pg 210] I will order up my carriage immediately, and beg you to take seats in it. I must see her as soon as possible."

"On that very account I have made arrangements for you to come out to The Grange in mine," replied Mr. Wyndham. "We can explain all things by the way; and you can return whenever you say the word. You will find Old Cæsar quite at your disposal."

"I gratefully accept your offer, my dear sir, and can never be sufficiently thankful to you, if you indeed restore to me my brother's child. I will order my carriage to follow us to The Grange."

Accordingly, he acquainted his family, in few words and great haste, with the discovery that had been made, and left Carrie, Alan, and Malcom in an intense state of excitement, at the idea of regaining the long-lost cousin. The three then drove immediately to Mrs. Norton's little cottage, where the gentle and womanly child was busily engaged at her work—

> "Stitch, stitch, stitch,
> Band, gusset, and seam—"

striving, by her small, but active fingers, to aid in the support of that family which had sheltered her in adversity. As the door opened, she raised her deep blue eyes—the very reflection of her father's. The work fell from her hands; that face reminded her of home, of her grandfather, of her unknown uncle. They have recognized each other; the ties of blood speak out in their hearts; the long-severed are now united.

I will not attempt to raise the veil which hides from the world the strongest and purest affections of our nature: they were never intended for the common eye. But now, after the first rapture of [Pg 211] meeting had subsided, there arose a tumult within the soul of our affectionate and grateful little Maggie: her heart urged her in two opposite directions. She felt, in an ardent and uncommon degree, that instinctive love of kindred which is implanted in our nature, and manifested so strongly by the natives of Scotland; but, on the other hand, gratitude and duty appeared to bid her stay with her benefactors. Mr. Roscoe perceived the struggle, and it raised his little niece highly in his estimation. He told her that it was not his wish to separate her entirely from the family to which she was so warmly attached; that she should come very frequently to see them, and that, as his niece, she would find it was in her power to aid them more effectually than she could do as their adopted daughter. Mrs. Norton, although with tears in her eyes, told her that she could not now dare to detain her; her duty was clear, to follow her uncle, who filled her father's place. Having made the arrangement to call for her in the afternoon, Mr. Roscoe accompanied Mr. Wyndham and Alice to the Grange, where he dined, and spent the intermediate time; greatly to the pleasure of our young party, who could not have felt sure of Maggie's future happiness, had they not themselves experienced the attractive influence of his kind, gentlemanly, and paternal manner.

After dinner, the two gentlemen had a little private conversation about Mrs. Norton. They wished to place her above poverty, and yet to do so in a way which should not mortify her feelings of independence. Mr. Roscoe remarked that "he had it in his power to bring Frederic forward in business; and that, if he were an industrious and intelligent lad, he should enjoy as good an opportunity of rising in the world as the son of the richest merchant in the land. He would see to [Pg 212] it that the girls had the best advantages of education; and if they showed sufficient talent, they should be trained for teachers. But, meantime, what was to be done for Mrs. Norton? Would she accept from him an annuity, which, after all, was only a small return for her kindness to his brother's child?"

Mr. Wyndham thought that it would be a better plan to establish her in a neat dwelling and well-furnished shop, either in the country or in the city, where Frederic could board with her. He knew, from his wife's account, that she had an acquaintance with business, and had thought of setting her up, himself, in a small way: he should be happy to aid in the good work. But Mr. Roscoe insisted that the debt was all his own, and that no one should share with him the privilege of helping her; and, accordingly, this plan was determined upon as combining the most efficient assistance to the widow, with a regard to her self-respect.

In the evening, after the excitement produced by the unexpected turn in the fortunes of little Maggie and of her generous protectors had somewhat subsided, our happy party drew up to the fire, which crackled and blazed as if conscious of the animation it imparted to the group around it.

"What game shall we play to-night?" said Cornelia, who possessed such an active mind as to think it stupid and "poking," unless some visible fun was in progress. She never could think the fire was burning, unless the sparks flew right and left.

"What do you say to 'Who can he be?" asked Mary. "'Tis a game, partly of my own invention, that I think may prove entertaining. I've seen a set of historical cards, in which a description is read of a general, king, or other illustrious character; and any one having the card on which the [Pg 213] corresponding name is printed, calls it out, and gains the other one. But if a beautiful Queen of Egypt, who lived a short time before the Christian era, is portrayed, it's quite as well for boys who own a Moses or a Mary of Scotland, not to be in too great a hurry to speak."

"We wouldn't be such dunces, I hope," cried Harry. "But, Cousin Mary, what's your improvement? I don't see any cards here at all."

"Oh no: I think when people have brains, they can play much better without them. My plan is, for a person to describe the individual, naming the country and age in which he lived, what gained him distinction, and every thing else that is interesting; and then any one of the circle can guess who the hero is, having the privilege of asking one question previously. If the conjecture be correct, the guesser describes another character, and so the game proceeds. Or, if you prefer it, you can narrate one well-known anecdote of your hero, and then three questions are allowed previous to a guess. I call it 'Who can he be?'"

"I think I shall like it," said Ellen. "If you please, I'll begin. Once there lived a Roman Emperor—he was a nephew, like Louis Napoleon and Cousin John. We often say people lived in the year one: he certainly did. He was a great patron of literature and the fine arts, and was a munificent friend to Virgil. Who can he be?"

"I can tell you, without asking my question," cried Tom. "Augustus was eminently the nephew, and succeeded his uncle, Julius Cæsar, in the Empire. He was reigning at the time of our Saviour's birth, and of course lived in the year one: every thing fits—he's the man."

"You are right. Now 'tis your turn, brother Tom." [Pg 214]

"The first of the English poets—who wrote splendid poetry, if only one could read it. 'Tis such hard, tough, jaw-breaking English, that it is little wonder his very name shows we must use the muscles of our mouths when we attempt it. He lived soon after the time of Wickliffe, and imbibed some of his ideas. Who can he be?"

"Who but Chaucer?" said Cornelia. "Now who is the hero who was almost elected King of Poland, but who lost that honor through the interference of a queen of England, unwilling to lose the brightest jewel of her crown by parting with him? He is mortally wounded on the battle-field, and thirsting for water. His soldiers procure some, with great difficulty, and he is about to raise it to his lips, when he sees the longing eye of a dying man, at his side, fixed upon it. 'He wants it more than I,' said he, and gave it to the poor fellow. Who can he be?"

"We are allowed three questions to an anecdote," said Alice, "but none are required here. There is only one Sir Philip Sydney. But who was the selfish queen, unwilling to have her noblest subject exalted beyond her control?"

"None other than good Queen Bess," answered Cornelia.

"And who is the poet that has immortalized Sydney's sister, in the following lines?

> "'Underneath this marble hearse
> Lies the subject of all verse:
> Sydney's sister, Pembroke's mother—
> Death, ere thou hast slain another
> Good, and fair, and wise as she,
> Time shall throw his dart at thee!'"

"Was it 'rare Ben Jonson?'" cried Charlie Bolton.

"Even so, Charlie: now, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"I intend to disprove the assertion of Alice, that there is only one Sir Philip Sydney. Who was that [Pg 215] other equally valiant knight, and much sweeter poet, who used to sing his own verses, accompanying himself upon the harp; and could thereby soothe the most troubled spirit? On one occasion, this brilliant genius, whose romantic adventures might fill a volume, and who subsequently became a king, was in exile, and was hidden, with some devoted followers, in a large cave. The enemies of his country were encamped around, and lay, in strong force, between his hiding-place and the small town where he had spent his childish years, which they also garrisoned. While in this situation, cut off from all intercourse with his home and friends, his heart turned to them with an intense longing; and in a moment of thoughtlessness, he said before three of his captains, 'Oh, what would I not give, could I once more drink water from the well, outside the gate of my native town!' At the peril of their lives, the gallant men fought their way

through the hosts of the enemy, and returned with the water. But the poet-warrior would not drink: he poured it out as a libation to God, saying, 'Can I indeed drink the blood of these noble friends, who have risked their lives to gratify my idle whim? I cannot do it.' Now, who can be this poet, warrior, and king?"

"Did he live about a thousand years before the Christian era?" said Amy.

"He did."

"It was the sweet Psalmist of Israel, David, son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite. Now, who is the man that long ago published a book of jests, said to be greatly studied now-a-days by diners-out and professed wits, and endlessly copied into other works of a similar character. His reputation is so high, that many anecdotes are called by his name. Who can he be?" [Pg 216]

"Is it Punch?" said Lewis.

"How silly!" cried Harry, with the knowing look of a boy two years older: "Punch is a newspaper. Was it Hood?"

"No: do you all give it up?"

"Yes: we can't imagine who he can be."

"Joe Miller, of jesting memory."

"Now let us try another game," said Gertrude. "Of course, Cousin Mary has an endless store at her disposal."

"Let us try 'Elements,'" Mary answered. "I will throw my handkerchief at some one, calling out water, air, or earth; and the person who catches it must immediately name an animal living in or upon the element. But if I say *fire*, you must be silent. The answer should be given before I count ten; and then the one in possession of the handkerchief must throw it to another, carrying on the game. Any one who repeats an animal that has been already mentioned, pays a forfeit—except that I think forfeits are stupid things."

"Instead of that," said Charlie, "let the unlucky wight who makes the greatest number of blunders, have the privilege of proposing the first game to-morrow."

"Very well," said Mary, throwing her handkerchief at Tom. "Water."

"Codfish," answered he, tossing it to Cornelia. "Earth."

"Elephant," replied Cornelia, sending the missive to Charlie. "Fire."

"Water," rejoined Charlie, flinging it to Amy.

"Eel," responded Amy, casting it into Anna's lap. "Air."

"Eagle," cried the latter, hurling the embroidered cambric at George's face. "Earth."

"Have pity upon my poor little handkerchief!" said Mary. And so the game proceeded; and simple though it was, it caused diversion. [Pg 217]

"Who shall be appointed to tell the story to-night?" asked Ellen. "It seems to me that Tom or Charlie, George or John should be selected; as it generally happens, 'the softer sex' has done the chief talking. Isn't it right and proper for the boys to take their equal share?"

"Oh, by no means!" answered Charlie. "It is the ladies' privilege—it would be very ungallant to deprive them of it. Besides, my trade is that of a critic, not an author: you must be aware that it is a higher branch, giving larger scope to my superior judgment and exquisite powers of fault-finding. Yes, criticism is my forte: do you tell stories, Ellen, and I'm the chap to slash them up."

"You are only too kind," replied his cousin, laughing. "After such a generous offer, who wouldn't be tempted?"

"I know you are right, sister Ellen," said Tom, "and that it is our duty to help in the entertainment of the company; but, for my part, I throw myself upon your mercy. I wouldn't, for the world, hint that we are more solid than the girls, but 'tis very certain that we are more lumbering. If I were to begin a tale, I'd flounder through it, like a whale with a harpoon in its body; while any of the girls, even down to little Anna, would glide along, like a graceful, snow-white swan upon a silver lake—happy in her element, and giving pleasure to all who witnessed her undulating motions."

"Very pretty that, Tom!" cried Cornelia. "After such a well-turned compliment, our hearts would be flinty indeed, if we didn't excuse you. But what do George and John say?"

"As for me," responded George, "it appears to be my vocation, at present, to eat hearty dinners, grumble over my lessons, skate, and now-and-then, by way of a frolic, fall into a pond. You may be thankful if I don't get into all sorts of mischief. You need not expect me to make myself agreeable till I arrive at the 'digging-up' age, that Cornelia spoke of." [Pg 218]

"For my part," added John, "you know that I couldn't invent a story, to save my life. I've no fancy at all; and have made up my mind, as I can't be agreeable, that I'll at least be useful. Everybody ought to be one or the other."

"We should aim to be both," said Mr. Wyndham.

"But, indeed, uncle, 'tis hard work for a fellow, when he's plain-spoken and rather dull, like me. I'd prefer sawing wood, any day, to entertaining a parcel of girls!"

"That being the case," answered Mrs. Wyndham, smiling, "we couldn't be hard-hearted enough to impose such an arduous duty upon you. I appoint Cornelia to the honorable office of story-teller this evening."

"Then I bargain that I make my tale as short as I like, and that I am not compelled to lug in a moral by the hair of its head, as the Germans express it," said Cornelia. "I approve of every one following the bent of his genius, and mine is not of the didactic order."

"We certainly should not expect a moral essay or an instructive treatise from our wild little girl," replied Mr. Wyndham. "I suppose there is no danger of its being immoral."

"I don't know, indeed," answered she, tossing her black curls, and looking archly at her uncle, whom she dearly loved to tease. "I'll leave you to judge of that: I don't answer for the injurious effect it may have upon these unformed minds around me. I call my story

; [Pg 219]

The Astrologers.

William Forsythe and Edward Barrington were lively young fellows of twenty, who had left their homes in the South to complete their education at one of our northern colleges. I don't think my strict uncle would call them "immoral" young men, but they certainly did not carry gray heads upon their green shoulders: they loved fun and mischief about as well as I do. They did not neglect study, and were up to the mark in their recitations; and they never perpetrated any thing really bad. They would not have intentionally hurt any one's feelings for the world; but yet, were any frolic to be carried into execution, these two were "the head and front of the offending." The grave professors, while they entertained their families at home with some of their exploits, were obliged to put on a very sober face in public, and even to hint at expulsion from the "Alma Mater," if the merry and thoughtless youngsters persevered in their course.

I must relate one or two instances which caused considerable laughter at the time, and have added to the stock of traditionary stories that may be found in every boarding college throughout our land. Contraband turkeys or geese, roasted in their room for supper, and intended for a jolly party of friends who would collect together, were, of course, quite common affairs. On one occasion, just as the odor had become very exciting to their gastric organs, and the skin had assumed that tempting brown hue betokening a near approach to perfection in their culinary operations, the watchful tutor scented out either the supper or some mischief, and rap-rap-rap [Pg 220] was heard at the door. Every sound was instantly hushed, and the offending bird was quickly transferred to a hiding-place in the room. After some little delay, the door was opened, with many apologies; and the tutor, looking suspiciously through his spectacles, entered the apartment. "Very studious, gentlemen! very studious, I see!" he said, glancing at the array of learned volumes open before them. "Let me beg you not to injure your health by too close application to books. But what a very curious smell! one would think you had been carrying out the classical lessons contained in Apicius. Allow me to examine: ah, Mr. Forsythe, I see that you grease your boots to keep out the wet—a good precaution." So saying, he pulled out the nice little goose from a new boot in the corner, to the mingled mortification and amusement of the young men. "Suppers are doubtless agreeable things at night," added the tutor; "but the worst is, that they often leave unpleasant consequences the next morning: of course, you are aware that you meet the faculty, to-morrow, gentlemen."

On another occasion, our two heroes were out all night, exerting themselves strenuously for the public good. I suppose they thought that if some of the impediments to familiar intercourse in the neighborhood were removed, the state of society would be greatly benefited. Some such grave purpose they must have had in view; for, in the morning, when the inhabitants of the town awoke, they found to their surprise that all the gates, small and great, had been removed from their hinges, and collected in one large pile, in the middle of the Campus! To complain to the faculty would do no good: it would only raise the laugh against them. So, when any of the townspeople, or the farmers in the neighborhood, came to select their gates from the pile, the cry was given, [Pg 221] "Heads out!" and from all the windows surrounding the Campus, roguish eyes peeped forth, to watch the proceedings; and frequently the property-owner returned, feeling very much as if he had been the culprit.

One day, a countryman drove up with a load of wood. As he disappeared around an angle of the building in search of the purveyor, our heroes approached, with a select party of classmates, weary of recitations, and longing for a change. Forsythe, whose genius for military tactics was so striking that he was dubbed, by universal consent, "the general," instantly formed his plan of attack; and, being nobly seconded by his quick-witted aids, he carried it into execution with the rapidity and decision characteristic of a great commander. In five minutes, the farmer returned, having concluded his bargain; but where was his cart, and horse, and load of wood? Nothing of the kind was to be seen; and it was very evident that patient Dobbin had, for once in his life, resolved to take a frolic, and see a little of life; or else that some rogue had gotten possession of

him and his appurtenances without the formality of a purchase. The town was searched, and all the adjacent roads. The neighbors, ever ready, from a principle of pure benevolence, to take a lively interest in all that was going on, gave advice in rich profusion, and sent the poor man flying hither and thither, in vain. But, at last, the contradictory reports appeared to settle down into the following facts: that many persons had seen the cart enter the town, but that none had witnessed its departure—wherein might be traced a strange likeness to the old fable of the sick lion and his visitors. The suspicion at last became general, that the students were somehow at the bottom of it; so just an appreciation did the townspeople possess of their capabilities for mischief, that no tricks of diablerie seemed too much to ascribe to them. As the weary countryman and his [Pg 222] sympathizing companions approached those academic shades, where earnest study and severe meditation filled up all the hours, a stir was apparent within the building; and the tramping of feet upon the stone staircase, and the laughter of many voices, told that something unusual had occurred.

With ill-disguised merriment, the worthy rustic was escorted up three flights of stairs, until, uneasily stamping upon the brick pavement of the hall, his wondering eyes fell upon his horse, looking decidedly out of his element. How came he there? Behind him was the cart, loaded with wood—not a buckle of his tackling was amiss—it looked as if old Dobbin had marched up the stairway, load and all. No one knew any thing of the prodigy—no one ever does, in such cases. The horse looked indignant, as if he had a tale to tell; but the words wouldn't come. No other witness could be produced in court; and the end of it was, that all, except the unfortunate animal himself, indulged in a hearty horse-laugh.

In what way they drove the cart down stairs, history does not mention. That was the concern of the owner and of the college authorities, and not mine nor my heroes—it may be in the hall to this day, for aught I know. But how they got up so high in the world is another matter, and I will let you into my secret, merely to convince my incredulous hearers that the thing was possible. Each of the fellows shouldered as many logs as he could carry, conveyed them to the appointed place, and returned swiftly to the charge. The wheels were now off, and ready for four of them, and the body of the cart for eight more. Forsythe and Barrington reserved for themselves the honor and glory of managing the live-stock. Slipping woollen socks over his feet, they somehow [Pg 223] got him up-stairs with marvellous celerity; and whilst his owner was gazing up and down for his vanished property, the astonished horse was again tackled to the loaded cart, his hose were taken off, and he was left to his meditations, in solitary possession of the hall. So quietly was all this done, that, although students and tutors were in the rooms adjoining, nothing was suspected, until the horse, who felt himself to be placed, without any fault of his own, in a false position, made known his sentiments by his impatient movements.

The worst trick our heroes ever played, and one of a somewhat kindred character, consisted in ornamenting Professor X's horse. At midnight, when the authorities were sound asleep, they took the poor animal out of his comfortable stable, and shoeing him with an extra quantity of felt, to prevent any noise, they conveyed him, with great difficulty, up the staircase, to the hall in the third floor. That might have satisfied them; but no, they were not pleased with his color. He was of pure white, and the scapegraces wished a variegated hue. So, after a preliminary shaving, they painted him in green stripes, and when they had arranged it to their satisfaction, they went to their own rooms. The unfortunate victim was not well contented, either with his quarters or his condition, and stamped about at a great rate, being quite unable to get down stairs. In the morning, when the Professor was ready for his usual ride, where was his horse? It had vanished, and the stable-door was open: thieves must have been prowling about in the night. At last, the trick was discovered; and then, as Will Forsythe said, "I could paint that horse, which was rather restive, but I would not undertake to paint the wrath of the Professor." Of course, no one did it—it was impossible to discover the guilty individuals. But the poor animal did not enjoy the frolic as [Pg 224] much as the wild youngsters, for he died in consequence; and this unfortunate termination of the exploit put a stop to any practical jokes for the enormous period of several months. To make up the unexpected loss to the Professor, the two friends sent him, anonymously, a sum of money equal to the value of the horse.

But the moral discipline inflicted by the luckless death of the green and white horse, did not endure forever. They say, that when a subterranean fire exists, and old craters are abandoned, new ones are thrown up: the inward, irresistible power must have a vent. Perhaps it's somewhat so with us, lovers of fun. I see uncle shake his head at me, and know that he thinks I'm inculcating bad morality: but indeed, nature will out, as well as murder. You must know that the excellent President, who had a great deal of dry humor in his composition, had procured a nice new vehicle. Every one liked the old gentleman, and yet, so great is the love of frolic inherent in some reprobate minds, that when the idea of carrying off his carriage was first broached at one of their little private suppers, by that wicked imp Will Forsythe, it was met with shouts of applause. It was resolved to convey it away, in the dead of the night, to a little piece of woods belonging to the Doctor, at a distance of about three miles from the college, and there to leave it. The plan was to be carried into execution that very night.

Accordingly, at midnight, eight forms might have been seen carefully descending from eight windows, and skulking along in the shade, for the moon was shining brilliantly, until they got beyond the college limits. They drew out the carriage, and proceeded slowly along the road: no one was astir except themselves. When they had passed all the houses, they no longer felt the [Pg 225] need of keeping the strict silence they had at first thought necessary, and the merry laugh and the gay repartee went round. "Hallo, Forsythe!" exclaimed Barrington, "how do you stand it? I

think this concern is as ponderous as if the old fat Doctor were inside it himself!" "I conceive this joke to be rather a heavy one," replied his friend, laughing. "I begin to wonder if we are not fools for our pains: Dr. Franklin would say that we paid too dear for our whistle." "Never give up the ship, my boy!" cried the other. "Only think how the old Doctor will stare about him to-morrow, when he misses it! It will be a second edition of the Professor's horse." "Now, 'an thou lovest me, Hal,' don't say a word about the Professor's horse, or I'll turn back with the carriage. That cost me to the tune of a hundred dollars, and more, not to speak of the remorse I felt when the poor creature died. But didn't he look comical when I had put on the green!" Thus, with jocund peals of laughter, they shortened the way, until they reached the little piece of woods in which they intended to deposit the coach. Had they been obliged to toil as much to gain their daily bread, they would probably have thought it hard work.

They took down the bars, drew in the carriage, and placed it in a snug position, out of sight. "And now for home!" said Forsythe. "Won't we get there a little sooner than we came?" At that moment the carriage window was thrown up, a large white head was put forth into the moonlight, and, to the horror of all concerned, they beheld the Doctor! Whether to run, or what to do, they did not know. The old President enjoyed their confusion for a few moments, and then said, "Much obliged to you for a pleasant ride, young gentlemen: now, suppose we go home again." Putting in his [Pg 226] head, and shutting the window and blind, he left them to their dismay. Completely taken in! they had been betrayed, somehow. They might look for an expulsion, after that; and, what was worse, would be heartily laughed at besides.

Between their mortification and the unwonted hard work, the perspiration rolled off their faces in large drops by the time they got home—that is to say, to the coach-house. Forsythe humbly opened the coach-door and let down the steps. "Many thanks," said the Doctor, with a grave face: "I have seldom enjoyed a more agreeable ride. I don't know when I have had horses I liked so well." Every day for a fortnight "the horses" were trembling, in expectation of a notice to canter off from the college, in disgrace; but no such intimation came. The worthy old Doctor was contented with the punishment he had already inflicted, but reminded them occasionally of their midnight frolic, and brought blushes up to their cheeks, by some sly allusion.

College days are now over: our heroes have graduated with some distinction, notwithstanding their many peccadilloes, and have bid farewell forever to the "academic shades," figuratively speaking, of their Alma Mater. They have amazed, delighted, and edified the ladies present at the Commencement by the eloquence of their Greek and Latin orations: the pretty creatures listened with rapt attention, and most intelligent countenances, to the whole. Had it been Cherokee, it would have proved the same thing. They did not enlighten the audience, as a learned old Scotchman, who, some fifty years ago, was President of one of our northern colleges, actually did at a commencement speech. He had a board of trustees, whom he looked upon with great contempt, as illiterate men; and not being on the best terms with them, he determined upon a [Pg 227] characteristic revenge. Turning round to one side of the stage, where some of them were seated, whenever he quoted Latin, he gave the explanation, "That's *Latin*, gentlemen;" and again, when he introduced any Greek, bowing to the other side, "That's *Greek*, gentlemen." But one incident occurred, showing equal respect to the classical acquirements of those around him: Will Forsythe, whose memory was none of the best, feeling a sudden lapse of it in the very middle of his speech, with imperturbable impudence, recommenced from his starting-point, and made an admirable impression. Thunders of applause rewarded him when he made his parting bow.

The two friends still kept together. They visited the Falls of Niagara, Canada, Saratoga, and Newport; and yet, strange to say, their purses were not exhausted. What shall they do next? they are ready for any frolic that presents itself. They have money in their pockets, young blood in their veins, unlimited time at their disposal, and, of course, they must be in some mischief, as neither of them has lost his heart, and become sentimental. While in New York, Forsythe accidentally took up a newspaper, and that determined the especial kind of wickedness in which they should engage. He noticed a number of pompous advertisements of fortune-tellers under the head of astrology, which gave him an idea. He showed them to Barrington, who observed that "it was astonishing how many fools and ignoramuses there were still in the nineteenth century, when the schoolmaster was abroad." "A very sage remark," answered his friend. "If the schoolmaster would stay at home, and mind his own business, instead of being abroad so much, perhaps the world would be better taught. I notice that he is always going to an education convention. But I didn't show you that for the purpose of eliciting wisdom: quite the contrary— [Pg 228] folly is what I'm after, just now. What do you think of our turning astrologers?" "Grand! you're a genius, Will! that's the very thing to wake us up! Here are you and I, dashing blades, who have been doing penance by trying to be fine gentlemen at watering-places, when it wasn't at all in our line. I began to think we looked as much like fops as the rest of the scented and bearded dress-coats, who strut about, and imagine the world is looking at them. This would throw us into quite another rank of life, and give us new ideas. How shall we manage it though, my fine fellow?" "Nothing easier in the world. Let us rent a small house, somewhere near the Bowery—that's the right neighborhood; and when we have fitted it up suitably to our trade, I'll engage to put an advertisement in the papers that shall draw us customers. How do you think I could pass for a Jew?" "Pretty well, with your coal-black eyes and hooked nose: but what is that notion?" "I think it would cause a great sensation if the Wandering Jew were to appear again in real life. What between Croly and Eugene Sue, he has been kept very extensively before the public in books: but I believe no one has had the audacity as yet to represent him in an every-day, money-getting capacity, at least in America. How do you like my plan?" "Superb! the only objection is that you are rather youthful in appearance for one who has wandered over the earth for more than

eighteen hundred years. Could you alter that, Will?" "Somewhat, with the aid of a snow-white wig and yellow dye; and you know I always possessed the accomplishment of furrowing up my face with wrinkles when I chose. I don't doubt I could look the character pretty well, in a rich, flowing Oriental dress. And the little Hebrew we picked up at college from our good friend the learned [Pg 229] young Rabbi, will also stand us in hand. Have you any objection to being my servant, Ned?" "None at all; I shall feel quite honored by the position. I don't consider myself competent to play the first fiddle in this amusing duet, but can follow your lead very well." "Remember, then, that our English is rather broken, and that we communicate our meaning to one another in French, Spanish, scraps of Hebrew, or Latin and Greek. I have not quite yet forgotten all I learned at college, though I suppose I shall do so in another month." "You remember your speech, at least—eh, Will?" "The first half; if it is necessary to make a great sensation, I can come out with that."

Full of the new plan of diversion, the boys, for they were boys at heart, although men in stature, set out to hunt a house; and were successful in finding one that suited their notions. Very soon it was furnished in Oriental style, and an inner room was fitted up with various occult instruments, calculated to inspire the minds of the vulgar with a wholesome dread. It was agreed that Barrington should make very little change in his wardrobe, and merely dye his hair and whiskers, and add a richer brown to his complexion, to give a more travelled look, and, as he said, to hinder any of the Saratoga belles from finding him out, if they came to have their fortunes told. But Forsythe took infinite pains to alter his appearance, and was so successful, that his friend assured him his own mother could not detect his identity, and that Garrick himself, who could look any character and any age he pleased, would have been jealous had he seen how successfully he had hidden his youth and beauty. When all preparations were made, the advertisement was written. It stated that "The Wandering Jew, having reached New York in his peregrinations, would stay for the space of one fortnight only, it being then indispensably [Pg 230] necessary that his travels should recommence, and highly probable that he might not revisit the city for a century. Being now the sole depository of the mysterious knowledge acquired in Egypt in ancient times, some scraps of which had been picked up by the astrologers of the middle ages, and especially by Merlin, Michael Scott, Cornelius Agrippa, and Friar Bacon, he was ready, during the short period of his stay, to lift the veil which separates the present from the future. Not being actuated in the slightest degree by a lust for gain, the illustrious exile would not consent to gratify mere idle curiosity, and to afford amusement to the gay and frivolous; but where an earnest, inquiring mind was intent upon discovering the hidden things of life, upon investigating the secrets of the past, or searching into futurity, the Wanderer would give his mighty assistance. By books and science, by spells and conjurations, the POWERS were compelled to reveal their arcana, and FATE itself whispered its dark mysteries into his ear. The SPIRITS being subjects of the Great Magician, their aid would be called in when desired. Where this mode was preferred to the ordinary methods of consulting the stars, the Cabala, and black-letter volumes, these intelligences answered all questions by significant RAPS, or in writing, guiding the hand of the Wanderer, who acted as their medium."

The first day that the advertisement appeared, no visitors of any distinction came to see the Wanderer, who yawned, and smoked cigars, and read through the last novel, declaring that it was intolerable to be dressed up for a show, and to have nobody come to see them. But in the evening, they were rewarded for their trouble. There was a quick, nervous ring, and Barrington opened the door: a timid little man walked in, looking back over his shoulder to see if he were [Pg 231] observed. When he found himself alone with Barrington, he asked, with some surprise, if he were the Great Magician. "I! oh, no, my lord: far be it from me. I am the humblest of his slaves. I will see if my venerable master can now receive you." Opening the door leading into a back apartment, he made a low salam to the Wanderer, who was seated in state upon a divan, immersed in his studies. Addressing him in Hebrew, with a few words of Greek to make out the sense, he received a response which he interpreted to the newcomer as a permission to approach the august presence. The little man went in, feeling at every step an increase of reverential awe. The Oriental, costumed with all magnificence, his hoary head bent with age, his brow, from beneath which black eyes flashed brightly, furrowed with years and care, filled him with admiration. Every thing around heightened the impression. A curious-carved cabinet, whose doors looked as if they concealed a mystery, was surmounted by folio volumes filled, of course, with potent spells: and above these again, a skull and cross-bones made him shudder. In one corner was a globe, covered with strange figures, dragons, scorpions, distressed damsels fastened to a rock, etc. Scattered about the room were singular instruments of various kinds, jars with hideous snakes preserved in spirits, books in unknown tongues, and parchments upon which cabalistic diagrams were portrayed, which no doubt had power to command the spirits and to reveal futurity.

The Wanderer waved his hand, to invite his visitor to a seat: the humble slave stood, with head meekly bowed down, near the door. With some difficulty the little man, who was frightened nearly out of his small stock of wits, explained his errand. It seems that he had fallen heir to a property, the deed of which had been lost. He had tried every method he could think of to [Pg 232] discover it: he had rummaged over all the drawers and chests in his relative's house; he had said his prayers backwards, so that a dream might be sent him in the night; and he had been to three fortune-tellers, but strange to say, had returned no wiser than he was when he went. And now, this was his last hope: if the Wandering Jew, of whom he had heard so much, could not help him, he knew that no one could. He was asked in which way he wished to receive the desired information: should the answer appear in flames before him, should it be discovered by the magic books, or should the spirit of his deceased friend signify his presence to him by a rap, and then respond to the question? The stranger evidently preferred the last mode of operating, and let out

the fact, in the course of conversation, that his relative had been lost at sea. The Wanderer then performed various evolutions, burning incense, bowing to unseen visitors, who were admitted into the room by the slave upon a rap being heard at the door, and muttering, meanwhile, mysterious words in an unknown tongue, to which his attendant occasionally responded. The poor little man began to quake all over: he felt as if surrounded by charms, and spells, and wicked spirits. He wished himself heartily out of the house: but there was no retreat now—some ghosts it is easier to raise than to lay. When the room was filled with fragrant smoke, and the subject of the conjuration was completely mystified and frightened, Selim, for so the Wanderer called his assistant, brought in a circular table, around which the three seated themselves in profound silence; but the venerable Oriental, who acted as the medium of communication, alone placed his hand upon it. A rap, which caused the little man nearly to jump off his chair, announced that the spirit was ready to be consulted. The medium asked, "Whether the inquirer [Pg 233] should recover his rights, and obtain a copy of the deed?" Three impressive, decided raps gave an affirmative reply. "Will he be satisfied upon this point to-morrow?" Again three raps. "Will the spirit condescend to signify, in writing, in what way he shall act to obtain this end?" Three raps again testified that the amiable spirit was willing to oblige. Accordingly, Selim having produced an antique ink-stand and an eagle's quill—a goose quill and steel pens would have been quite too common—the hand of the medium was guided in tracing strange characters, which looked like a jumble of the Greek, Arabic, and cuneiform alphabets. This "spirit dialect" was translated to the inquirer: it contained a direction to call early the next morning, between the hours of eight and nine—for during that hour the fates were propitious to him—at the office of a lawyer named Warren, No. 354 Broadway. Upon seeing him, he was to lay down a $20 gold piece, and to say that he wanted him to procure a copy of the missing will. He must answer all questions Mr. Warren might ask, and, above all, must feel implicit faith in him, as the agent appointed by the spirits to restore to him his property.

Full of awe as he was, the little man still wished to gratify his curiosity as to the manner of his kinsman's death: could that be done? "Oh, yes," answered the mysterious one, "nothing is easier." As he was speaking, the table began to creak, as a ship would do in a storm. It was excessively agitated; the noise of the rudder was heard, and at last, after a series of agonizing movements, the whole concern fell over, with a sudden crash. And yet no one appeared to touch it—the passive hand of the venerable exile could scarcely have affected it so strangely. "You see the fate of the ship," said the Wanderer; "it has gone to the bottom in a storm." "How very odd!" replied [Pg 234] the simple-hearted little man; "when it came home, the Captain said he had fallen overboard." "He did," answered the magician, in a solemn manner, avoiding, however, to look in the direction of Selim. "Did you not hear the plunge into the sea? this describes the ultimate fate of the vessel." The good, easy man was perfectly satisfied.

He was directed to come on the morrow, when the deed had been found, and the correctness of the spirit's directions was fully proved: and payment was indignantly' refused. The next day, various sentimental chambermaids visited them, desiring to be shown the likeness of their future husbands. This was done, greatly to their satisfaction, by exhibiting to them one and the same hyalotype, magnified by the magic lantern, so that the life-like countenance appeared to approach them from the opposite wall in the darkened room. It was observed, that the more ignorant they were, the more were they affected with horror by the sight of the cross-bones, skull, and chemical apparatus. Still, this was rather tame work; and both the Aged One and Selim were relieved when they saw their dupe of the preceding night reappear, with happiness beaming in every feature of his countenance. "The lawyer," he said, "had not appeared at all surprised at being told to get him a copy of the will: he said something about the Recorder's office. He was a young-looking man to be chosen by the spirits: and he wanted to know who had sent him to himself. Of course I told him, and then he laughed, and said it was a great humbug. I was very much afraid that the spirits would be offended, and refuse to discover to him the will: but he told me to return towards evening, and lo! here it is."

The poor little man was full of the warmest gratitude, and wanted to force a purse upon the [Pg 235] unwilling astrologers: but they finally overcame his importunities by representing that the spirits would not obey their summons, if made a subject of bargain and sale, and that he should best please them by distributing it among the sick and poor.

This circumstance, which found its way into one of the daily papers, with many embellishments, brought crowds of believers in "the night side of nature" to our mischievous youngsters, who were ready to humor the credulous public to the top of its bent. Very many people looked sage, and quoted the passage—

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Select circles of intelligent people insisted upon it, that although they could not give in their adhesion to such mysteries, yet they greatly disapproved of the spirit of skepticism which had been so prevalent for the last fifty years. The new discoveries in science plainly showed that nature had many secrets yet unrevealed to man: and no one should audaciously set a limit to his powers. Did not animal magnetism, containing so many things which could not be explained away, plainly prove it? Could they have seen our merry graduates, when the door was locked for the night, and the venerable wig was thrown aside, jollifying over their supper! could they have heard the peals of laughter caused by the unlooked-for success of the frolic, how would their cheeks have been covered with blushes!

The astrologers became decidedly the rage: had it been their object to gain wealth, they could have charged any price they pleased for their conjurations, and would have obtained it. But their popularity was of course increased by the fact that the mysterious Wanderer uniformly refused to [Pg 236] accept any compensation, and majestically commanded those who sought his aid, to apply the sum of money offered him to the relief of the first poor widow, orphan, or aged person they met. This peculiarity induced many young persons, of a rank in life and a style of education who do not commonly patronize fortune-telling, to visit the great unknown, partly in fun, partly in earnest; for there is a vast deal of superstition hidden in the recesses of most characters, and ready to start forth at the first call. Bright eyes, obscured by thick veils, excited the curiosity even of the venerable Wanderer; and white, jewelled hands were extended, that his searching glance might decipher the lines of life. Several interesting love-tales were poured into the sympathizing ear of benign old age, and the recollections of centuries were called up, to furnish suitable counsel and to encourage the despairing heart to hope. Forsythe assured his friend that he would not exchange the knowledge of human nature, and especially of woman nature, which he had acquired in this fortnight, for the experience of ten years of ordinary life.

The joke was very consistently carried out. Our youngsters were both possessed of ready mother wit, and the world was charmingly mystified. The answers furnished to inquirers partook much of the dimness and ambiguity of the ancient oracular responses, when Delphi was yet in its glory, and the oaks of Dodona reflected some of their own rich green tint upon those who consulted its priestesses. On one occasion, "Selim" found it very difficult to retain the gravity of his sad, Oriental countenance. A sharp, quick-witted young fellow, Frank Warren, their former college chum, to whom they had sent his first fee, had accompanied the grateful little man who had made their reputation, ostensibly for the purpose of consulting the spirit of Milton, but really, as they [Pg 237] plainly perceived, to detect their tricks. They were on their guard: they had not seen Warren for some time, but their former habits of intimacy made the danger of discovery imminent. It was Warren's wish that the spirit should guide the pen of his medium, and accordingly our Ancient sat down, and tried to indite Miltonic lines. "Very blank verse, indeed, it was," as he subsequently confessed to his familiar, at their midnight conference. The face of the visitor twitched convulsively as he read the so-called poetry, and the young fellows, ever ready to enjoy a joke, would have dearly loved to join him in a loud and merry peal of laughter. By a great effort, all three restrained themselves; but the inquirer remarked, with a grave countenance, that "it appeared as if the genius of Milton had not expanded in the upper world—he certainly never wrote such trash when he was upon the earth. It reminded him of the saying of the wits of Athens: that although Apollo was the god and patron of poetry, any common rhymster would be ashamed of the lines which emanated from the deity at Delphos." When Selim escorted the gentleman into the outer apartment, the skeptic slipped some gold into his palm, which the former at first pretended to receive; and by cunning cross-examination, strove to make him confess that his master was not so old as he assumed to be. "How long have you been in his service?" "Not very long, myself." "But do you think him as ancient as he pretends to be?" "That is a delicate question: I hardly like to answer it. To be frank, I have sometimes had doubts about the great length of his life, although I cannot feel any hesitation on the subject of his wonderful powers." "But how long have you known him?" "Let me see. It was Friar Bacon who first introduced me to His Eminence, and advised me to enlist in his service. He did not look so very [Pg 238] old at that time, and it was only six centuries ago. This occurred at Oxford, on the magic eve of St. John's day, in 1250 A.D.—I remember the date distinctly. No, between ourselves, I have some suspicions that he is not quite so old as he says he is." Very soon after that, the investigator left. One thing was certain, that he had not recognized them.

On the last day of their intended stay, an incident occurred which furnished a proper termination to their frolic. A rough, boorish fellow came to visit them, who evidently "hailed" from remote country districts, into which the civilizing influences of education had not penetrated. All his utterances, for his words should scarcely be dignified with the name of conversation, showed him to be ignorant in the extreme, and to be credulous in proportion. He had come to New York, hoping, in that centre of light and science, medical and theological, to find relief from a certain demon which possessed him. This wicked spirit made him often do things he didn't wish to do—caused him to foam at the mouth, tear his clothes, etc., and he wanted to know whether the Wanderer was not possessed of a spell to quiet the tormentor. "Certainly; follow our directions, and you never shall be troubled with him again."

Accordingly, the patient was brought into the back room, which had been darkened up purposely. A circle was described, within which incense was burnt, and in the centre stood the Awful One in his flowing robe, with his magical wand in his hand, uttering terrible conjurations. "Do you feel any thing?" he would occasionally ask the countryman, who was gaping with wonder and admiration. "N—no, I dunna that I do," the man would reply. "Then it has not left you yet: you'll [Pg 239] be sure to know when it does. You'll feel a sort of shock go all through you, and will see sparks: then open your mouth wide, and the spirit will jump out." As it was some time before the sufferer obtained relief, Selim was called to his aid; and the way in which their Latin and Greek orations were tossed about at one another, would have astonished the Professors. At last the Wanderer placed the patient upon a stool, and proceeded with his incantations. Suddenly the countryman uttered a shriek, and jumping into the air, cut a pigeon-wing. "He's gone! I felt him go!" He had touched the electrical machine, which had been fully charged, and was put there, as it were, in ambush. "Do you feel much better?" "Yes; I'm another man."

The poor fellow went away, declaring himself a perfect cure. And Forsythe and Barrington agreed, that after such a brilliant finale it was as well to beat a retreat: just as some gentlemen,

at the close of an evening visit, relate a witty anecdote, or sparkle out a brilliant repartee, snatch up their hats, make their bows, and leave you in the middle of a laugh. But another adventure was in store for them, which had not entered into their calculations at all. The play-bills show us that after a tragedy there generally comes a farce: the case was reversed with them, for they had enjoyed their farce, and had laughed over it heartily—and now there was danger of its ending in a tragedy. When their preparations were nearly complete for a sudden and inexplicable disappearance, our astrologers were horrified by the apparition, in the day time, of stars they had never consulted—stars of this gross, lower world—stars which, in case of resistance, become shooting stars, and which revolve, in very eccentric orbits, around the central police station. What these portended, it needed no wisdom of Chaldean sage to decipher—exposure, ridicule, [Pg 240] disgrace, and the prison. They had enjoyed their laugh at the world—now the tables would be turned, and the world's dread laugh be raised against them.

Resistance was utterly in vain. Attired as they were, in flowing Oriental garb, the distressed Wanderer and his faithful Selim were hurried into a cab, which no conjuration, not even that of "the golden eagle," could prevent from driving to the Mayor's office. Here they beheld their former friend, Warren, evidently the "very head and front of the offending:" he was talking to the little man of the famous will case, who appeared to be on the verge of a violent nervous fever. The latter wished to escape, but the lawyer was too resolute and pertinacious to be conquered by his weak irritability, and he was obliged to resign himself into his hands.

The exile had time allowed him to reflect upon his course of action. A multitude of petty cases were up for examination, and the patience of his Honor, the Mayor, was heavily taxed, especially as he knew that a very capital dinner and excellent company were waiting for him at home. At last this case of deception, imposture, and swindling came up in turn; but not before the aged, wrinkled, care-worn man had whispered a few words into the ears of the young lawyer, which made him start, and give the other an admiring glance of surprise, as if he recognized in him a genius of the highest order.

His Honor was angry and tired, and gave rather a savage look at the culprits. "A case like this needs very little proof—they are arrant swindlers, evidently—with all that foolery of dress about them! Remove that wig and beard." The red blood rushed up to the cheeks and forehead of poor Will Forsythe, and showed itself through the yellow dye of his skin, as he was obliged to submit to this indignity; and he mentally exclaimed: "If ever I pretend again to be any thing I am not, may [Pg 241] my head come off too!" "You appear in this case, Mr. Warren," said the Mayor. "Let me hear what can be urged against these men, and produce your witnesses." "I find that I have very little to say on the subject, your Honor. It is true, I can prove that this gentleman went to consult the prisoner as to a missing will, and that he is under the impression that spirits were consulted on the occasion. But I can also prove that very sensible advice was given to my client—to consult a lawyer of great respectability and high promise; and accordingly he came to me. And further, I can prove that the astrologers did not receive one farthing in payment for their counsel, and, indeed, positively refused the offer of a handsome gratuity from my grateful client. And I can challenge any one in the city of New York to prove that, in any one case, the prisoners received money in return for advice or assistance given to any visitor. This fact takes from the case the appearance of a swindling transaction, according to the well-known law of George III., which doubtless your Honor thoroughly remembers." "There appears, then, to be no prosecution in this case? I find that, like a true lawyer, you can argue on one side as well as the other." "There is none, your Honor: my client withdraws the prosecution. May I be allowed a word in private?" After a whispered consultation of some minutes, during which our unmasked jesters observed his Honor cast very highly-amused glances in their direction, and heard occasional snatches of the conversation,—"Ha, indeed? sons of *** and ****, do you say? the first families in the South! I knew their fathers well! tell them to come to dinner just as they are—the ladies will make allowances."

But that degree of impudence was too much for the brass of even Forsythe and Barrington. They [Pg 242] respectfully declined, and hastened homeward, accompanied by Frank Warren. One more merry supper did they eat in that house which had been the theatre for the display of so many strange adventures, and then they vanished. When morning came, no trace of the astrologers was to be found. The furniture had gone, the house was shut up, the birds had flown. Had there been a storm in the night, the believers in Gotham would have thought they had been claimed by their Dread Master, and had been snatched away in a blaze of lightning. As it was, there was nothing to reveal the mystery. The good little man, who never quite understood the scene in the Mayor's office, is gratefully enjoying his property, and thinks that the Wandering Jew may now be in the centre of Africa, or climbing the heights of the Himalaya Mountains. But as I happen to be better informed, I know that both he and his faithful Selim slipped out of New York as quietly as possible, and returned to their homes in the sunny South. They have since then married, have settled down into quiet orderly citizens, and have given up all practical jokes; but they frequently amuse their wives with some of their varied experience, obtained when playing the rôle of astrologers in New York.

"But you do not really think people could be so cheated now-a-days, uncle!" cried George.

"I certainly do not consider the world too wise to be fooled in almost any way," answered his uncle. "Look at the various *isms* which have sprung up, even in our own day. Think of the imposture of Mormonism,—it has fairly peopled a territory. Think of the pretensions of clairvoyance, claiming almost omniscience and omnipresence for the human spirit. Think of Matthias and his followers. But remarkable as that delusion was, it is almost forgotten now, so [Pg 243]

many extravagancies tread upon one another's heels, and hustle each its predecessor off the stage. Spirit-rapping is the last, and is spreading like wildfire throughout the land: some characters have so much tinder in their composition, that they catch in a moment. But it will soon go out—'tis like the crackling of thorns under the pot—a quick blaze for a moment, and then it expires."

"The alarm about witchcraft, both in England and America, was, I think, one of the most noticeable delusions of modern times," said Mrs. Wyndham. "How many eminent and excellent men were deceived by it! The learned, judicious, and pious Sir Matthew Hale condemned at least one witch to be burnt alive—although, I believe, it cost him some remorse afterwards. And in New England, Cotton Mather was prominent in hunting out those who were supposed by their neighbors to be on too familiar terms with a certain nameless individual. I am glad I did not live in those days! If a poor old woman was ugly, and cross, and mumbled to herself, as we old women will do sometimes, and above all, if she kept a large black cat, woe betide her! her fate was well-nigh sealed."

"I don't think you would have been in any danger, Aunt Lucy," said Amy, laughing.

"I don't know, indeed—probably not, while I had such an array of young people around me. But if I were left desolate and alone in the world, and became peevish and odd from the mere fact of having no one to love me, I would not have answered for the consequences at all."

"I had to laugh," added Ellen, "at the marvellous cure effected by the electrical machine. It reminded me of a well-attested anecdote I have read of the beneficial effects wrought by a [Pg 244] thermometer, through the medium of the imagination. The physician intended to try whether the galvanic battery could not be usefully employed in a case of paralysis, but before commencing operations, he applied a small thermometer to the tongue of the patient. Upon removing it, he was told by the latter that it gave him very curious feelings, and that he thought himself a little better. Seeing the mistake he had made, the doctor resolved not to undeceive him, but to persevere in the application of the thermometer. He did so, and the man was soon a complete cure."

"I have heard of instances of sudden joy or fright restoring the vital energies to poor bed-ridden mortals," said Cornelia, "but to be cured by a thermometer is too comical!"

"It was that powerful principle, faith," answered Mrs. Wyndham. "I remember very well the time when certain metallic tractors were all the fashion, to draw away pain from the parts affected, by magnetic influence. Well-authenticated cures were wrought; but at last a physician applied a test, which proved the beneficial results to be entirely the work of the imagination. He had wooden tractors made, painted so as to resemble the metal ones, and they exerted equal powers. When this fact was published, of course the cures ceased, and metallic tractors became things that were."

"Another fact is told to show how the imagination can kill or cure," said Mr. Wyndham. "A criminal was condemned to death for some atrocious deed, and it was resolved to try an experiment upon him, as he would have to die at any rate. He was informed that he would be bled to death; and when the appointed time had arrived, his eyes were effectually bandaged, his arm bared, and the surgeon pretended to cut the artery. Luke-warm water was poured, in a steady current, upon his arm, and trickled down into a basin below: and the physician held his [Pg 245] hand, feeling the pulse. The wretched criminal became paler and paler, his pulse beat more faintly, and at last he died, a victim to his own imagination."

"Poor creature!" added Mary. "And I have repeatedly heard of cases, uncle, in which persons fancied themselves about to die at a certain hour, from having had a dream to that effect, or some other supernatural indication of the will of Heaven. And sometimes they actually expired, from sheer fright. But when the clock was put back an hour or two, the time passed without any fatal result ensuing."

"Those chaps were wilder than we are, Charlie!" cried George, with an air of triumph.

"Yes," answered his cousin. "But I very much fear that does not prove our innocence, but only their depravity. It reminds me of that line in Milton—

'And in the lowest deep, a lower deep.'"

CHAPTER VIII. [Pg 246]

CONFIDANTE.—LEAD-MERCHANT.—TRADES.—THE ROSE OF HESPERUS; A FAIRY TALE.

As the time drew nigh when our young party would be called upon to separate, and to return to the every-day duties of the boarding or day school, and the home, the centralizing influences of affection appeared to be felt in an increasing degree. Aunt Lucy remarked that they greatly resembled a flock of birds or of sheep: where one came, the rest were sure very soon to follow. Cousin Mary asked George, with a look of great concern, if he felt very unwell indeed. "I? oh no, I

never was better in my life. What could have put the notion into your head that I was ill?" "My dear Coz, you are so uncommonly good. You have not teased Anna or Gertrude at all to-day, and I begin to feel seriously alarmed for your health. I have so often noticed a sudden attack of meekness to precede a sudden attack of fever, that I really think it would be wiser to send for the doctor in time." "Don't concern yourself," replied he. "If that be all, I can soon prove that my pulse is in good order." So saying, he gave Mary's work-basket a sudden twitch, which sent her spools of cotton, winders, thimble, and emery-bag flying in every direction; when, of course, with the malice peculiar to things of such small natures, they carefully hid themselves in the darkest corners, and ran behind the legs of tables and sofas for protection, "Preserve me from boys!" said Mary with a laugh, as George ran out of the room. "If it were not unladylike, I really should box [Pg 247] those ears of yours!"

"They are quite large enough to bear it—no danger of their being crushed," he replied, giving a pinch to the protruding members.

In the evening, as Gertrude claimed the honor of having been the most stupid person in playing "Elements" the night before, it was agreed that it appertained to her to introduce to the company another game. She said she had seen one played that resembled "Consequences," in so far that you wrote what you were ordered, and read it aloud when it was finished: but you were not obliged to turn down the papers after writing, as you did not change them with the rest of the company. She would call this game "Confidante," as she had never heard a name for it. Accordingly, every one got a pencil and sheet of paper, and wrote agreeably to her directions.

"Let each boy write a lady's name, and each girl a gentleman's name."

"Now, any past time—some date, if you please; yesterday, or a thousand years ago—it makes no difference."

"The name of a place."

"Either yes or no."

"Yes or no, again."

"Every boy write a lady's name, every girl a gentleman's."

"Some time to come."

"Write yes or no."

"Yes or no, again."

"Mention a place."

"Tell us your favorite color."

"Set down any number not exceeding 10."

"Another color." [Pg 248]

"Yes or no."

"Let all write a lady's name."

"Let all write a gentleman's name."

"All, another lady's name."

"Every boy write a gentleman's name, every girl a lady's."

"Set down the name of a clergyman."

"Now, any sum of money."

"The name of a place."

"And lastly, any number."

"Now that we have finished, every one must read aloud his or her paper, without cheating, whatever it contains—each portion as an answer to a question. Charlie, to whom did you make your first offer?"

"Happily, to no one present: it was to Queen Victoria."

"When was it?"

"In the year 1492: the day Columbus discovered America."

"Where did this interesting event take place?"

"In the Tower of Babel."

"Does she love you?"

"Yes: how could she help it?"

"Do you love her?"

"Yes: to distraction."

"Whom will you marry?"

"Queen Jezebel."

"How soon does this auspicious match come off? for I want to have my wedding-dress ready."

"To-morrow—New-Year's day."

"Do you love her?"

"No, not at all."

"Does she love you?"

"No, alas!" [Pg 249]

"Where does she live?"

"In Calcutta."

"What is the color of her hair?"

"Brilliant scarlet."

"What is her height?"

"Nine and a half feet."

"Please to mention the color of her eyes."

"A charming green."

"Is she pretty?"

"Yes, very."

"Who is to be bridesmaid at this happy wedding?"

"Miss Alice Bolton."

"Who will wait upon her?"

"King Nebuchadnezzar."

"Who is your sympathizing confidante?"

"Cousin Cornelia."

"Pray, tell us the name of your rival?"

"His Majesty, William the Conqueror of Normandy and England. I should not be sorry if he carried off my gentle dame."

"What clergyman will marry you?"

"The Archbishop of Canterbury."

"How much is the lady worth?"

"Three cents."

"Where will you live?"

"In the black-hole of Calcutta."

"How many servants will you keep?"

"Two millions, five hundred thousand."

"I must say, you are moderate, considering the lady's fortune. In asking the girls, I merely reverse the questions: 'From whom did you receive your first offer?' etc. As the game wants a name, I think it should be called 'Confidante:' the reader not only has a confidante in the play, but is called upon to intrust his secrets to the whole assembled company." [Pg 250]

"But isn't this rather silly—all this about love and marriage?" asked Mr. Wyndham, with the hesitating manner of one who knows that he shall instantly be put down.

"Certainly it is, my dear uncle," answered Cornelia. "If it were not, we should not like it half so well, I can tell you. You know we must be foolish some time in our life—so, for my share, I'm taking it out now."

"Well, well—there's no harm in it, any how. Though you wouldn't believe it, I was young once myself, and don't like to be too hard upon the rising generation. There's a game I remember playing when I was a youngster, that is not too wise for you, but ought to have more solidity in it than the last, as it is all about lead. It is called the 'Lead-Merchant.' One tries in every mode to dispose of his lead to the company, asking question after question, to which you must answer without introducing the words *lead*, *I*, *yes*, or *no*. He tries to trip you in every way, and as soon as

you say one of the forbidden words, you are out of the game. Would you like to try it?"

"Very much, uncle. Will you be the lead-merchant?"

"If you wish it. Amy, will you buy any lead?"

"Not any at present."

"But pray, why not?"

"Because none is desired at my house."

"Shall I call next week?"

"It is scarcely worth while: we do not wish any."

"I will stop to-morrow: your little boys want lead to make some bullets."

"They would only burn their sweet little fingers in melting it: they must not have any." [Pg 251]

"Then you will not buy my lead?"

"Positively not."

"I noticed that the lead upon your roof wanted repairing: the rain will beat in, and you'll all be taken ill, unless you buy my lead. 'Tis only one cent a pound."

"If you gave it to me as a present, I wouldn't take your lead."

"Amy, you're caught! You said both *I* and *lead*."

Notwithstanding all their care, the persevering lead-merchant entrapped every one in some moment of weakness; and the company agreed that he would make his fortune as a Yankee pedlar, or as an agent for some book that nobody wanted,—many would buy to get rid of him, on the same principle that the lady married her tiresome lover.

"And now," said Charlie, "let us play 'Trades.' We apprentice our son or daughter to some business, and mention that the first thing sold begins with a specified letter: but we must never repeat an article. The person who guesses, apprentices his son the next. I apprenticed my son to a carpenter, and the first thing he sold was a T."

"A table?" asked Mary. "I apprenticed my daughter to a milliner, and the first thing she sold was a yard of R. R."

"Red ribbon?" added Gertrude. "I apprenticed my son to a grocer, and the first thing he sold was a B. of R."

"Box of raisins?" inquired Cornelia. "I apprenticed my son to a cabinet-maker, and the first thing he sold was a S."

"Sofa?" said Tom. "I apprenticed my daughter to a dry-goods store, and the first thing she sold was ten yards of L."

"Lace?" asked Ellen.

"No—guess again." [Pg 252]

"Linen? I see that's right. I apprenticed my son to a tinman, and the first thing he sold was a N. G."

"Nutmeg-grater?" inquired George. "Now, I apprenticed my son to a hardware man, and the first thing he sold was a P. of S."

"Pair of skates?" said Amy. "I apprenticed my son to a book-store, and the first thing he sold was a P. B."

"Prayer-book? I apprenticed my daughter to a dressmaker, and the first thing she made was a V. M."

"Velvet mantilla?" And so the game proceeded, the questions and answers being tossed from one to another, like ball or shuttlecock, so that the general interest was kept up.

"I think it high time we had our daily story," said Amy.

"So do I," replied her uncle; "and I commission you to tell it."

"I? oh no, uncle, I'm too young. I think the older ones should have the monopoly of that trade—I wasn't apprenticed to it."

"Not at all—you are of suitable age to be apprenticed now, so you may consider the bargain struck. Begin, my little Amy, and if you break down in the middle of your tale, I'll promise to finish it myself."

"Very well, uncle; I feel quite tempted to fail, to inveigle you into a sensible termination to a foolish story. We often invent tales in the interval at school, and I'll give you one that my schoolmates like. It is called

[Pg 253]

The Rose of Hesperus;

A FAIRY TALE.

Every one has heard of the Garden of Hesperus, famous in all ancient times for its exquisite beauty. Its golden fruit, more precious by far than the fleece of Jason, in search of which heroes perilled their lives on board the good ship Argo, was watched by a terrible dragon, whose eyes were never sealed by slumber. A hundred heads belonged to the monster, a hundred flames of fire issued from his numerous throats, and a hundred voices resounded threats against the audacious being who should invade his province. Hercules alone, of all the children of men, was able to overcome him: but although he then expired, the next rising sun again beheld him full of life and vigor. The dragons of earth are never annihilated. Each generation has the same work to perform, has its monsters to conquer; and this it is that makes the noble heroes whom we all delight to praise.

So small was the number of mortals ever favored with a sight of this earthly paradise, that it is not surprising its site is now unknown. Even among the ancients, it was a matter of speculation and mystery. The majority placed it in the north of Africa; and it is not improbable that travellers who for the first time beheld them, mistook for the Gardens of Hesperus the oases of the desert, those gems of nature which are all the more brilliant for being set in sand and clay. Others again asserted that this region of delight was to be sought beyond the western main, in a lone isle if the [Pg 254] ocean. But all agreed that it was at the west, towards the sunset, that this treasure of earth was to be found: and thence it was that the name of Hesperus was bestowed upon it. Strange it is, that mankind has ever followed the sun in its path; and that while human life, religious truth, and science all point to the East as their source, they hasten westward for the fulfillment of their destiny. The East belongs to the Past—it is the land of memory: the West to the Future—it is the land of hope: and there it is that man seeks his happiness. It is in the yet unrevealed—in the mysterious West that the golden fruits and the perennial flowers bloom for him: not in Oriental climes, where, in his infancy, the Garden of Eden sheltered him.

So great is the lust for gold, and so small the love of moral beauty among the fallen race of man, that of all the varied productions of Hesperus, the golden apples alone have been mentioned in tradition and poetry. But in truth, these were far inferior to the precious roses which grew in the very centre of this paradise, and which were endowed, not only with exquisite form, hue, and fragrance, but with certain magic properties, invaluable to their possessors. If the bosom on which the flower rested were candid, pure, and kind, the rose bloomed with still richer loveliness, and emitted a delicious sweetness: and a grace was shed over the person of its owner, which grief and sickness could not dim, and old age itself was powerless to destroy. This indescribable something shone out in the eye, spoke in the voice, made the plainest features pleasing, and imparted an irresistible charm to the manner. It was as far superior to mere external beauty as the latter is to revolting ugliness. Nothing could destroy it: once gained, it was a lasting heritage. But on the other hand, if this rose were possessed by the false-hearted, the sensual, and the [Pg 255] selfish, it sickened and paled day by day, giving forth a fainter fragrance continually, until it was completely withered. And in proportion as it lost its bloom, did the hideous heart of the wearer imprint itself upon the countenance, until the eye would turn away in disgust from the most brilliant complexion and chiselled regularity of features. It acted as a moral test, making evident to the dull eye of man, ever prone to think only of outside show, the beauty or the deformity within. Until the time of our story no roses had been dipt from the magic tree; and men, always ready to look to the bright side of the wonderful unknown, thought merely of the charm it could impart, and not of the danger incurred by the unlovely in heart and life.

I will not attempt to fix the date of my tale with historic accuracy. It is sufficient to say that the events occurred in that period of unreasoning faith, when the myths of Greece and Rome were mingled in the popular mind with the fairy legends of the north; and both were baptized in the waters of Christianity. It was a charming period for all lovers of romance: it was the childhood of modern Europe. But I must warn you that it is in vain to search for the names of my emperors in chronological tables. They lived at a time when the historian was somewhat at a discount, and the minstrel wrote the only records, with his harp and voice, upon the memory of his hearers; save that here and there a solitary monk wore out his days in copying the treasures of antiquity, and used his imagination in embellishing the lives of saints and martyrs. When the manuscript is found which settles the exact date of King Lear's reign, I cannot doubt that it will give all particulars about my kings also.

In those happy, misty days, there lived an Emperor of Germany, Hildebrand by name, a potent [Pg 256] monarch. His court was splendid, and his retinue large and magnificent. But the chief glory of his palace, and the pride of his heart, was his daughter Clotilda, whose amazing beauty formed the theme of poets' praise, and whose fame was spread far beyond the limits of the Empire. Her form was of queenly majesty, her movements swan-like. Her glossy raven tresses set off a complexion of the greatest brilliancy: her faultless features would have served as a model to the sculptor. Large, sparkling eyes gave animation to her countenance, and took all hearts by storm. Add to these rare endowments a lively though malicious wit, great skill in all showy accomplishments, and especially in the arts of coquetry, and is it wonderful that she was almost worshipped in her father's court as a divinity?

To win her hand, embassies were sent from distant lands, and kings even came in person to plead their cause; but, hitherto, none had been successful. The fair Clotilda knew that she could choose among very many suitors, and her heart was none of the softest. Besides, she was well aware that she should be no portionless bride, as she and her younger sister Edith were her father's only heirs. She loved to keep many admirers in her train, but possessed too high a spirit to throw herself away upon any one inferior to herself in rank, power, or wealth. In addition to this, she had too keen a wit not to perceive and to enjoy the ridiculous, even in a suitor anxiously striving to gain her love. Truth to say, the adorable Clotilda had one small fault, unperceived by her worshippers, and hidden by the splendor of her beauty. She was heartless. If born with that important organ, she had early offered it up upon the altar of her own pride and vanity. Deprived of her mother at a very early age, and deferred to by all around, including her imperious father, [Pg 257] she had soon learned to issue her commands with authority, and to rule the household and the court as a mistress. Love of power had now become her ruling passion, and fierce and headstrong was the will hidden under that brilliant and winning exterior. It was like a wild beast, slumbering behind a bank of roses.

Far different, both in person and character, was the neglected Edith, who grew up in the imperial court like a sweet wild-flower, overlooked when the gorgeous exotic is nigh. Her slender girlish figure, with its undeveloped grace; her airy step; her color, coming and going with the varying feelings of her quick sensibility, like the delicate pink clouds at sunset; her soft brown hair, waving around a face of child-like purity and womanly tenderness: and her large gray eye, from whose transparent depths an earnest and loving spirit looked out upon the world—these were not the traits to win admiration in a sensual, splendor-loving court, where all acknowledged the sway of Clotilda. Her father lavished the whole of his affection upon his elder daughter: the latter seldom noticed her, and thought her more fit for a nunnery or for a peasant's cottage, than for the station of a princess. And so Edith grew to womanhood, unspoiled by flattery—that incense was reserved for Clotilda's shrine. Not in that crowd of selfish courtiers and of worldly women, wholly given up to dress and gayety, could the refinement and simplicity of the gentle Edith be appreciated. She was with them, but not of them: hers was the loneliness most felt when in a crowd, the want of congenial companionship. Her unassuming modesty and poor opinion of her own worth, saved her heart from the sharp pangs of envy at the thought of her sister's superiority: and thus, even in the impure atmosphere of the palace, did this artless maiden live [Pg 258] on, humbly looking up to one infinitely her inferior, and dwelling in love and peace. Her greatest enjoyments were of a kind despised by Clotilda. It was her delight to steal away from the gay assembly, where she was never missed, and to pore over the romantic lays of troubadours and monkish legends, and to make to herself a world, different from the one in which her lot was cast. Then she would be the lowly peasant-girl, singing while she worked, beloved by those for whom she toiled, and rising before the sun to deck the shrine of the Virgin with flowers. Or, if she were a princess, she lived but to bless and to relieve her people, and possessed the power of scattering happiness, as the beneficent night sprinkles dew-drops from her lap. From these day-dreams, the play of an active mind which had not yet found its true place in the universe, she would rouse herself to some deed of kindness, which others were too much immersed in pleasure to fulfil. If one of her maidens was ill, it was she who watched untiringly by her pillow, administering the medicines and the cooling draught. And it was she who rose by daybreak, while most of the menials of the palace were yet sleeping, and gave the daily portion of alms to the poor who waited at the gate—making the brown bread sweet by the gentle tones and kind words of sympathy. It is not strange, therefore, that Edith was beloved by all the children of affliction, and that she became universally known to the common people as "the good princess."

In honor of Clotilda's birthday, a tournament was proclaimed, to which princes and knights from all the neighboring countries were invited. The anxiously-expected day at length arrived: the sky was cloudless, and all nature appeared to smile upon the festival. Every thing was there united [Pg 259] that could please and dazzle the eye. There were satins and damasks, cloth of gold and velvet; flowers, and cheeks more rosy; gems, and eyes more brilliant. At one end of the lists, upon his throne of gold and ivory, sat the Emperor, blazing with jewels. Near him stood his ministers of state, in their official robes, bearing aloft the insignia of royalty; and around him were his faithful guards, in complete armor, with drawn swords. Opposite sat his queenly daughter, the beautiful Clotilda, the cynosure of all admiring eyes. She was magnificently arrayed, and surrounded by a bevy of fair damsels, who shone like stars, eclipsed by the superior brightness of the moon. Seated a little apart, attired in simple white with a sash of blue, and wearing no ornament save her favorite flowers, the wood-violet and the lily of the valley, was Edith, gazing with unusual interest on that lively, gorgeous scene. And truly, the amphitheatre crowded with spectators, themselves a show, and the lists filled with gallant knights, whose pawing steeds seemed impatient for the combat to begin, might excite the imagination of the dullest, and was well calculated to fire her ardent spirit.

Unusual splendor marked this tournament, in honor of certain distinguished guests who had arrived, candidates for the hand of the Princess Clotilda. The most eminent among them for knightly bearing was the young Duke of Milan. He was handsome, proud, and imperious, but withal brave and courteous as became his gentle birth; and he was a magnificent patron of minstrels and men of letters, aiming to make his court the centre of literature and the fine arts. His personal qualities and accomplishments were such as to win for him the admiration of the fair Princess, who had never before been wooed by a suitor so much to her taste. His rank and possessions were so great that all would have acknowledged the match a suitable one even for [Pg 260] Clotilda's pretensions. But a wider career of ambition was now opening before the vision of the aspiring lady. Who would stoop to be a duchess, when the diadem of an empress was placed at

her disposal? Certainly not the Princess Clotilda, be her preferences what they might: she would have considered it childish folly to hesitate in her choice. And three emperors now graced the court, each provided with a numerous and splendid retinue. These daily vied with each other in gorgeous fêtes and costly presents to the proud beauty whom they hoped to win. In flowing robe of richest fabric, stiff with sparkling gems, behold the Emperor of China, the Sacred Son of Heaven, the Supreme Ruler of the earth! His shaven head is surmounted by a conical cap, at the crown of which one pearl of uncommon size points out his rank: beneath it hangs down a jet-black queue below his waist. His small, oblique eyes, his yellow complexion, and thin beard show him unmistakably to belong to the Central Flowery Land. He is a heathen: but perhaps for her sake he might be baptized. At any rate, there would be little difficulty in procuring a dispensation from Holy Mother Church, which is ever hopeful that such alliances may bring converts into her bosom. Will she, can she accept him? She will at least accept his gifts and his attentions, and will decide hereafter. Millions, unnumbered millions of slaves call him their lord; vast is his power and wealth; provinces would be her dowry. But would she not, herself, merely add another to his list of slaves? Secluded within his palace, with many rivals to counteract her, would she not gather thorns, as well as blossoms, in the Flowery Land? It is a matter to be considered.

But who are these two other Asiatics, as they appear by their dress, fashioned in Oriental magnificence? One is from the frozen North, the other from the sunny South, and they divide the east of Europe between them. That pompous, formal old man, whose small heart and head are stuffed full of etiquette, and who lives and breathes only in a sense of his own importance, is the ruler of the Byzantine Empire. He was born in the purple chamber, and wears the purple; he eats purple, drinks purple, sleeps purple—only as the Emperor does he exist—he could live as well without his head, as without his crown. He is so imbued with notions of his own dignity that he would prove a tough subject to manage. But his rival from the North is still undescribed. Tremble at the sight of this ugly Cossack, with small dull eye, flat nose, and bushy red beard; for in him behold the Autocrat of all the Russias! Not yet had the genius and perseverance of Peter the Great introduced the arts and sciences into that vast region of snow and mental darkness. Ivan, the Squinter, ruled over his serfs with Oriental despotism: he was ignorant, coarse, and profligate. At his feasts, the dishes were of gold from the Ural Mountains, and the attendants who waited upon the monarch were arrayed in all the grandeur of Eastern princes; but the slightest blunder on their part subjected them to death, to the more dreaded knout, or to banishment in Siberia. Nominally a Christian, the Emperor of China is quite a saint when compared with him, and infinitely more respectable. But the Czar is a fool, chiefly immersed in the pleasures of the table; and Clotilda, if Empress of Russia, could easily seize all real power, and sway the sceptre over millions of obsequious subjects. [Pg 261]

These potentates are seated on thrones near Hildebrand, to witness the spectacle. But Udolpho, Duke of Milan, is among the combatants, mounted on a powerful charger, in armor blazing with gold: he looks like the flower of chivalry. He wears the colors of the Princess Clotilda, scarlet and green; and having ridden to the end of the lists, and made a lowly obeisance to his fair lady, he has returned to his place among the competitors for honor. Others there are who wear the same colors, but none to compare with him in rank and knightly bearing; and as the Princess gazed upon him, she wished him success. But what cavalier is this, with closed vizor, whose head towers above the rest like the cedar of Lebanon above all the trees of the forest? A kingly majesty marks every motion, and notwithstanding the unusual plainness of his accoutrements, all eyes are turned upon him with interest and curiosity. He is clad in brightly-shining steel, and no heraldic emblems show his rank. His Moorish page bears before him his shield, upon the black ground of which one blooming rose, and the motto *Quero*, "I seek," form the only device. He is an utter stranger to all: yet both Emperor and Princess command the herald to discover who he is. That he is illustrious, none can doubt. A blue ribbon, worn upon his arm, shows that he has not enlisted himself among the admirers of the Lady Clotilda: in whose honor can he wear it? [Pg 262]

When the heralds have taken the oath of the combatants that they will in all respects obey the laws of chivalry in the approaching conflict, the names and titles of those who were about to engage in it were called aloud, with the sound of the trumpet. When the unknown knight was courteously requested to announce his name, he gave that of "The Knight of the Blooming Rose." The mystery as to who he could be increased the interest felt in him; and as one after another of the cavaliers was unhorsed by his firm and skilful arm and rolled in the dust, the excitement became intense. The Grand Duke Udolpho had also greatly distinguished himself, and it was soon very evident that the victory would lie between these two. Clotilda's sympathies were enlisted on the side of Udolpho: Edith's, for the Knight of the Blooming Rose, whose success she watched with breathless interest. The contest was not long undetermined: the shouts of the populace, and the waving of scarfs and handkerchiefs by fair hands, soon proclaimed the unknown cavalier to be the victor. [Pg 263]

Escorted by the heralds he approached the Emperor, who, after pronouncing a eulogy upon his bravery and skill, threw round his neck a costly chain, and placed in his hand the wreath to be worn by the Queen of Love and Beauty, whose duty it should be to preside over the games during the remainder of the week, and to distribute prizes to the winners. It was his envied privilege to confer this dignity upon the lady who was fairest in his eyes. As he rode round the barriers, gazing at the numberless lovely faces assembled there, many a heart thrilled with emotion; and as he passed the Princess Clotilda, surprise, mortification, and resentment could only too plainly be traced upon her countenance. Never before had she been so slighted. But when the knight stopped before the Lady Edith, and kneeling down, besought her to confer dignity upon the office of Queen of Love and Beauty by filling it, the young girl's astonishment was great, as she had not

for a moment thought of herself as a candidate for the honor. Quickly recovering herself, however, with the native courtesy of the high-born lady, agreeably to the manners of the day, she raised the cavalier, and taking off her blue sash, fastened it round his waist with her own hands, begging him to wear it as her knight, and ever to prove himself faithful and brave. [Pg 264]

Thus ended the first day's tournament. Meanwhile, the burghers and yeomanry joined in the general festivity, having wrestling-matches, quoits and bowls, and various other rural games. A purse of gold was conferred upon the victors, and barrels of beer were continually running for the benefit of the public. The noble guests were invited to a banquet at the palace, which was to be repeated daily during the continuance of the games. The Knight of the Blooming Rose was, of course, a prominent person in these gay assemblies, and his noble person and courtly bearing greatly excited the admiration of the ladies of Clotilda's circle. But while courteous to all, his marked deference to the gentle Edith plainly showed that he was faithful to his allegiance. It was a new experience to the timid girl to be thus singled out in preference to the more brilliant beauties around her; and while it raised her in the estimation of others, it gave a decision and self-possession to her character in which it was previously deficient. And the intimate intercourse which she thus enjoyed with a kindred mind of high cultivation, earnest thought, and large acquaintance with mankind, gave a stimulus to her mental powers which only human sympathy can impart. The Emperor himself was greatly pleased with the gallant knight, and frequently honored him with confidential conversation. And yet no one could discover who he was. Free and unreserved in his communications with those around him, when this subject was approached, his lips were sealed in silence, and a certain dignity of manner warned off all intrusion. Efforts were made to arrive at the truth through the medium of his page; but the noble-looking Moor was a mute, and would only hold intercourse with those around him by gestures and expressive looks.

In the succeeding days of the tournament, various games of knightly skill and prowess engaged the attention of the competitors for honors, and in all of them did our cavalier come off victorious. In the use of the bow he was unrivalled, ever piercing the centre of the target, and bringing down the bird upon the wing. Udolpho of Milan was the second in distinction, and the two were united by a generous friendship. The last day was a trial of minstrelsy. In this, also, the Knight of the Blooming Rose bore the palm away from all his rivals, both professional and amateur. Accompanying himself upon the harp, he sang spirit-stirring lays which awakened the enthusiasm of all his auditors. [Pg 265]

In the evening, the Emperor requested him to give the meaning of his motto, and of the emblem on his shield. Taking the harp, and striking up a bold and brilliant prelude which gradually arranged itself into a simple air of great beauty, he sang as follows: [Pg 266]

"Not wealth nor trappings proud,
Nor shouts of envying crowd,
That swell both long and loud,
'I seek.'

"No jewels from the mine,
Nor gold, so pure and fine,
Nor generous, sparkling wine,
'I seek.'

"Soft pleasure's bonds are vain—
I feel for them disdain;
And still, through toil and pain,
'I seek.'

"It is not kingly crown—
That subjects may kneel down,
And tremble at my frown—
'I seek.'

"To keep my knightly oath,
Be faithful to my troth,
To God and Jesu both,
'I seek.'

"To help the poor that cry—
To wipe the widow's eye—
To humble tyrants high,
'I seek.'

"The maiden weak to save,
To free the Christian slave,
And punish impious knave,
'I seek.'

"At noblest deeds I aim.
To win a lofty name
Upon the roll of fame,
'I seek.'

"To pluck the magic Rose
In Hesperus which grows,
And fadeless beauty knows,
'I seek.'

"To wear it on my breast—
There may it ever rest!—
Honor and truth to test,
'I seek.'

"To lay it at the feet
Of noble lady sweet:
For her an off'ring meet!
'I seek.'

"To win fair Edith's praise—
Merit the poet's lays—
Grow nobler all my days—
'I seek.'"

"And is it really the wonderful Rose of Hesperus which you seek?" asked the monarch: "that magic flower hitherto unplucked by mortals? Bring one to each of my daughters, and I here [Pg 267] pledge you my word that you shall wed one of them, if you can gain her consent!" The knight, full of gratitude, knelt down to express his thanks. He then told the Emperor and the listening Edith in what manner he had been led to take the vow to acquire these precious roses, and to place this emblem upon his shield. He had been engaged in defence of his native land against the invader and the oppressor, but his efforts, and those of a small, brave band of friends, had been wholly in vain: his country was crushed by the ruthless heel of despotism. On that night when it had been agreed in assembled council that all resistance was fruitless, and that nothing now remained for patriots but to seek freedom in exile, after tossing in troubled slumbers, he had been visited with a calming and inspiring dream. He saw bending over him a lovely female form, which he knew instinctively to be that of his Guardian Angel. She was clothed in white, and a soft light streamed out from her soul. The morning before the tournament, as he rode along at break of day, he had seen the Princess Edith bending down to speak encouragement to a poor cripple, and he had at once recognized the earthly form of which he had then seen the glorified image. The Angel spoke, and commanded him not to yield to despair: she had work for him still to do. She said that, with her help, he should pluck roses from the Gardens of Hesperus, which mortal man had never yet done. She gave him exact directions how to reach the spot where the invisible gate was placed, through which alone he could enter the charmed Paradise. Only at sunrise, upon the repetition of a form of words, which she gave him, could a brave knight, of unsullied honor and purity, obtain admittance. And only at sunset could he leave, upon reciting the same formula. And then telling [Pg 268] him that the accomplishment of this feat would lead to the fulfilment of his destiny, and that a crown yet awaited him, she had suddenly vanished, leaving a smile upon the air.

The next day, having bid adieu to his friends at court, the cavalier departed with his Moorish page. They travelled in a southwesterly direction, towards the Mediterranean Sea. It is worthy of remark, that when they had passed away from towns and populous districts, the page rode alongside of his master, instead of following at his former humble distance. And, miraculous as it may appear, it is very certain that they no longer conversed together by signs, but with audible sounds.

At length they reached the borders of the sea. Following it for a few days, they came to a lofty rock: here they alighted, and searching carefully along the water's edge, the knight perceived a small entrance, so covered up by overhanging grass and ferns that one unacquainted with its existence could never have detected it. Entering, they found themselves in a lofty and spacious cave, where nature had amused herself by uniting in strange confusion the odd and the beautiful. The roof was hung with sparkling stalactites, and wonderful forms were ranged around. There was an organ, with its numerous pipes—but the wind was the only musician. There was a lofty throne—but the king was not yet born who would fill it with dignity. There was a pulpit—but solitude was the only preacher. Strange shapes, like those in a Hindoo rock-temple, were ranged along into the darkness. Stars and flowers of crystal were strewed around, and the grotto looked like a fit abode for sylphids or fairies. The deep blue water formed a lake in the centre, upon the bosom of which a small boat lay sleeping like a swan. When the knight and his page had [Pg 269] sufficiently admired the beauties of the place, the cavalier advanced to the edge of the lagoon and called the boat. It instantly waked up, and came like a living thing to crouch at his feet. The two friends stepped into it, and it shot out of the cave into the broad open sea, darting across the water with the speed of the wind. No visible means of motion could be detected; no sail or oars were there in the fairy boat—there was nothing mechanical about it; but it sped on its way like a water-bird or a graceful nautilus. Once, indeed, gazing into deep blue water, the knight fancied that he saw a soft white hand, with rings of pearl and bracelet of coral, guiding it in its course; but if this were not the effect of his heated fancy, the hand was at least speedily withdrawn, and he saw it no more.

When the moon had risen upon the expanse of waters, which reflected her image, breaking it into a thousand fragments—while the waves danced up to greet her bright face, like children clamoring for a mother's kiss—the little boat ran into a quiet inlet, and stopped to let its

passengers alight. They rested that night in an orange-grove, and awoke refreshed, to begin their search while the bright morning-star was still shining. At the break of day they arrived at lofty perpendicular rocks, which, after pursuing a straight line, suddenly formed a right-angle. Here the knight and his companion stopped, and turning to the east, awaited the sunrise. At the moment when the glorious orb of day started up from his couch, impatient to commence his course, the cavalier spoke: "Open, thou gate of stone, for the hour has come, and the man." At these words, with a noise like that of thunder, the rock was rent asunder, and a wide passage was opened, through which the friends proceeded. It had appeared to be a lofty chain of mountains, but they were soon at the end of it, and came out into the open air. But an obstacle [Pg 270] opposed itself. A huge dragon, Ladon the terrible, reared up his hundred heads, his eyes flashing fire and fury, his mouths emitting baleful flames and pestilential breath, his tail, covered with metallic scales of green, scarlet, and blue, coiling away to a great distance. The page drew his sword; but the knight took a little black book and aimed it at the volcanic heads. It was a Holy Book, and the names therein quenched the threatening fire and quelled the rage of the monster, who sank back exhausted upon the green sod, and slept the sleep of death. "That little book can do more than the sword," remarked the cavalier.

They proceeded onward: the earthly Paradise was unfolded to their view; the air was balmy, and laden with rich fragrance from the numberless flowers around; but instead of filling the spirit with soft languor, and indisposing the body to exertion, the gentle breezes imparted new vigor to the frame, and the buoyant, hilarious feelings of early youth shot through the veins, making the thoughtful eye sparkle, and giving to the grave foot of saddened maturity the elasticity of childhood. A new, unsuspected power of enjoyment was awakened in the bosom of the friends, combining somewhat of the gladness of the child, and the ardor of the youth—qualities, alas, how transitory!—with the appreciating taste and refined feelings of riper years. Many faculties lie dormant in our nature: the capacity for much higher happiness is one of them; and it will be awakened in the breast of all the good in the Resurrection Morn. They may have lain down to die, weary and heart sore, but they shall find that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

With joyful spirits, their eyes drinking in beauty, and their ears harmony, the knight and his [Pg 271] comrade moved along, guided by wayward fancy. Here a sparkling, dancing rivulet would entice them to follow its course, amid mossy rocks, flowery banks, and drooping trees, which whispered their secrets to its babbling waves; and then suddenly it would vanish into the earth, like a child playing at hide-and-seek, gurgling a merry laugh at its bewildered followers. At every step a new beauty was unfolded. Now the brilliancy of hue and splendor of coloring in the sky, the flowers, the birds, filled their minds with admiration: but when they wandered into the deep, cool woods, with their sober tints, and their mysterious whispers, they gave the latter the preference. And when they left these green recesses, and viewed the extensive landscape opened before them—gently swelling hills, distant mountains, and the boundless ocean—then they wondered that more limited scenery could have given such entire satisfaction. Climbing among the rocks, wild and sublime views, of a rugged grandeur, prepared their souls for nature's masterpiece, the foaming waterfall. Down the stupendous precipice rolled the torrent, masses upon masses of water, almost lost to the eye in the dark distance below; while, above, the gorgeous rainbow closed it in, as if a crown of glory were bestowed upon it in recompense for its agony. And day and night a voice might be heard from its mighty heart, "I can endure forever and forever." Then the friends felt how deep is that bliss which takes away all words—they felt how great a joy there is in awe.

Descending from these heights, soft scenes of beauty attracted their gaze. The setting sun threw its mellow light over a landscape of Italian character; it seemed as if nature and art were here combined to make perfection. Statues of rare loveliness took them by surprise when strolling over the grassy walks, or sauntering under the deep umbrage of the trees; mossy grottoes, [Pg 272] adorned with shells, invited them to repose; unexpected openings in the woods revealed vistas beyond, exciting to the imagination. Lakes of crystal clearness reflected the fleecy clouds, and the snowy forms of the swans upon their azure surface; and gold and silver fishes chased each other through their pellucid waves. Birds of brilliant plumage came there to lave in the pure water, and then shaking off the diamonds from their wings, rose into the air with a gush of melody, pouring out their souls to their Maker. And all gentle and exquisite creatures were met together in that spot, to glad the eye with life—the soft-eyed gazelle, the swift antelope, the graceful stag, the Java deer, smallest of its kind: nothing was absent which could add beauty and variety to the scene.

Amid such innocent joys, drinking in poetry at its very fount, several days were passed, each shorter than the one preceding. Their hunger was satisfied with delicious fruits; and when weary, a natural couch of moss received them, and the trees locked their arms together, and bent over them, as if to keep off all harm, if harm could have existed in that place. It seemed that life could glide away in perfect bliss in those gardens of beauty, where naught repulsive or annoying could enter, and delight succeeded delight. Could glide away, did I say?—not there; for in the centre of that Paradise flowed the fountain of eternal youth, and over its brink hung the bush whose magic roses were famed abroad.

The sight of them awoke the sleeping energies of the noble and resolute knight. "And shall I falsify my motto?" said he. "Shall the bliss of the present satisfy me, while so much remains unaccomplished—while might is triumphant over right, innocence is oppressed, and brute force bears rule upon the earth? Shall I lap my soul in indolent ease while the work of life is before me? [Pg 273] Not so: still must I seek what is higher, purer, nobler; still must my heart pant for excellence; still

must I learn bravely to endure."

Speaking thus, he plucked three roses from the magic tree, and placed them upon his breast, and as the sun approached the western horizon, the comrades drew near to the gate which separated them from the world of common life. The stony barrier opened before the charmed words, and when they had emerged from its gloom, closed again with a clap of thunder. Never since has mortal man profaned those regions of unclouded happiness.

Their little fairy skiff speedily conveyed them to the cave, and with the early morning they resumed their journey. Their route lay, as before, through an attractive country, and the peasants, in picturesque costumes, were engaged in the various labors of rural life: but how changed did all at first appear! It seemed as if scales had fallen off their eyes, showing coarseness and deformity, where previously none had appeared. They had tasted the rapture of a more beautiful life; and now the ordinary toils of humanity appeared "stale, flat, and unprofitable," and common men and women tedious, rude, and mean. But the brave knight struggled against this feeling. "Shall we be so ungrateful, because a glimpse of the earthly paradise has been vouchsafed us, as to sink into idle, repining dreamers? Shall we allow the visions of fancy, or the charms of nature, to steal away our hearts from human sympathy? Rather let these remembered joys excite us to fresh effort; let the useful and the good be ever clad with beauty, in our eyes; let us act as men, strive and be strong in our rightful purposes, sure that in the end the true will ever prove to be the beautiful." He might have said, in the language of a modern poet, [Pg 274]

> "I slept, and dream'd that Life was Beauty;
> I woke, and found that Life was Duty:
> Was then thy dream a shadowy lie?
> Toil on, sad heart, courageously,
> And thou shall find thy dream to be
> A noonday light and truth to thee."

In due time, they arrived at the imperial court. Some important events had taken place during their absence. The splendors of royalty had not been able to preserve the Emperor from a loathsome disease, from which his attendants fled away in horror. The Princess Clotilda could not endanger her beauty by approaching his side; neither did the cares and toils of a sick-bed comport with her views of life. But Edith now took her rightful position, and by her fearless example recalled those around her to a sense of duty. She was her father's gentle, untiring nurse: his wishes were forestalled, his fretfulness soothed, and his thoughts directed to higher things. She rose in her father's love day by day, as he felt her worth; and bitterly did he now think of the undeserved slight with which she had been treated, while the ungrateful Clotilda had been his pride. He was at present recovering from his illness; but he felt himself unequal to the labors of his position, and had seriously resolved to lay down the crown and sceptre, that he might end his days in peace. He had announced the day when his daughters should fix upon one of the suitors for their hands, and when the assembly of barons and knights should decide upon the successor to his throne.

The Knight of the Blooming Rose was gladly welcomed back to court. In the Emperor's presence, he presented the magic flower to each of his fair daughters,—his own bloomed sweetly upon his breast, proving the purity and fidelity of his heart. Edith's cheek was pale, from her late watchings; but never had she looked more lovely than when she placed the rose upon her bosom; her face was glorified by its expression. And Clotilda's ill-concealed scorn and jealousy not only detracted from her queenly beauty, but the flower paled as it touched her breast—pride and worldliness, and every selfish passion, had swayed her being too long, to be repressed at a moment's notice—like the fumes of poison, they were taking away the life of the precious rose. It was impossible that the contrast should not be noticed: comparisons were made which filled the mind of the despotic Clotilda with rage against her unoffending sister; and the more violent her evil passions became, the fainter grew the perfume of her flower, and the more fading its hue. Not all the flattery of her adorers could restore her equanimity; and her face showed, only too plainly, the workings of the evil spirit within. [Pg 275]

At last the day approached when the fate of the empire and of so many individuals was to be decided. Clotilda, meantime, consistent in her desire for universal sway, received the homage of all her admirers, but refused to declare her preference until the day of public betrothal—the day when she proudly expected to be hailed as Empress. Her numerous suitors indulged in flattering hopes, each for himself; while all agreed in pitying the delusion of the rest. The electors met in the audience-chamber, which was splendidly decorated for the occasion: all the dignitaries of the State, and the great nobility were assembled, presenting a very imposing spectacle. The Emperor was seated upon a throne, but the crown and sceptre, whose weight he felt himself unequal longer to endure, lay upon a cushion at his side. The people, in a dense mass, thronged the courtyard of the palace, anxious to know the result of the election, and to hail the new lord of the land. [Pg 276]

At the appointed hour, the doors were flung open, and the two royal brides entered, followed by their maids of honor. Clotilda, self-possessed in her proud beauty, looked like a queen indeed. She was magnificently dressed, and the pale, scentless rose upon her breast was almost hidden by diamonds. But many there turned their eyes from her handsome, haughty face, to gaze upon young Edith, who leaned upon the arm of her betrothed, the unknown knight. They wondered that they had never before remarked the exquisite delicacy and sensibility of her countenance,

the very exponent of the beautiful soul within, which flashed out brightly as if through a transparent covering. When in repose, the calm and happy expression reminded the beholder of the deep purity and peace of the sunny sky—when moved by passing thoughts and feelings, of the same heavens, ever heavenly, over which the fleecy clouds are driven by the wind, in varying shapes and hues. Edith's dress, though elegant, was as simple as consisted with her rank. The pearls and white jasmine in her hair well became her, and the magic rose upon her breast adorned her as no jewels could, and filled the chamber with its rich, refreshing fragrance. As the sisters stood, one on each side of their father, they might well have passed for types of spiritual and sensual beauty—of heaven and earth.

The Emperor arose, and addressed the assembly. He said that the cares of state weighed too heavily upon his feeble old age, and that his most earnest wishes were now directed to a tranquil retirement, in which he should enjoy the leisure he required for preparations to meet the King of [Pg 277] kings. That his daughters were before them—he wished to see the diadem encircling the youthful brow of one, whichever they should choose. But well he knew that a firm and valiant arm was needed to sway the sceptre, and that an experienced mind must govern the nation; and therefore it was his will that the Princesses should this day make known their choice of a consort from among the many candidates for their hands. His younger daughter, Edith, had already plighted her faith, with his entire approval, to the stranger knight. No kingdom awaited her, for her betrothed was a landless exile; but the fame of his valor and wisdom had gone throughout the earth—and in the future husband of his daughter he now presented to them one whom he was proud to claim as a son—Arthur, Prince of Britain, the renowned Champion of Christendom!

At these words, shouts of enthusiastic joy rent the hall. When the tumult was hushed, the Emperor called upon the suitors of the Princess Clotilda to come forward. The rival sovereigns approached, among whom the Duke of Milan was conspicuous for dignity and knightly courtesy. All wished him success; but Clotilda passed him by, and placed her hand within that of the Czar. At that moment, a sound was heard throughout the hushed room, resembling somewhat a deep sigh and an expiring groan—it proceeded from the rose, which fell from her bosom, shrivelled and lifeless. An expression of disdainful rage rendered her face almost repulsive, as she noticed the sensation excited by the circumstance, and the cold, gloomy silence with which her choice was received.

After a short conference, the electors reported that they had chosen Arthur of Britain and the Princess Edith to be their lawful sovereigns. Hildebrand then led them to a balcony, and [Pg 278] presented them to the people; and loud and enthusiastic were the shouts of the populace: "Long live our Emperor, Arthur the Brave! Long live the good Princess!" The plaudits were echoed far and wide. The achievements of the noble Arthur, and the kind deeds of "The Good Princess," formed the theme of the fireside-tale in the humble cottage, and of the troubadour's lay in castle and banquetting-hall. Arthur, who in Britain was mourned as dead, or as lying in enchanted sleep with his good sword Excalibar at his side, ready to start up to his country's rescue in some hour of future peril—enjoyed, instead, a happier fate. Long and glorious was his reign: the wicked fled away from his presence, like mists before the sun; the upright rejoiced under his protection, and peace reigned throughout all the borders of the Empire. Excalibar was sheathed: no foes dared to invade the land. Brightly and sweetly bloomed the magic roses, which once grew on the same tree in the earthly Paradise, and which were now seldom far asunder; flourishing, in their transplanted state, upon hearts which diffused a moral Paradise of love and purity around them.

And what became of the imperious Clotilda? Enraged at the decision of the electors, and at her father's acquiescence, she soon left the Imperial court to accompany her lord to his distant empire. There her life passed unhappily enough amid the rude magnificence and brutal amusements of the palace. She did not find that Ivan was easily managed, as she had hoped: fools seldom are—it requires a portion of good sense to perceive our deficiencies, and to allow the superiority of others. They became more and more estranged, both giving way to the evil passions most natural to them. Ivan, indulging in sensual pleasures, became more and more [Pg 279] brutified; and Clotilda, yielding up her soul to the dominion of pride, hatred, and violence, became so embittered against her unfortunate husband that she compassed his death by violence, and seized the crown, reigning in the name of her infant son, Constantine. And never, under the most despotic sovereigns, had the iron rule been exercised with more unrelenting vigor than during the reign of Clotilda the Terrible. But a day of vengeance was at hand. A secret conspiracy was formed, at the head of which her young son was placed: the palace was seized in the night, and the murderess was hurried away to a distant fortress, where she spent the remainder of her unhappy life—the victim of her own ungoverned passions.

"How I wish that I possessed such a magic rose!" said Alice Bolton. "It might cure my unfortunate pug nose—I should so love to be beautiful!"

"You own such a rose, my dear girl," said her uncle. "It is invisible, but I often perceive its fragrance. Each one of you carries such an indicator of character and feeling about with you, wherever you go. We may as well call it a rose as any thing else."

"But what can you mean, Uncle? do you mean our tell-tale faces?"

"Nothing else. It is one of the many proofs of beneficent design in the formation of our frame,

than we can scarcely help giving a timely warning to others of the evil passions which may fill our breasts. The angry man becomes inflamed or livid with rage before his arm is raised to strike—just as the rattle-snake is heard before he darts upon his victim. And so with the gentle and kind emotions. Friendly feeling softens the eye and soothes the heart before the tongue utters a [Pg 280] sound. Then take my advice, my dear nephews and nieces, if you wish to be attractive now, seek moral beauty, and the external will follow, in some degree here below, and completely in a better world. You can afford to wait."

CHAPTER IX. [Pg 281]

NEW-YEAR'S DAY.—CHARACTERS, OR WHO AM I?—QUOTATIONS.—ACTING CHARADES.—RIDDLES.

"A very happy New-Year to you, Aunt and Uncle!" "The same to you, dear children! and may each one in your lives be happier than the last!" "As the Spaniards say, 'May you live a thousand years!'" cried Charlie Bolton. "I feel glad that wish is an impossible one," answered Mr. Wyndham, with a smile. "How tired the world would be of seeing me, and how weary I should be of life! No, no, my boy—I hope when my season of active labor shall be closed, and I can no more be useful to my fellow-men, that my kind Father in Heaven will grant me a mansion above, where time is swallowed up in eternity."

There was service in the morning in the pretty little country church. Strange that this beautiful and appropriate mode of commencing the New-Year, which is so general in continental Europe, should be frequently neglected here! It appears so very natural, upon entering upon a new division of time, to consecrate its commencement by acknowledgments of our dependence upon the Great Creator. At least, so thought the family party assembled at The Grange; and they were amply rewarded for the effort it cost them by the joyful, hopeful nature of the services, which were intended to lead the soul to repose upon God with unshaken trust for all future time. [Pg 282]

In the evening, it was agreed that there should be no story, but that games and conversation should fill up the time. Mary proposed a new game she had heard of, "*Characters, or Who am I?*" While one left the room, the rest agreed upon some historical personage who was to be represented by the absentee upon his return. When he re-entered, unconscious whether he was a Nero or a Howard, they addressed him in a manner suitable to his rank and character, and he replied in such a way as to elicit further information in regard to the important question, "Who am I?" As he grew more sure of his own identity with the illustrious person whose deeds they alluded to, his answers would become more unequivocal, until at last he could announce that he had solved that difficult problem, "know thyself." An amusing state of puzzle—a dreamy feeling that you might be anybody in the world, was found to pervade the first replies. Cornelia, who led the way in assuming a character, declared that she felt like the little woman in Mother Goose's Melodies,

> "If I be's I, as I suppose I be,
> I have a little dog at home, and he knows me!"

and that when she found out who she really was, it was as grateful to her as was the little dog's joyous bark to the unfortunate woman, doubtful of her own identity.

When Cornelia entered, Mary said to her: "Does your majesty feel very sore from your fall?"

"Very little bruised, indeed."

"Physically, I presume that you feel nothing; but you must suffer mentally," remarked Ellen. "For a queen to be so disgraced, and for a moment's pride to be brought down to the rank of a subject, [Pg 283] and of a divorced wife, is indeed a dreadful fate."

"A lofty mind," replied Cornelia, "can bear reverses."

"True," rejoined Charlie. "I rejoice to see your majesty bear up so nobly: it is well that pride can sustain you in adversity, since it occasioned your descent. And yet, do you know, most sovereign lady, I have always entertained the idea that the reason you refused, in obedience to your royal husband's command, to unveil your beauty to the court, was not so much modesty and pride, as the fact of an unfortunate pimple upon your nose, and a sty upon your eye, which had the effect of making you look uncommonly ugly."

"Shame, ungallant sir! never, unless my silver mirror deceived me, did I look more lovely. But if the laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be changed, neither can the modest customs of their women be altered, even at the command of the King, of Ahasuerus himself. I stand here, a martyr to the rights of my sex: I, Vashti, queen of Persia, and of all the ends of the earth, have proved myself to be strong in will, and the champion of womanhood. I shall appear before all eyes as the first asserter of woman's rights. But oh! that Jewish girl! that modest, shrinking, beauteous, hateful Esther! that *she* should wear my crown!"

"Well done, Cornelia! you have entered into the spirit of the game. And now Charlie should go out, as you caught the idea from him."

Upon Charlie's re-entrance, Alice spoke: "Did Dante's genius inspire you, gifted mortal, or did you sit so long at the feet of Isaiah, that your harp caught up some of the tones of his?" [Pg 284]

"Don't know, ma'am, indeed. Couldn't possibly give you any information on that subject. Scarcely knew I was much of a poet until you told me."

"A man like you," said Ellen, "did not write for the unthinking multitude, but for the select number who could appreciate. 'Fit audience, though few,' is what you ask for. How shameful is it that such worth and genius should languish in obscurity, in a pleasure-seeking age! And that, while court minions rolled in luxury, you should sell your glorious poem for the paltry sum of ten pounds!"

"It was really too bad," replied Charlie. "And the money went very fast, too."

"And yet," answered Amy, "you were never of prodigal habits. You lived simply, in the country: your supper was of bread and milk; your greatest pleasure, to play upon the organ, or to listen to the music of others. You retired early to rest: to be sure, you often awoke in the night, your brain so filled with visions of beauty that you felt obliged to arouse your daughter, that she might write them down, and so they were saved for the benefit of future ages."

"What do people think," said Charlie, "about my waking up my daughter, instead of taking the trouble to write down my poetry myself?"

"How could you, when you are stone-blind? And of what great consequence was it that one common-place girl should sleep an hour or two later in the morning, when such strains as yours were in question? A dutiful daughter would feel honored by acting as your amanuensis, even in the night season. True, the girl did grumble occasionally, being afflicted with some portion of human weakness; and those who do not love inspiring strains have called you cross, in consequence. But you should no more regard these things than Samson—your own Samson Agonistes—caved for the mockings of the Philistines." [Pg 285]

"Of man's first disobedience"—began Charlie. "Hurrah! I feel quite elevated since I have become Miltonic. And yet, do you know, I would rather wear a strait-waistcoat than try long to sustain such a character as that. I couldn't do it, indeed."

"I think you could not," replied Tom. "Now tell us whose speech gave you the first impression of being Milton?"

"Oh, Amy's, to be sure. So go out, little Amy, and we'll try to find some very angelic character for you to fill."

When Amy returned, Anna spoke: "What remarkable worldly prosperity! And yet, though a strikingly handsome woman, with polished manners, and Italian craftiness, you do not look happy."

"I am not—my heart is not at ease."

"Nor your conscience either," rejoined Charlie. "Unless you have found some way to polish that, to make it match your face and manners, I should think your majesty might find your conscience rather a disagreeable companion."

"My majesty is not accustomed to rebuke."

"I know it—and if I were in France, I should fear that some of your Italian powders might be sprinkled in my food or wine, in consequence. But I wonder when I think of you—a simple duke's daughter—being raised to the throne; and not only that, but of your ruling so absolutely over the three kings, your sons. Mother-in-law to one of the greatest kings of France, and to the most renowned of beautiful, suffering queens, what more do you want to make you celebrated?"

"One thing only," answered Amy. "The Massacre of St. Bartholomew will carry my name down to posterity. My daughter-in-law, Mary, Queen of Scotts, was interesting, but I am great. She could kill one husband: I, Catharine de Medici, will not say how many men groaned out my name that night." [Pg 286]

"And now," said Ellen, "let us play *Quotations*. One quotes a well-known passage from some book, and if another mentions the author, she is entitled to propose the next passage. It all depends for interest upon our cleverness; so brighten up your wits, cousins mine."

"As I'm a poet," said Charlie, "I'll give you this:

> 'The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.'"

"Shakspeare!" cried Tom. "Now where does this come from: 'the better part of valor is—discretion.'"

"Shakspeare again," replied Alice. "And in what book do you find this passage, which corroborates that noble sentiment:

> 'He that fights and runs away,
> May live to fight another day.'"

"In Butler's Hudibras, I believe," rejoined Ellen. "And where may that truth be found, which evidently is intended only for boys and men—'Use every man after his desert, and who shall escape whipping?'"

"Of course it was said by no one else than Will Shakspeare, the deer-stealer—he knew it held good of himself, and was indulgent to others. And who was it that wrote this epitaph:

'Underneath this stone doth lie
As much beauty as can die:
Which in life did harbor give
To more virtue than can live.'"

"That was 'rare Ben Jonson,' I am sure," replied Alice. "If her pale ghost could have blushed, I think it would, at such lofty and exquisite praise. For my part, I could say, 'Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.'" [Pg 287]

"That's Shakspeare again," cried Charlie. "It is surprising how many passages come into one's head from that wonderful man's works. Where is this to be found: 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.'"

"In the Bible, of course—though I do not remember in what part," said Mary.

"Think again," replied Charlie, "for you are quite wrong: it can never be found in the Bible."

"Oh, but I'm sure it is there: I'll get a concordance and find the passage in a minute." Accordingly she did so, but was obliged to acknowledge herself defeated: it was nowhere to be discovered.

"Since you are at a loss, I can set you right, for once," said Mrs. Wyndham. "The passage is to be found in Sterne's works: I have myself heard it quoted in the pulpit as from the Bible, and many people really think that it is. Here's another:

'When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war.'"

"That's from Shakspeare, I know," answered Tom.

"'Tis from Troilus and Cressida, I imagine—that is a Greek play."

"Then find it, my boy," said Mrs. Wyndham, handing him Mrs. Cowden Clarke's elaborate volume.

"It is not in the whole book," replied Tom, after a diligent search, laying down the volume, with a face as blank as the leaves at the end. "If it is not in Shakspeare, I give up." [Pg 288]

"'How poor are they, that have not patience!'" cried Cornelia. "Can you tell us where that piece of wisdom may be found?"

"Yes—in Shakspeare—the same author who writes 'This was the most unkindest cut of all!'"

"I thought of that passage concerning the Greek, which seems to have baffled you all," rejoined Mrs. Wyndham, "because I was once a whole year on the watch to discover it. It happened to be quoted at a little literary gathering, and none of us could tell the author, although it was 'familiar in our mouths as household words.' We agreed to search for it, but it was full a year before I found it, in looking over the play—quite a celebrated one—entitled 'The Rival Queens,' by poor Nat. Lee, commonly called the 'crazy poet.' Alexander the Great is the hero."

"We know so many quotations at second-hand," said Mrs. Wyndham, "that I like this game: it will set us to hunting up the original passages, and seeing their connections. If people would act upon this principle, of going to head-quarters, with regard to history—and in private life too—how many mistakes might be saved."

"And now, just to keep us from becoming too wise," Cornelia chimed in, "I propose that we act charades. A group of us will arrange the plot in the library, and when we open the door, the rest of you must guess from our actions what word we intend to depict. We'll choose one of several syllables, so that there will be repeated opportunities given you to sharpen your wits. And if you should conjecture the whole word before we are through, please not to spoil sport by telling it."

"We are all obedience," was the reply: and Cornelia, Charlie, and George, after a whispered consultation, and a foraging expedition into the housekeeper's room, shut themselves up in the library. Soon the door was thrown open, and the three were seen gravely seated at a small table, sipping imaginary tea, while Cornelia, as hostess, was anxious to fill her part by replenishing their cups. "Tea," "tea," sounded from every part of the room, and the door was closed. When again opened, the three cousins were disclosed in the very height of enjoyment: Charlie's mirth-provoking face, Cornelia's gay laugh, and George's loud and long haw-haw, quite upset the gravity of the spectators, and peal after peal of laughter rewarded the trio. "How merry we are!" said Aunt Lucy. As she spoke the word, the door was shut, showing that the right expression had been used. When re-opened, Cornelia was discovered carefully arranging Charlie's cravat. "Shall I make a sailor's knot, or how shall I fix it?" "Give it a plain tie, if you please." There was little difficulty in discovering that the word was *temerity*; and to make "assurance doubly sure," the whole of it was acted out. George and Cornelia stood up, holding hands, while Charlie, who had in a marvellously short time metamorphosed himself into a minister, with gown, bands, and book, put to the former the question, "Will you take this woman to be your lawful wife?" "I will," responded George. "Will you take this man to be your lawful husband?" "No, I will not," answered [Pg 289]

Cornelia, hysterically. "You will not? What, madam, is the reason of this change of purpose? Have you not well considered the matter?" "No, I have not—I have been very rash—I never saw him till yesterday!" "What *temerity*!" exclaimed the clergyman reprovingly, and the door was closed, amid great laughter.

When it was re-opened, George was found seated in the centre of the room, under the hands of the Doctor, who was examining his eye; while Cornelia, with an appearance of great anxiety, held [Pg 290] the light. "Is it out yet?" "No, Doctor: I feel it still—how it hurts!" Thereupon the Doctor produced a formidable instrument from his pocket, and appeared about to gouge out the eye by way of curing it; and the door was closed amid cries of "eye!" "eye!" "eye!"—quite parliamentary, as Charlie said. The second scene disclosed Cornelia apparently engaged in household avocations, which were interrupted by a rap at the door. She gave admittance to a man and boy who were peddling tin wares, and there ensued such a sounding of tin-pans, and such a chaffering about tins, that no doubt could exist in the minds of the spectators as to the word. To act out the third syllable, Cornelia and George were seated at a table, with lamp and books, when a knock was heard, and a traveller, with carpet-bag and umbrella, entered the room. He had lost his way—he was going to the town of Certainty, in the land of Theoretical Speculation, and wanted some plain directions. "Oh, I can tell you exactly how to get there," cried Cornelia. "Keep along this road, the highway of Inquiry, until you find it bends off to the left into the path of Metaphysics. The path becomes narrower and more difficult continually, and many side-walks lead off to other spots: one, to the wilderness of Atheism; another, to the populous city of Thinkasyouplease; still another, to the dangerous bog of Alldoubt. But if you follow the right road, you cannot possibly err." "Much obliged: I'll try to keep the path." Presently, the traveller returned, in a battered condition: he had wandered from the right track; his cloak of philosophical reason had been torn by the briers of difficulty; his feet pierced, through the shoes of intellectual pride, by the sharp stones of suffering: he could not hear of any town of Certainty in the whole country of Theoretical [Pg 291] Speculation. "I believe we have all made a mistake," replied George. "We erred in giving you a wrong direction: you erred in following it. Certainty is situated in the land of Truth: follow this highway of Inquiry in the opposite direction, until it leads you to a well-trodden road formed by the juncture of Faith and Facts; and then you cannot fail to reach Certainty. My sister Fancy misled you into error." And when the company in the sitting-room cried out "err," "err," the shutting of the door showed they were not mistaken. For the last scene, Aunt Lucy was called into requisition, and formed the central object of the exhibition. But little wit was required to make, of the whole, the word *Itinerant*.

"Now for a few puzzles and conundrums," cried Charlie, "I have one which I think none of you can guess. Who are the most immoral of manufacturers? Do you give it up?"

"I have heard the answer—we could not guess it, as it consists of puns," replied Mary. "Those who make you *steel* pens, and then say they do *write*."

"Here's another. Why is the clock the most humble of all things?"

"Because it covers its face with its hands, and is continually running itself down."

"When is it in a passion?"

"When it is ready to strike one."

"Pray, what can be the difference between Joan of Arc and Noah's ark?"

"One was made of gopher-wood—the other was Maid of Orleans."

"Two persons met in the street, and one of them said, 'I am *your* son, but you are not *my* father.' [Pg 292] How could that be?"

"It could not be, Charlie!—how could it?" said Lewis.

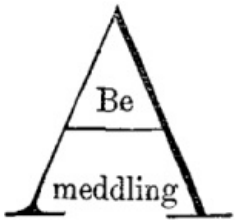
"It might be, if the person happened to be his mother," answered Mary, with a laugh.

"It is that, of course—how silly we all are!"

"My first is on the table, and under the table; my second is a kind of grain; my third and fourth combined, form what the most romantic people cannot well dispense with; and my whole is one of the United States."

"Let us see—California? no. Massachusetts will not do, nor Connecticut. Oh, I have it: it is *Matrimony*—not always a united state, however!"

"You think not, Ellen? Then here is a piece of advice for you, and to make it more emphatic and intelligible, I will write it upon a card."



man family wife.

"I have it! *eureka*!" cried Tom Bolton. "Be above meddling in a family between man and wife."

"Why are pens, ink, and paper like the fixed stars?"

"They are stationary."

"A gentleman visited a prisoner; and, pointing to him, said to the bystanders,

> "'Brothers and sisters have I none;
> But this man's father was my father's son.'

What relationship was there between them?" [Pg 293]

"A slight one—only that of father and son," answered Cornelia.

"What glorious fun we have had this week!" cried George. "It will be hard work to go back again to *hic, hæc, hoc*—I wish Christmas holidays could come once a week!"

"So do not I, much as I love them," replied Mr. Wyndham, smiling. "It is the alternation of grave and gay, of diligent study and active duty with lively social intercourse, which will make you complete men and women. I would not have you to be mere drudges, in the most useful work; nor book-worms at home, only in the library, and unfit for mingling with your fellow-men. But much less would I like to see you triflers—butterflies—living only for amusement. I hope you will become earnest men and women: choosing great and good aims in life, and working your way upward continually to greater usefulness, and to a higher moral elevation. But amusement is not wasted time: it may be so indulged as to be improving to the wits, and never to transgress the line of innocency. I have often felt the benefit of a hearty laugh, when my brain has been overtasked: it is recreation, in the strict meaning of the term—it gives new life to the exhausted spirits. Yes, I approve of entertainment, in its place."

"So do I, heartily, my dear sir!" chimed in Cornelia. "And its place is everywhere, I think. I never heard uncle make so long a speech before!"

"Beware, or I will punish you by making another!" replied Mr. Wyndham, drawing the mischievous girl towards him. "But I have news for you all, which I think will scarcely disturb your slumbers. I received a note this afternoon, informing me that the united wisdom of your [Pg 294] parents had concluded to prolong your holiday by one day; and so your 'Week's Delight,' as Amy calls it, must be counted by Long Measure—a week and a day."

"Glorious!" cried George. "Let's pack the day as full of fun as ever it will hold. I never shall forget the jolly time we have had this year at The Grange!"

"Not even the ice-bath at the pond, George?" said Cornelia.

"No, indeed; nor my kind deliverance; nor my brave rescuer," answered George.

"That might, indeed, have turned our laughter into weeping," replied Mr. Wyndham, lighting his lamp. "And now, Good-night, and happy dreams!"

CHAPTER X. [Pg 295]

WHISPERING GALLERY.—POTENTATES.—THREE YOUNG MEN.

The last day at The Grange had come, and well was it filled up with active exercise and sport, song, laughter, and sweet converse. In the evening all met as usual in the library, eager for whatever amusement might turn up; for everything was *impromptu* among our young people, and, whether story, games, or conversation, had at least the merit of spontaneity.

"I have a thought," said Alice. "There is a game I would call 'Gossip, or Whispering Gallery,' which can take in the whole of us, and possibly take us all in, in a double sense. Let Aunt Lucy sit in one corner of the room, and Uncle John in another; and we young folks can range ourselves between. Aunty can say anything she pleases in a low whisper to her next neighbor, only she must be careful to name some one; and he must repeat it to a third, and so through the line. The last person must announce distinctly what the whisper was, and settle any differences with Aunt Lucy, who originates the whisper."

"Very good," replied Mrs. Wyndham. "Only it is evident to me that I am going to be victimized!"

"O, you can stand it; you can stand it!" cried out several young voices. "Your character for truth and prudence is established; and with Uncle John at the other end of the line, you need not fear!" [Pg 296]

And so the company was arranged, and care taken that no ear heard the "gossip," save the one for which it was designed. The mysterious message was at last announced, amid laughter and shouts from the youngest.

"Aunt Lucy says that Cornelia told her that Charlie reported that John had eaten ten slices of mince-pie to-day. He is very sick, and I'll send him home to his mother."

"But I only said, 'Cornelia and Charlie both told me John hadn't eaten one slice of mince-pie to-

day. I'm afraid he is sick, and it is well he is going home to his mother!'

"Rather a difference! But who altered it? It seems to me Cornelia looks mischievous!"

"O, that's a way I have! Poor little me, all the mischief is put on my shoulders! But—honest now—Tom whispered so low, that I thought it might as well be ten slices as one!"

"And now change places," said Alice, "and put Cornelia head as a reward of merit—we'll fix her; and then we can try 'Whispering Gallery' again."

No sooner said than done, and Cornelia started the game by saying to her nearest neighbor, "How sorry I am to leave The Grange! I never was so happy in all my life; and Charlie says so too!"

But the outcome of this very innocent remark was as follows: "How sorry I am I came to The Grange! I never will be happy again in all my life, and Charlie says so, too!"

"Are you sure there was no cheating?" asked Mr. Wyndham.

"No, dear uncle, impossible," replied Cornelia. "I couldn't, and they wouldn't; they are all quite too good for that; every one of them, except, perhaps, Charlie, who is in a peculiar sense my own first cousin. But it seems to be a property of a whisper to be a *twister*; it is sure to get in a tangle, and comes out quite different from the way you started it." [Pg 297]

"Just so," answered up Charlie. "It is like what they say happens in Cincinnati. You put in a grunter at one end of the machine, and in a few minutes it comes out in the form of bacon, hams, lard, sausages, and hair-brushes!"

"My dear Charlie," chimed in his uncle, "that is the loudest 'whisper' I've heard yet! But, seriously, boys and girls, don't you see in the game how evil reports originate, and how easy it is, by the slightest variation from the straight line, to falsify the truth?"

"That's so," said Mary. "And I have often noticed how whispers glide into gossip, and gossip into scandal, before people are aware. I've resolved many a time not to talk about *people*, but things, and then I'll escape doing harm with my unruly member."

"I, too," said Charlie, demurely, "have frequently written in my copy-book, 'Speak not of the absent, or speak as a friend.'"

"Now for another game," cried Gertrude. "Here is one of mine. I call it 'Potentates.' It's very simple, and you can vary it according to your taste. You visit a foreign country, and see the rulers and grandees; you can mention their names or not, as you wish. I'll begin, to show one way of playing it.

"I went to England and was presented at court. I had a superb dress made for the occasion, which I will not describe, as I see the boys are all ready to laugh. But my father had to wear a special drawing-room suit for the presentation, also, and he looked as funny and quaint as if he had stepped out of an old picture. His sword hung at his side, and he had to practice walking with it, and bowing over it, or it would have played him a trick. It was worse than my long train. [Pg 298]

"When my turn came to be presented and the Lord Chamberlain announced my name, I felt like sinking into the ground; but I didn't. I think the dignity of my grand dress supported me. Somehow I reached the throne, where sat in state Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, Defender of the Faith, etc. On either side were princesses of the blood, ladies of honor, and others according to rank. I had seen my predecessors kneel before Her Majesty, so I had to put my democratic feelings into my pocket and do the same. I made believe to myself that I knelt because she is a pattern woman, is the best queen England ever had, and is old enough to be my grandmother, having reigned fifty years. She graciously extended her hand. I did not shake it, as report says one fair American savage did, but humbly kissed it, and then retreated backward with eyes still fixed upon the Queen in all her glory, and scarcely knowing which gave me the most trouble, my long train or my wounded self-respect.

"I afterwards saw the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Archbishop of Canterbury, dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies—a brilliant constellation. But I very much doubt if they saw me. And these are the potentates of Old England."

"As for me," said Charlie Bolton, "I saw the Dey of Algiers, and a very brilliant dey he was! By way of contrast, I determined to visit the Knights of Malta, but on inquiry found that they had not been in existence for nearly ninety years, and therefore gave it up. Instead I concluded to see the Knights of Labor, who abound in this favored land, and appear to be potentates, as they can stop railroad travel, mines, manufactories, etc., at their own sweet will." [Pg 299]

"As Charlie was in North Africa," remarked John, "I went to Egypt to be in his neighborhood, and had the privilege of seeing the Khedive. I found the country quite demoralized, the finances in a very bad condition, and few appeared to know who was the real potentate of the land, the Khedive, the Sultan of Turkey, or the money kings of England. General Gordon had been murdered, and El Mahdi, the false prophet, was dead also. Those two men were the greatest potentates Africa has had for centuries!"

"And I crossed over into Turkey," continued Tom Green, "and had an audience with the Sultan. I saw numerous pashas in attendance of one, two, and three tails."

"O, Tom!" cried Gertrude, "that can't be! Even Darwin doesn't claim that for man in the nineteenth century!"

"My dear young friend," answered Tom, "these tails were not carried monkey-fashion, but were insignia of office, the man having three tails holding the highest rank. They are of horse-hair, placed on a long staff with a gilt ball on top, and are always carried before the Pasha on his military expeditions. Always ask for information," said he, bowing to the circle, "and I shall be happy to impart such as is suitable to juvenile minds!" [Pg 300]

"Very condescending!" "Deeply interesting!" "Just from college, isn't he?" were some of the remarks of the girls.

"The Grand Vizier presented me," continued Tom. "We had a good deal of pleasant conversation together, the Sultan and I; and I tried to convince him that the republican form of government was the best. Strange to say, my eloquence failed in effect. But he was very friendly, and asked me to stay to tea, and he'd introduce me to his little family—"

"Tom! Tom!" cried several voices, "Do keep probability in view."

"I declined, of course, even at the risk of hurting his feelings. *I* don't want to see women with thick veils on; some may think it romantic—I know Alice does, for it is so mysterious—but *I* think it looks as if they were marked with small-pox! Just then, the muezzin sounded for prayers from the nearest minaret, and the Sultan instantly fell prostrate on his rich Turkish rug, and began his devotions. He was just saying, 'Do come, Tom, for'—but he stopped in the midst, and I'll never know what strong inducement he was going to offer; perhaps he wanted me to be Grand Vizier. I slipped out while he was at his prayers."

"O Tom, Tom!" cried John. "I didn't think you could draw so long a bow!"

"It is quite understood that we are indulging in fiction," replied he. "You know that falsehood consists in the *intent to deceive*. No one will be taken in by my yarns, dear Coz!" [Pg 301]

"Nor mine, either," said Cornelia. "For I was in Paris before the French Revolution, at the same time as our philosopher, Benjamin Franklin. I was present at court on a grand occasion. The king, Louis Sixteenth, a handsome and amiable monarch, and the beautiful and graceful queen, Marie Antoinette, were there of course; the young Dauphin was, I hope, sound asleep. The ladies of the court were brilliant, and everything as gay as gay could be. But to my surprise, our plain, simple republican Dr. Franklin was the central object, the 'cynosure of all beholders.' The king was quite secondary. Philosophy was then quite the rage, and republican simplicity—in the abstract—was adored by these potentates. One of the grand, gay ladies crowned Franklin with a wreath of flowers! And he was wonderfully pleased with all the attention he received, I assure you. It was a different scene from any in the Philadelphia of those days—with our staid citizens, and sweet, gentle, modest Quaker ladies in their plain dress!"

"And now," said Amy, "aren't you all tired of potentates? I am. This is our last evening, and I want dear Uncle to tell us a story—something from his own life, if he will—to finish up our pleasures."

"It would finish up your pleasures by putting you to sleep," Mr. Wyndham answered, laughing gayly. "Mine has been an unusually happy life, but not an adventurous one. I was never even in a railroad collision. Do you remember the story of Dr. Samuel Johnson, when writing his 'Lives of the Poets'?"

"Do tell us, Uncle," chimed in the young voices.

"He was trying to get information in a certain case, but could not elicit anything of interest. At last, out of patience, he burst forth: 'Tell me, didn't he break his leg?' I never broke mine; I can't get up an incident." [Pg 302]

"And I'm very glad you didn't, Uncle mine," said little Amy. "And now I speak by permission in the name of the assembled company: You are unanimously requested to tell us your life, or something that happened to yourself."

"'Story! Why, bless you, I have none to tell, Sir,' as Canning's needy knife-grinder says. But if you all insist, as a good uncle, I must e'en obey; so prepare for those comfortable slumbers I have predicted. I will call my story

THREE YOUNG MEN.

"Now you must not expect from me," said Mr. Wyndham, "exciting tales of adventure, and hairbreadth escapes by sea and land. I have never read a dime novel in my life, and therefore couldn't undertake to rival them in highway robbery, scalping Indians, and bowie-knives and revolvers. My heroes were never left on a desert island, nor escaped with difficulty from the hands of cannibals, nor were pursued by hungry wolves; and never even saw a lion or tiger except behind the bars of a menagerie. They were not strikingly handsome nor charmingly hideous, nor had they rich uncles to die opportunely and leave them heirs to a few millions; indeed, they were very much such young men as you see every day walking the streets of your own city.

"I would gladly leave my name entirely out of the story if I could; but as it is an 'o'er true tale,' and I happened to be mixed up with the other two, whom I have known from childhood, I am very sure my dear nephews and nieces will not accuse me of egotism. It is the other two who are my [Pg 303]

heroes—not myself.

"John Howard and Mortimer Willing were my schoolmates, in the same class for years, neighbors and playfellows, so that I know them well. And I speak of them the more freely because they are now both living at a great distance from here, one being the honored Governor of a Western State, and the other residing in a remote town in the interior of Texas. Such are the changes in our land of freedom.

"But to begin with our school-days. We had not a genius in the class, neither had we a dunce; we were average boys, digging our way through the classics and mathematics, and not too familiar with science, history and geography. The world we live in was not much studied then. Such minor knowledge we were somehow expected to pick up at home, and we did after a fashion. I liked both these boys; but while Willing was the more self-possessed, showy and brilliant, I always felt Howard to be the most true; he was the very soul of honor, as transparent as glass without a flaw in it. Willing did things with a dash, and by his superior tact and ready language often appeared to know more than he really did. If he got into a scrape he was pretty sure to get out of it smoothly.

"I have sometimes known him, for example, to go unprepared to a recitation, depending upon his luck not to be called upon to recite, when, with his ready wit and retentive memory, he would gather up what it required hard study for the rest of us to put into our craniums. But it sometimes happened that Dame Fortune, wicked jade! forsook him, and Willing had to march up, as we thought, to certain disgrace. But whatever forsook him, one thing never did—invincible [Pg 304] assurance. He would bear himself in so composed a manner, talk round the subject so ably, and bring what little he knew so prominently forward, that the professor himself was often deceived, and was sometimes entrapped into telling the very thing Willing most wanted to know.

"If any side-helps were given by sympathizing friends—for Willing was a general favorite—he availed himself of them without scruple. I remember the question was once put to him, 'What is the Latin name of the earth?' Any boy surely should know that; but for once his memory failed him. He nudged the boy next him, saying in a stage whisper, 'Tell us.' The teacher's ears were quick, and his wit also; he answered, with a quizzical look—before the boy could speak—'That's right, Tellus is one of the names; but you should direct your answer to the desk, and not to your neighbor.'

"In composition he was sometimes brilliant, but not always sustained or original, for I have more than once detected a striking likeness to Addison and other well-known worthies of our English tongue. Evidently the same Muse inspired both, for in style and sentiment they were identical; but unfortunately for Willing, they had the advantage in point of time, and made their mark in the world before he came along. The wonder to me was that the teacher did not see it; but his was not a wide range of scholarship, though thorough in what he taught. His groove was narrow but deep and well worn, I felt indignant when I heard Willing praised for what should have brought him disgrace; but he was so pleasant and ready to oblige, such a good companion and playfellow, [Pg 305] that I soon forgot my righteous anger—until next time.

"Another trick of his I could not like. Possibly my young friends may have seen the same; for schoolboy failings are very similar throughout the ages. I don't doubt school-children cheated before the flood! They certainly have done so since. He sat at the same desk with honest Jack Howard, the most unsuspicious of mortals because himself so free from guile. Many a time have I seen him slyly glance at Howard's slate when we were solving hard problems in arithmetic or algebra. They were sure to come out even, neck and neck, as they say. But *I* knew that if Willing had been called upon to explain the process he couldn't have done it; and he was sure to get the praise.

"As for Howard, he plodded on, never getting all the appreciation he deserved. Always prepared, but not always ready—for he was easily abashed, and then his tongue did not do justice to his thoughts. No fellow in the class—or, as we then said, no *man* in the class—was so thorough as he, but the teachers did not always find it out. We boys did, however; and we knew, too, that what Jack Howard once got he kept, in the way of mental acquisition. But the best of it was, he was such a solid fellow as to worth. His word was never doubted; we could trust him in everything. '*Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*,' holds true, and the converse is also true, Faithful in one, faithful in all. Howard was true and faithful from the time I first knew him, a little shaver, 'knee-high to a grasshopper,' as children say.

"I'm the more particular in giving you an insight into the character of these boys as a key to their after-life. I know that the child is not always 'father to the man,' and that the insertion of a new [Pg 306] and transforming principle into the soul will elevate and ennoble the meanest man. But as a general rule the mainsprings of character develop early, and the man is very much as the child has made him. The sowing then, brings forth a harvest afterwards. They tell us, that two natives of Scotland settled in the far West, and that each took with him a memorial of his fatherland—one the thistle, the national emblem, the other the honey-bee. Rather different sowing that! For while the dwellers on the Pacific coast have to keep up a continual fight with the thistle, the honey of that region is now largely exported, and is worth its millions. A little time has done it—and thistles are especially prolific, you need take no pains in the sowing.

"But we didn't think much of sowing and reaping in those days, though we were sowing all the time. The years flew fast till we had seen seventeen birthdays, and our fathers thought we should learn something of business if we were ever to be business men. Willing had influential

connections, excellent abilities, and popular manners; he was a general favorite. He was placed without difficulty in a large importing house, where he gave entire satisfaction, and was rapidly advanced to a position of great trust, collecting moneys and keeping the accounts. His salary was large, and he was considered a rising and prosperous young man; he moved in fashionable society, married a dashing girl, lived in a handsome house, gave elegant entertainments, and kept a horse.

"Howard and I got on more slowly. Somehow, we always kept together, so that 'the two Johns' [Pg 307] became a by-word. We were clerks in the same commercial house, and, although self-praise is no recommendation, I may say that both of us did our whole duty. We worked hard, as was then expected; were at the store soon after sunrise, and had everything in order before our employers arrived. Young gentlemen in those days did many things that are now the porter's work, making fires, sweeping the store, etc., quite new duties to us, who were fresh from Academic shades, and from communion with Homer, Virgil, and Horace. I can't say we enjoyed it much. Neither did we like the lifting of heavy packages and being ordered about as if we were inferiors. But we did not shirk our duty, and kept our tempers. John, good fellow, came out of the ordeal sweet-tempered, kind, and obliging; and I don't doubt that we both feel the benefit of this practical training to this day. Certain it is, that we mastered all the details of the business, and knew what to expect from others, when our time came to employ them.

"'The two Johns' went into business together, and for a time everything was prosperous. We married happily, and lived in comfort and moderation, as becomes young people who have to make their way in the world. Meantime we saw less and less of Willing, for in the daytime we were busy, and our evenings were very differently employed. He and his young wife—a pretty and attractive creature she was—cultivated the society of the gay and rich, gave entertainments, or were seen in full dress at balls, concerts, the opera, and the theatre. I sometimes wondered how a clerk on a three-thousand-dollar salary could live at the rate of eight or ten thousand. And [Pg 308] so, with all kind feeling, we drifted apart; your dear Aunt and John's wife found their style of living so different, ideas on all subjects so opposite, and friends so dissimilar, that visits were only exchanged once or twice a year.

"When we were about thirty, commercial disasters befel us. A financial crisis swept over the land, by which some houses closely connected with our own were engulfed, and could not meet their engagements. We lost heavily. We struggled through it for a time, but were compelled at last to call a meeting of our creditors, lay our statements and books before them, and offer to give up all we had to satisfy their claims. That was the best we could do, and we then could not pay more than fifty cents on the dollar.

"Our creditors behaved most nobly and generously. They expressed the utmost confidence in our integrity and business skill, uttered no word of blame but much of encouragement, and begged us to go on and retrieve our fortunes. They settled upon fifty cents in the dollar as full satisfaction for our debts, and told us to take our own time for the payment; nothing could have been kinder and more considerate. For my part, knowing we were not to blame, I bore up bravely till that point; but there I broke down. I am not ashamed to say, that I wept like a child.

"Howard was the bookkeeper of our house, and a beautiful set of books he kept. The accounts were exact, the writing clear, the figures unmistakable—not a blot or erasure in the whole. They excited great admiration, and from none more than from Stewart & Gamble, who were prominent creditors. After the meeting, they invited Howard to look over their books in the evening, [Pg 309] remarking that although they had all confidence in their head clerk, their receipts had fallen off considerably of late, and as they wished to understand the reason, they had concluded to get the services of an expert, which Howard certainly was. John accepted the offer, although he looked grave when he remembered that Willing had been head clerk for years.

"As our business perplexity was now comparatively settled, we went on as usual, only taking in sail and trimming the boat for the storm. But in our private affairs both families resolved to retrench. Our wives came nobly to our support, proving themselves true women; they themselves proposed to *double-up*—the two families to occupy one house, and in several ways to reduce our expenses one-half. Such an arrangement would never have answered if we had not all thoroughly understood one another—but we did. My wife is, as you all very well know, a model of amiability and of every household virtue, and the other John thinks as well of his Rib, and I suppose is right. The old saying is, 'If a man wishes to be rich let him ask his wife;' I can add, if a man wishes to be honest and pay his debts, let him ask her counsel, aid and coöperation also. We were determined to be honest; and our good wives helped us in this effort with all their might.

"How they managed it you can't expect a man to explain—it is a problem too deep for our limited intelligence—but certain it is, that while we always sat down to a plentiful table and maintained a respectable appearance, what had supported one family now answered for two. I don't think our wives were reduced to the straits of the Irish family, whose little boy reported to his schoolmates: [Pg 310] 'There's a great twisting and turning going on at our house. I'm having a new shirt made out of daddy's old one, and daddy's having a new shirt made out of the old sheet, and mammy's making a new sheet out of the old table-cloth.' But 'twistings and turnings' of a marvellous kind there must have been, which the male understanding could not fathom; for while the house was always in order, and the two ladies looked as neat as if they had just stepped out of a bandbox, no bills came in, and a little money went a great way.

"One word more about this very practical thing of expense in living. We could have lived on as we had done, and no blame from any one, for we were in no respect extravagant; but we could not

reconcile it to our consciences to spend a penny without necessity when we owed money. All four thought alike about that; we were thankful for health, and that we could provide the comforts of life for our young families. As you know, our dear children were then living. And I may here add, that both John and I lived to see the solid benefits accruing from the ten years of strict economy and active work in which all shared. Our boys and girls learned betimes to help themselves and one another, and were invaluable aids to their mothers. The lessons of self-denial were not lost upon them. They attended the public schools and received a solid education there; but the languages were picked up at home, and thoroughly, too. It is astonishing how much can be learned by devoting a short time every day to any study when the heart is in it; and I found that the boys were prepared for college, when our ten years were up, and we were able to spend more freely. [Pg 311]

"But meanwhile, what about Willing, and the very mixed accounts of Stewart & Gamble? Alas, alas! how happy was our lot compared with his! We had cheerful content, hope for the future, peace in our consciences. We were respected by those around us, and by the business world, never more so than then. But poor Willing!

"Howard found it as we had feared. There were inconsistencies between the debtor and creditor columns, increasing with each successive year; and the effort had been made to cover them up by the alteration of figures so as to appear square and correct. Howard knew too much of prices to be deceived by these, being in the same business. The aggregate stealings—for it was nothing else—amounted to $20,000! And this was the payment the firm received for their liberal kindness and their blind confidence!

"When all was discovered, and Willing's guilt clearly proved, he was summoned to meet his injured employers. He must have gone with quakings of heart: but not even then did his cool assurance fail him, or the blush rise to his cheek, until he was made conscious that all his trickery was understood, and that public exposure and the penitentiary were before him. Then he gave way, and confessed all. He had not, in the beginning, planned deliberate villany—very few ever do who have been brought up to know the right. But the temptations to extravagance had proved too much for him, and his principles, never strong, had given way. He had taken two hundred dollars, intending to return it from his salary, and none should be the wiser. But fast living is a [Pg 312] deceitful thing—almost as deceitful as the human heart. Bills came in fast—store bills, butchers' bills, carriage bills, confectionery bills, milliners' bills—swallowing up his quarter's salary; and one must have ready money, you know; so instead of returning what he had taken, as hope had whispered, he took more—still to be repaid in the future.

"I need hardly say, that each time he yielded to temptation the resistance of his conscience became less and less, until finally it appeared to be paralyzed. He had woven the toils about himself until he seemed powerless to escape; no chrysalis, apparently lifeless in its silky shroud, was feebler than he. He was strong to do evil but weak to do good. Everything conspired to push him down hill—circumstances were against him, he thought—but one thing was certain, he must have money, and then all would be right.

"But how to break the meshes? How to retrieve himself? One way only was clear to him—speculation in stocks, and on a margin; he could borrow money for that, for he would be sure to repay. *Borrowing* was now the convenient name he applied to his stealing. He tried it, and at first succeeded; the deluded victims of all gambling, whether in the Exchange or in gambling hells, are pretty sure of success at first; and so they are enticed to higher ventures. Now he might have returned the ill-gotten money, and at least have saved his reputation. But no! the gambling passion was now aroused, and he felt sure he could soon realize enough to make him easy. He tried again and for a larger sum and *lost*.

"And so he went on until he was tangled inextricably in the net, and felt that he was a rascal, and [Pg 313] a lost, not a successful one. Remorse seized him, but not repentance; for still he went on in his guilt. Indeed, he was more reckless than ever, struggling to get out of the meshes. Gay to excess at times, then gloomy; his temper became unequal, and to drown reflection he sometimes drank to excess. He was a ruined man—ruined *before* exposure, for that only opened the eyes of others —his own down-fall had already taken place.

"I am told that when the proofs of his guilt were laid before him, and his confession was made, his pleadings for mercy were most pitiful. Stewart & Gamble had a stern sense of justice, and their indignation was in proportion to their former confidence. They were determined that he should not escape, and that, not so much from personal vengeance as because they thought it wrong to interfere with laws due and wholesome in themselves, and necessary to deter others from evil doing. He was committed to prison, a trial took place, and poor Willing was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary.

"When he first stood up for trial, he Was alone; all the friends of his prosperity had forsaken him. He was thoroughly stricken down, abashed, shame-faced, not lifting his eyes to the crowd in court; and no one of his intimates care to claim acquaintance with a felon. I could not hold back; much as I hated the crime, I could not hate the criminal. My schoolmate, my playfellow, stood there, alone, forsaken, despised; crushed to the ground, ready to despair. I went to him, gave my hand and stayed, while his case was up. Never shall I forget the look of mingled gratitude and hopelessness in his haggard eyes which had scarcely known sleep since his disgrace. [Pg 314]

"O, it is well to be just! No doubt of that. The law should be sustained, and no sentimental pity should interfere. We must not condone crime, or the very object of law and penalty will be

annulled. Philanthropy should be tender, but not weak; and if tears are shed and bouquets of flowers sent, it should rather be to the victims of crime, than to the criminal. But when a man is crushed with a sense of guilt, and down on the ground, that is not the time to spurn him; when disgrace is added to trouble, friends must not stand aloof. Many a poor fellow is driven to suicide by this course who might have been saved by kindness and brought to repentance.

"Willing's dashing friends, by whose example he had been helped in the downward career, who had eaten his dainty little suppers and enjoyed his society, now forsook him and held up their hands in horror at his conduct—it was so disreputable! I may be wrong, but I can't help despising men and women who share a poor fellow's prosperity and fall off in his adversity; giving an additional kick, if need be, to send him down the hill. Of all his gay companions not one stood by him on his trial, or said one word of pity, hope, or cheer, when he was condemned. The friendship of the world is a hollow thing, more unsubstantial than a bubble. It seems to me that nothing is so hardening to the heart as self-indulgence, luxurious living, idleness, the absence of any high aim in life, or any earnest effort for the life beyond. Certain it is the summer friends all vanished; their friendship wilted like flowers before a frost. [Pg 315]

"That was the time for Howard and me to act like men. We were busy, very busy, but we took turns to stand by him, and show that we had not forgotten 'auld lang syne' and boyish days. Poor fellow! he wept then. Well did he know that we would be the last to extenuate his crime, but he saw that we pitied him while we condemned his sin. He spoke the first words of genuine repentance, or what looked like it, then and there.

"After his condemnation, when immured in prison walls, dressed in convict garb, and fed on prison fare, we visited him whenever the rules allowed it. We found him quite broken up—thoroughly humiliated, ready to despair of God's mercy as well as man's forgiveness. He was in the depths of trial, all the waves and the billows had gone over him, the deeps had swallowed him up, as the Psalmist poetically and truly says. We could not in conscience say one word that might lessen the weight of his guilt, but we could point him to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin not of one only, but of the whole world. We could tell him that Christ came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, to which he promptly added, and from the heart, 'Of whom I am chief.'

"Calamity, sorrow, reverses and all the punishments due to iniquity, can never be relied upon to bring men to repentance; but in this case they worked well, and Willing became a new man. It was a great pleasure to us to see the change in his very countenance, wrought out by the inward principle, and that his sorrow, as time went on, was not so much for his punishment and disgrace as for his guilt. He made no effort to get a commutation of his sentence, saying, It was all right; [Pg 316] he had deserved that and much more.

"Of course our pity was much excited for his poor little wife, who seemed almost heart-broken. My dear Lucy and John's wife, who had never cultivated intimacy with her in their prosperous days, now came forward in true womanly style, and made her feel that she had sisters in heart, whom she had not known. She had no near kindred, and the few relatives she had held aloof. Truly she might say, 'My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.' No one offered her help or shelter, of all those who had enjoyed her elegant hospitality.

"Immediately upon the conviction of her husband she wrote to Stewart & Gamble, offering to give up all her handsome furniture and pictures, and even her jewels, as a small indemnity for their losses; but they very nobly refused to accept it, advising her to sell and invest the proceeds. John and I, acting under the direction of our wives, who were enthusiastic in their admiration and pity for Olive Willing in her trouble, told her to pack her trunks at once and come to our house, where we had room enough and to spare, and that we would attend to the sale. She could scarcely believe she heard aright, and was full of surprise and gratitude, and, of course, accepted the offer.

"I don't wonder you think our house was made of gum-elastic; it really seemed so. 'Room in the heart, room in the house," was our motto; and the children most amiably agreed to give up one room and be sociable together; and I fancy they were, from the peals of laughter that often came from that room, so full of young life and spirits. And so poor Olive was settled down as one of the [Pg 317] family. It was a new experience to her in every way. The industry of the house surprised her, and from gratitude and a proper ambition she soon sought to help, which really was the best thing she could do to relieve her trouble, and regain a measure of cheerfulness. But she had to learn first, and found two willing teachers in the noble women who had given her a home. She was an apt scholar and soon became mistress of domestic arts, which were indispensable to her in after life. Indeed, what woman should be ignorant of them, if she wishes to be helpful to herself and useful to others? Who would wish to be considered a mere ornamental piece of bric à brac, good to be set upon the mantel or against the wall, but not good for everyday use and comfort? Better be an eight-day clock, for that at least will regulate the goings of the household!

"In these new employments and in our happy home circle Olive in a few months recovered something of her wonted tone. She then formed the plan of putting her hitherto useless accomplishments to work, by taking pupils in music, drawing, and embroidery. We all approved her plan, and Lucy found pupils for her among our friends—not among those who had cast her off. This supplied her with ready money, and with a little increase to the sum John and I had safely invested for her.

"When his five years were accomplished, and Willing was notified that he was once more a free

man, we were there to receive him, and conduct him to our house. He entered it, a wiser and a sadder man. We had formed a plan for him into which he and his wife heartily entered, and had [Pg 318] already written to correspondents in Texas, to obtain information as to localities for settlement. After a week's rest Willing and Olive left us for their distant home, where they were soon at home on a small ranche stocked with sheep—the whole paid for by the modest sum held in Olive's name. They did well and are much respected. He has been able to enlarge his operations, and is now a thriving man; and what is far better, he is upright, honest; always on the right side; fearing God, and having favor with those who know him.

"But to return to ourselves. We persevered in a strict course of industry and economy, declining help proffered from outside sources. My dear grandfather, who had brought me up after my father's death, was very kind in offering financial aid; but I did not wish to involve any one in my misfortunes, or to cause embarrassment to one I so greatly loved. Besides, I felt confident that we should retrieve our affairs by our own efforts. So it proved. Eight years to a day from the time we attempted to make our assignment to our generous creditors we paid them, not fifty cents on the dollar, but one hundred, with compound interest. It was a glad surprise to them, but a much greater joy to us. O, boys! better it is to step forth clear of debt; to be able to look every man in the eye; to feel that you owe no man anything, than to own the mines of California, Arizona, or the whole of a Pacific Railroad! I cannot describe to you the exquisite pleasure it gave us to pay out that money. Those who have never experienced losses and embarrassments can scarcely understand it.

"We now had a fresh start in business, with a good stock on hand, boundless credit, and no debts. We soon came to the front rank among merchants. Indeed, so successful were we, that on my [Pg 319] fiftieth birthday I resolved to retire, feeling that I was rich enough. My dear grandfather, who had entered into rest some years before, had left me The Grange, in which my earliest years had been passed, and here, amid the beautiful scenes of nature, and with still a large scope for my activities, I have enjoyed years of happiness. My dear friend, Howard, had landed property in one of the Western States and fancied there was more elbow-room there for his children who were settling in life; so at last we were obliged to separate. He has risen, as you know, to prominence, being the most popular governor of the State they have had for years, and even political opponents are loud in praise of his integrity and fidelity to trusts.

"I need scarcely say a word to show the meaning of my simple tale. A life of unspotted integrity and honor is the only life worth living; and to love God and keep his commandments is the only safeguard. You may have a good disposition, but that is not enough. You may have been well trained and instructed, but that is not enough. Your father may be the very soul of honor and to be trusted with uncounted gold, but virtue is not an inheritance, and you must be honest for yourself, self-denying for yourself, diligent for yourself, if you wish to build up a character respected by men and pleasing to God. 'Tis true, this is only one part of your duty, but it is a very important part. Truth and rectitude are pillars in family life, and the very bulwarks of society. If these fail, all else fails.

"And now, a pleasant and a dreamless sleep to you all. To-morrow you return to the studies and [Pg 320] duties of the new year, which has begun so happily for us all. I dislike to say that word, Farewell, and so I will only wish you now, Good-night!"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOLIDAYS AT THE GRANGE; OR, A WEEK'S DELIGHT ***

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