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Townsend**

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**THE  
BROTHER CLERKS;  
A TALE OF NEW-ORLEANS.  
BY XARIFFA.**

NEW-YORK:  
DERBY & JACKSON, 119 NASSAU-STREET.  
1857.

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In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for  
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**THE BROTHER CLERKS.**

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**CHAPTER I.**

There, stranger lips shall give the greeting,  
There, stranger eyes shall mark the meeting;  
While the bosom, sad and lone,  
Turns its heavy heart-beats home.

A September sun was casting its parting rays far over the dull waters of the Mississippi, as a steamer, with steady course, ploughed her way through the thick waves and "rounded to" at the thronged and busy wharf of New Orleans.

Upon her deck, apart from all other passengers, stood two youths gazing with anxious eyes on the vast city spread out before them. The taller and elder of the two, bore upon his brow the flush of his twentieth summer. His figure seemed already to have gained its full proportions, and in his carriage and tone of voice there was all the pliant grace of youth, combined with manhood's strength and ease. His hair was of that purplish black so rarely seen save in the raven's wing, or the exquisite portraits of the old masters. The full broad forehead, shadowed by its dark locks, the clear black eye, the hue of health upon the cheek, and the smile upon the red lips as they parted over the snowy teeth, formed a picture of fresh and manly beauty over which the wing of

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this wicked world had as yet never hung darkly.

The younger was a mere boy; and stood beside his brother in that autumn hour, like a pure memory of other days; so marked was his whole bearing with that pureness of grace and refinement which circles some young brows like a halo. His figure was slender and delicate as a girl's; while his hair, almost golden in its hue, hung in curls about the blue-veined temples, and a brow of solid and exquisite formation, such as the lover of the intellectual delights to behold. His eyes were like the blue which lies revealed when the storm ceases and the clouds part in the sunshine; and the long lashes curled upon a cheek of almost invariable whiteness. His nose was of a pure Grecian cast, his mouth one of great expression and most beautifully cut. No one ever looked upon that young face without turning to look again, and felt holier for the gaze, in their hearts. Dear reader, do not imagine this an over-drawn sketch from a romantic fancy. I have only too weakly delineated the reality, as the portrait which hangs before me, looking down with its golden-fringed blue eyes upon my task, can fully testify.

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During the whole passage the brothers had attracted universal attention, and won the good will of all; and now, as they stood arm in arm, amid all the hurry and bustle of the "first hour in port," not a sailor passed them but raised his dusty tarpaulin with a hearty "good e'en to the lads," and the passengers, as they reached the shore, would look up through the crowd once more at their young faces, to gain one more smile or one more parting wave of the hand, thinking, perhaps, it might be the last time forever.

"Guly," said the elder of the two, suddenly throwing his right arm around the slight figure of his brother, and drawing him closer to him, "tell me what makes you silent and thoughtful at this moment, when the scene of our future action lies before us, and our destination is gained. Of what are you thinking?"

"I was thinking," replied the boy, as he laid his cheek caressingly upon his brother's shoulder, while his thoughtful eyes became suffused with emotion, "I was thinking of home. The sun is setting, and you know, at this hour our mother prays for her absent boys—were you thinking of the same thing, brother?"

There came no reply for a moment; Arthur only pressed his brother closer to him, but he answered at last, while a faint blush stole over his cheek: "No, Guly, I must confess my thoughts were far from that. I wish I could always think as rightly as you do, but it isn't my nature so to do. I was thinking of the untried path before us, the probable events of the next few years, the fair home so recently torn from us, the possibility of regaining possession of it through our efforts, and re-establishing ourselves in that station where we have ever moved. We must do this, Guly, for our mother's sake."

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"With God's help we will."

Again Arthur's clasp tightened round his brother's figure, and again for a few moments he was silent; then suddenly resuming he said: "You must strive to make a good impression on Mr. Delancey, Guly; don't be timid or shrinking—such things have a bad effect. Be every inch a man, as you so well know how to be; bear always in mind how much depends on us two, and we shall get on bravely." It was evident Arthur dreaded more for his brother than he thought of for himself.

"I dread the meeting," returned Guly; "from the tone of his letter I learned to dread the man, and a boy-novice, as I am, in mercantile business, I shrink from the examination I may have to undergo, while you, with your experience, of course, scarce give it a thought. I have pictured Mr. Delancey as a very stern man."

They put themselves and their baggage into a cab, and at length brought up before a large and brilliantly lighted store, with the name "Delancey," in gilt block letters over the door. The cabman set the trunks which comprised the brothers' baggage, within, and pocketing his fare, drove off, leaving the youthful strangers standing upon the stage of their young future, waiting for fate to ring the curtain up.

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In a short time a tall, heavily built young man, with a fine eye and pleasant smile, stepped between them, with an interrogative expression on his countenance, which asked, without the aid of any words, what might be their business; and Arthur replied that they desired to see Mr. Delancey as soon as possible.

The young man glanced at the trunk, and then at Guly's face, and ejaculating an "Ah, yes!" as if he had suddenly jumped at a conclusion, asked—this time putting his question into words—if they were the young chaps Mr. Delancey was looking for from the North; "because," said he, "if you are, I can settle you."

Guly replied that they were the same; and informed him they were not a little fatigued with their recent journey, and would be pleased to be "settled" as soon as convenient.

The clerk, whose name was Wilkins, regarded Guly attentively a moment, then smiled pleasantly, and said: "You are to sleep in the store—up stairs. If I'm a judge, you've been used to pleasanter places; however, I presume it will soon be home to you. Here, Jeff," beckoning to a tall negro near by, "tote this trunk up for your young masters."

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"Jeff" appeared, and with a scrape and a bow signified his readiness to show the brothers to their room, and nodding to Wilkins, they followed the negro to the back part of the store, where a long

winding staircase led to the floor above.

They had reached the stair foot, when Wilkins, who had been observing them, hurried after them, and holding out his hand to Gulian, said: "Don't get a bad impression of all of us here by the dingy room you'll find up there; notwithstanding you meet such a rough welcome, I hope you'll learn to like us and be happy."

"Thank you," said Guly, shaking his hand warmly, and feeling pleased at his frank, honest manner, "I've no doubt we shall be very good friends. Good-night."

"Good-night," returned Wilkins, and he stood watching the boy as he mounted the steep staircase, until the golden curls and young face were lost to sight. He turned away then with a short deep sigh, which sounded almost like a gasp, and thoughtfully resumed his station near the door.

"Dis is a gloomsome sort of place, young massa," said Jeff, the negro, as he placed the trunk at the foot of the bed and turned towards Guly, who was trying to look through the dingy window; "howsomever, 'taint quite so bad in the day time."

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"What makes it more pleasant then?" asked the boy.

"Oh," said Jeff, "when 'tis light you can look straight down from here into de neighbors' kitchens; you can see all dey hab for dinner, how dey 'conomize, how different de misses are drest in de backdoor to what dey are when dey come out de front, and all dat."

"A pleasant occupation, truly," laughed Guly. "Does any one sleep in the store beside ourselves?"

"Massa Wilkins, sah, and me. Massa Wilkins' room is down below, just under the stairs; I sleeps behind the big door on the floor, and play watch-dog for master."

"What's your name besides Jeff?" asked Arthur, amused at the loquacity of the black.

"Same as my father's, sah."

"And what is your father's?"

"Well," said the negro, twisting a lock of wool in his fingers, "dat's a puzzler! His fust name's Voltaire, and I guess his last one's Delancey, 'cause he belongs to master, and his belongings generally take his name—sich as Delancey's hosses and Delancey's niggers; but bress de Lord! I 'spec you's sleepy; good-night, young massars—why didn't I tink of dis afore?"

"Good-night," said Guly, at the same time lifting a book from his trunk.

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Jeff reached the door and laid his hand on the knob to go out, but as he cast his eye back at the brothers, he stopped short, then walked towards them on tip-toe.

"'Scuse me, massa," said he to Guly, "but I jist happened to tink mebbe dat big book was de Bible."

"And you are right."

"Was you gwine to read it, sah!"

"Yes."

"May dis chile stay an' listen? I like to hear de talk ob dat book; It fecks me inordly and makes me feel better in my heart."

Guly signified his assent, and opening the book, read in a sweet, mellow voice a selection of Psalms. Arthur listened attentively, but not more so than Jeff, who stood with parted lips drinking eagerly in every word. When Guly closed the Bible no one spoke; and after a moment's hesitation he knelt, as did his brother and Jeff, and from the depths of his pure young heart poured forth a prayer of sweet and touching eloquence, such as might have graced the lips of older and wiser persons.

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## CHAPTER II.

Backward we turn life's varied page,  
To note the changes written there.

On the banks of the Hudson, in one of the oldest settled counties of New-York, stood the handsome dwelling of Arthur Pratt, the elder. All that wealth could buy was lavished upon the elegant house and grounds, to gratify the taste of the owner.

Mr. Pratt (or Colonel Pratt, as he was more generally called) had married quite early in life, and having inherited a large fortune from his father, sought out for himself and bride a home suited to their wealth and station. His wife was a woman of great personal beauty, of most engaging and graceful manners, and distinguished in her own circle for her sweet and unobtrusive piety.

As far as was consistent with what she considered her Christian duty, Mrs. Pratt mingled in the

gay scenes with which she was constantly brought in contact; and her gentleness and affability were the comment of all. Col. Pratt having located himself in business (with the desire of having "something to do," which sometimes prompts the millionaire to busy himself in some way) in the adjacent city of New-York, was enabled to pass much of his time in the precincts of his happy home, and at the same time to enjoy the society of the *haut ton* of the city.

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When the happy father clasped to his proud breast his first-born child, the little Arthur, he deemed his happiness complete. The boy was like his father, both in character and beauty; and as he grew in "winsome ways," he became the pride and pet not only of the household, but of friends and visitors. So much indulgence, and openly expressed admiration, did not fail to foster the boy's inherent spirit of pride, and he soon learned to demand concessions and indulgences which were all too rarely denied him. At times, the mother, her fears aroused for the well-being of her child, would remonstrate upon the course of training pursued with him; but a laughing promise of amendment, forgotten almost as soon as given, a kiss, a word of endearment, or a gentle smile, caused the subject to be dropped; not to be renewed until some glaring fault in their darling boy again demanded it.

Gulian seemed sent to his father's arms just in time to prevent the utter ruin, by over-indulgence, of young Arthur. He was a delicate but exquisitely beautiful babe, and his frequent illnesses made deep demands on the endearments hitherto so freely lavished upon his brother. For a time Arthur was highly indignant at the new turn of affairs, and openly resented the slights which necessarily he now often received. Naturally, however, he was of a noble and generous disposition, and soon learned to tenderly love the helpless babe, whose blue eyes would brighten when he drew near, and whose lips murmured, for their first word, "Arty."

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Arthur had attained his sixth year when his brother was born; and when time had written Guly a schoolboy, the closest affection united the children, notwithstanding the difference in their years and disposition. Guly, as he was called, though of a cheerful disposition, never displayed that sprightliness and vivacity which characterized Arthur. Even in his merriest moments, a thoughtfulness mingled with his mirth, which rendered him ever attentive to the comfort of others.

There was an attraction about the child which won all hearts—a natural grace and refinement of manner, mingled with a presence whose influence was always for good. With the tattered beggar he came in contact kindly, pressing into his tawny hands the alms he had to give, while Arthur, though equally generous, spoiled his gift by the manner in which it was bestowed, tossing his gold contemptuously at the weary feet of those who asked it, and turning carelessly away. Too early had he learned the power of that wealth to which he might one day become the joint heir with his brother, and his pride, perhaps, was censured more than he deserved.

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His love for his mother and brother were strong redeeming traits in that self-willed nature, and toward those two beings he ever exercised a lofty and ennobling forbearance. Throughout their school-days he assumed the part of defender and protector toward his younger companion, and if a slur was ever cast upon Guly's meekness, or a taunt uttered at his almost girlish beauty, an earnest champion was ever at his side to adopt his cause, and give the lie to those who dared thus to speak; and Guly in return looked up to Arthur as one brave and manly in all things, a superior both in mind and body; little dreaming of the hour when their stations should seem changed, and he assume the part of guide and guardian over his brother.

Colonel Pratt was desirous that both his children should choose a profession. But Arthur impatiently expressed his distaste for such a course, preferring the busy hum of mercantile life, to the long study necessary to fit him for a profession. Consequently, after having received a good school education, he was placed in his father's store, there to become acquainted with the business under the immediate care and supervision of his doting parent. Gulian at this time was still at school, the same gentle-souled, spiritual-looking boy; who perhaps more than Arthur had wound himself round the fond heart of his mother, and who seemed to love her presence, and cherish her affection, with a depth of feeling unusual in boys of his age.

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One morning, late in August, as Colonel Pratt was about to proceed to the city, his wife observed him wandering over the house and grounds with an air of thoughtfulness amounting even to dejection. Astonished at this in one usually so cheerful-hearted, she joined him, and anxiously inquired the cause.

"I have suffered for several days from this same depression of spirits," he answered, with a faint attempt to smile. "Perhaps some wise sightseer might declare it a presentiment of coming evil, but it is no doubt the mere effect of a slight indisposition, occasioned by the extreme heat and application to business."

"Stay at home with me to-day, Arthur!" said his wife, earnestly, reading beneath his attempts to treat the matter lightly a seriousness which he had striven to conceal.

"Nay, my wife," he answered, "it would but seem that I yielded to a superstitious dread. It will all be right to-morrow."

Seeing the boat drawing near, the fond husband bade his wife an affectionate farewell, and hurried to the wharf. She saw him safely on board, and watched the steamer till out of sight.

In life she never saw that husband more. The boat in which he returned was the ill-fated "Empire," which was sunk near Newburgh, and he was among those who perished. The corpse of

Colonel Pratt was not discovered until two days had elapsed, and immediate burial was necessary upon the arrival of the body at that dear home whence he had so lately departed. This blow was so severe to his wife, that for several weeks her reason deserted her, in an attack of long-continued illness. She recovered, only to learn, that extensive speculations, whose prospect of certain success had induced Colonel Pratt to invest very nearly the whole of his fortune, had proved an utter failure, and that she and her children were destitute. [Pg 22]

Here was something which called forth all her energies, and for her children's sake she nerved herself to action. Their beautiful home, the scene of so much happiness, passed into strangers' hands. Horses and carriage, and even Mrs. Pratt's jewelry, all went in the general ruin. Naught was reserved save enough to purchase a diminutive cottage not many miles from the scene of her former prosperity, and thither she departed, taking with her Arthur and Gulian, who had never before tasted the bitter dregs of poverty or sorrow.

As usual, in such cases, the many *friends* who had so gladly shared her wealth, now apparently forgot her existence, and she was left to battle with the heavy change alone. It was impossible for them all to live together now, and the mother felt that if Arthur left her, Gillian, too, must go to learn the ways of that world, of the hollowness and falseness of which he as yet knew nothing. [Pg 23]

About this time, a Southern paper fell into their hands, containing an advertisement, by a merchant in New-Orleans, for two young clerks, to fill vacancies recently made in his number of assistants. After due consideration, it was determined that they might fill those places, and the merchant was accordingly written to. An answer was immediately returned, desiring that they should come on as soon as possible, stating that it was not his custom to engage Northern clerks, but that it was a season of the year when it was difficult to procure any one, and for this reason he had decided in their favor. He further stated that he should expect them to remain with him winter and summer, as he could not go to the inconvenience of engaging clerks from such a distance, and then have them away three or four months in a year.

On the whole, Mrs. Pratt thought the letter a very stern and disagreeable one in tone, and shuddered as she pictured to herself the character of the writer. What would her delicate and gentle Guly do, in daily contact with such a cold, blunt-lipped man. Still, there was nothing she could devise that would be well for them, and New-Orleans, at that time, was considered an El Dorado, where industry and perseverance soon brought the fickle goddess to bestow her glittering stores. It was a long way to send them from her side, but she experienced a pride which prevented her from applying for situations for them nearer home. Thus, it was decided they should go. In the bright anticipations of future fortune and happiness, which immediately filled his busy brain, in the preparation for departure, and the prospect of his approaching journey, Arthur in a measure forgot the calamity which had over-taken them, and the attendant painful separation from his sole remaining parent. He dwelt enthusiastically upon the fortune he was confident he should soon win. He told how frequent his letters home would be, and hinted that, as soon as practicable, they would contain something more than mere words. His voice, when dwelling upon this subject, was always loud and confident, and even in the midst of all their troubles he sometimes laughed as merrily as of old, when picturing their restored wealth and renewed happiness. [Pg 24]

Not so Guly. He hovered round his mother like some gentle spirit; saying but little, yet evincing in every glance of his expressive blue eyes, and in every noiseless footfall, the deep sorrow which lay in the recesses of his young heart. When he spoke it was in accents of tenderness and sympathy for his mother; and though he never talked as Arthur did of the approaching journey, and its results, there was an expression of firmness and determination in his thoughtful face, which more than once forced upon the mother's heart the conviction, that in that distant land, this frail being, after all, might prove the stronger of the two. Daily she warned them of the temptations and snares that would beset their path, and taught them to zealously shun such, as they would a viper in their way. They listened and promised; and when the expected day of departure arrived, bade her adieu in the midst of her tears, and prayers, and blessings. Thus was the widow left utterly alone; yet in her faith she felt not forsaken, knowing that the Father of the fatherless was with her in her woe. [Pg 25]

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## CHAPTER III.

### *Number—Chartres-Street.*

With the first ray of the morning light, Gulian was awake. Without disturbing his brother, he rose, dressed himself, and took a survey of his chamber by daylight. It was a large, gloomy-looking room, unceiled and unpainted, and the rough beams and rafters looked like the ponderous ribs of some antediluvian monster, which might crumble in at any time, and bury all beneath them. The windows were large, but dingy and begrimed with the unmoved dust of years; and spiders' webs hung in profuse festoons from the dirty sashes. A quantity of old barrels, boards, wine casks, and other lumber, were carelessly thrown in one corner, and the door which opened upon the staircase was covered with big-lettered advertisements, in such diversified type that it seemed as if the old door was "making faces" all the time, to improve its Punch and Judyish appearance. The windows looked down into the courtyards of adjoining dwellings, which were built up so high that no view was afforded beyond. As Guly looked down now, he saw the servants hurrying about with [Pg 27]

their turbaned heads and ebony faces, busied with preparations for the morning meal; laughing and joking as they passed one another, apparently as happy in these narrow gloomy courts as though they were the possessors of the proud mansions adjoining.

Such was the view from two of the windows of the room. There was another one covered partially by a tattered and dusty painted shade, at the southern extremity of the apartment, but Guly did not approach it, not caring to look down upon what he thought must be a third edition of kitchen scenery.

Opposite the bed was a pile of empty dry goods boxes; and one or two pieces of furniture of the same description were placed about the room, which, with the addition of one store stool, minus a bottom, served for seats.

The bedstead was of common stained wood, furnished with a tester and flimsy mosquito bar, through the grim and smoky folds of which were visible sheets of unbleached factory muslin, an emaciated mattress, and a pair of lean pillows, which seemed quite lost in the much too large cases which covered them. The boy sighed as he took in all the dinginess and gloom, and his heart throbbed yearningly for the pleasant room which, even in adversity, had been his at home, cheered and enlivened so often, too, by the presence of his tender mother.

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"It isn't time to get up yet, is it, Gulian?" said Arthur, half-rousing himself, then closing his weary lids again. "The sun isn't up yet, is it?"

"The sun never gets into this room, Arthur; we can only know when it's up by the increased light."

"I was dreaming of home; oh! such a pleasant dream! I must sleep a little longer," murmured Arthur again, in the lingering tones of one but half-awake.

"Not this morning, brother. Come, we must up, and be doing. I hear them opening the store below; we shouldn't be late the first morning, you know, dear Arthur. It is too late to sleep."

Alas! that this first bright dream of home, in that old gloomy room, should ever have been broken! Alas! that the first sweet slumber, on that rude couch, should have had its awaking! Alas! for the beauty of that boyish face, radiant in the flush and glow of early youth, with the halo of home dreams upon it, that it had not there and then chilled and crumbled! Alas! for the innocence and purity of that buoyant spirit, that it had not then taken its flight to brighter realms, forewarned of the dark time coming, when it would quake to find in conscience's depths, that, indeed, "it was too late to sleep."

Upon going down stairs the first person the brothers met was Jeff, who stood at the foot of the staircase, looking up as if expecting them. They returned his cheerful and respectful salutation kindly, and passed on to the front door, where Wilkins stood in his shirt-sleeves; leaning against the door-post, reading the morning paper.

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He raised his eyes as they approached, and nodded to them, and, somewhat to Guly's surprise, inquired how they had rested, adding that the room needed some cleaning before it could be made habitable for human beings, and he would see to it.

They thanked him, and, as he resumed his reading, they could do nothing more than stand in the door and look out, or walk briskly up and down the floor for exercise. The clerks began to gather in after a while, all of whom gave the young strangers a passing greeting, as they stationed themselves at their respective places. At length beginning to experience the craving of naturally good appetites, they walked up to Wilkins, and inquired where they were expected to board.

"Good gracious! sure enough!" said he, flinging his paper on the counter, "I came near forgetting you; and would have been off to breakfast without you in a minute more. Come on," and he put on his coat as he went out of the door, and led the way down street. They only walked a couple of blocks, then entered a large room, opening upon the street, with glazed glass doors, which stood open on account of the heat of the morning.

"I always eat here, as it is cheaper than to take a boarding-house, I think; and, besides, you can always have just what you call for. If you take my advice, you'll take your meals here, too," said Wilkins, assuming a very patronizing air, as he rang the little table bell for the waiter.

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Arthur thanked him for his kindness, and asked him when they would probably see Mr. Delancey.

"He's only in the store from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon," replied Wilkins. "You will see him shortly after we get back there."

When their meal was over, arm in arm they took their way back to the store. It wasn't nine o'clock yet, so they didn't walk very briskly, but looked about them, and made their comments to each other on the appearance of the buildings, the streets, etc., etc., and Arthur drew some comparisons between them and those in New-York. They reached the store almost at the same time that a pony-chaise, driven by a very respectable-looking negro man, drew up at the door. A tall, spare gentleman, in a suit of black, stepped out of it, and after reaching back for his walking-stick, entered the building. He had, apparently, seen about fifty winters; he was active enough to be fifty, but he was wrinkled and skinny enough to be sixty. His hair was quite grey, and of a dry, husky nature, which prevented its ever looking smooth; and, in consequence, it stuck straight up in front, and straight out at the sides, in a very bristling and business-like manner. He had a deep

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frown between the eyes, which were of a cold stone color, of a most peculiar expression, and exceedingly quick and restless; always darting hither and thither, never as if looking for a bright side to anything, but always as if seeking for something amiss. His nose was high and pinched, but long, also, and very hooked; so hooked that it seemed as if each nostril had baited a corner of his mouth, and drawn it up in speaking distance, so that when it was open, the end of that prodigious nasal organ might refresh itself by looking down his throat.

There was a firmness in his tread, as he passed through the store, looking quickly to the right and left, without turning his head, which told of energy and decision; but there was in the whole appearance of the man something repugnant and disagreeable, and a shadow seemed to fall on every face he passed, so that the whole line of clerks, ranged on either side behind the counters, and a moment before so cheerful and bright, looked as if a pall had been dropped over them after he had gone by.

Gulian and Arthur had shrunk back at his first entrance, and felt as certain at that moment that this man was Mr. Delancey as they did a few minutes afterwards, when Wilkins took them up, and formally introduced them.

"So, you've come?" said he, by way of greeting, and turning his keen eyes upon them alternately, as Wilkins named them, "which of you is it that's been in the business before?"

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"I, sir," said Arthur, stepping forward.

"What do you know about it? what have you been accustomed to doing—anything more than sweeping out and cleaning the lamps?"

"I never swept out, or cleaned a lamp, in my life, sir. I have sold goods, and sometimes taken charge of the books in the book-keeper's absence."

"No airs, young man—don't want any exhibitions of pride here; you'll have to do whatever you're set at in my service, if it's washing windows. Can you make out, a bill?"

Arthur's face was very red, and angry words were on his lips, but Guly's hand that moment touched his arm, and pressed it gently. He remembered all, and answered calmly that he could.

"Step up here, then, and let me see you do it," said Mr. Delancey, making room for him to use the large desk.

Arthur obeyed, and in a clear, bold hand, drew up the bill properly, and handed it to him.

He ran it over with his eyes quickly and eagerly, as if certain of finding a flaw; and there was something like disappointment in the tone of his voice as he said, briefly, "Right, sir," and laid it down.

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There was a moment's pause, during which Mr. Delancey busied himself in writing down a great many figures on a piece of paper. When he had finished he handed it to Arthur, with a look of triumph in his face, and said, "Let's see you solve this problem correctly, if you can."

That sneering "if you can," to Arthur's mind seemed to imply so much doubt of his capacity, that he felt stung to the quick; and it was with a gesture of pride and impatience, which he could not repress, that he took the paper. He returned it to the desk in a few minutes, and again those cold gray eyes ran over his work, and again they showed disappointment when it proved to be right.

"Wilkins," said Mr. Delancey, turning to that individual, who had remained standing near, "Give this young man the vacancy in the bleached goods department, which Jones left."

Mr. Wilkins moved away to fulfill the order, and Arthur was about to follow him, when his employer called him back.

"It is my custom," said he, "to give young clerks the first year a merely nominal salary, but as you seem to be pretty well acquainted with the business, and have a face that may win custom, you will get liberal pay. I will give you five hundred a year. Five hundred—but mark me, sir, you've got to earn it!—every picayune of it, sir, you've got to work for. When any clerk is caught idling or dawdling about these premises, he's turned out, neck and heels, with only just what he can scrape together on the shortest possible notice. I hope we understand each other. Go, now."

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Arthur bowed, and moved away with Wilkins, who pointed out his place to him, and having introduced him to the young men on either side of him, returned to his position near the big desk.

After dismissing Arthur, Mr. Delancey seemed entirely to have forgotten Gulian, and leaned stiffly back in his chair, regarding the lines of clerks and the customers, who now began to flock in, without taking any notice of him. When Wilkins approached, however, and cast a meaning glance toward him, he seemed suddenly to remember Gulian, and turning round, said, bluntly:

"Come here, sir."

Guly's face had lost every vestige of color, and his heart beat so violently that it seemed to make him tremble all over, and he came forward hesitatingly, with his eyes cast upon the floor.

"So, you know nothing at all about a store, eh?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I think, for my part, such a white-livered, baby-faced chap as you are would have been better off at your mother's apron strings, than coming so far from home to get initiated."

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No answer, but the pale face and golden head drooped a trifle lower.

"Do you know your multiplication-table?"

"Yes, sir."

"Step up here, and repeat it."

Without lifting his eyes Guly obeyed; and stepping forward, commenced in a low tone to repeat the table.

"Louder, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Delancey, angrily; "how do you suppose I can hear such a muttering as that?"

The throbbing in his breast increased to such a degree, that Guly felt as if he could not breathe. He reached up and laid one white delicate hand upon the desk tightly, for support, then summoning all his courage, he elevated his voice, and went on, mechanically, to repeat what, in calm moments, he knew as well as A B C, but which now seemed to be a sort of dead memory, which would desert him every moment.

"Louder, sir!" again shouted his tormentor, as his voice unconsciously lulled again. "What do you want to play the fool in this way for? If you know it, speak up."

There was a sudden turning of heads by the clerks nearest the desk towards the spot, attracted by the unusually loud tone of the proprietor. Guly felt, rather than saw, that he had become the object of attention, and with a last effort raised his voice, and commenced another number, but suddenly he ceased altogether, the white hand slid from the desk, and he fell fainting at Delancey's feet.

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Wilkins sprang quickly forward, with a hot flush burning on either cheek, and lifted the boy like a baby in his arms. As he did so he cast a look full of deep and mysterious meaning upon Delancey. It was a look difficult for a mere observer to interpret, but the merchant quailed visibly beneath it, and turned aside his head.

Wilkins bore the quiet figure in his arms farther back into the shadow of the staircase, and placing him in a large chair which stood there, bathed his temples with camphor water, and held it to his nostrils, gazing upon him meanwhile with an intense and anxious gaze. At length the snowy lids, with their curve of golden lashes, trembled slightly, then opened wide, and the blue eyes were raised an instant, appealingly, to the face which bent kindly over him.

"A drop of water, Mr. Wilkins, if you please."

It was brought, and he drank eagerly.

"Are you better?"

"Yes, Wilkins, almost well."

He dropped his head upon his hand a moment, and those to whom he was visible saw his lips move earnestly for a moment or two.

"I can go on without any trouble, I think," he said, in a voice of gentle earnestness, referring to his unsaid table.

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"You needn't say any more unless you would like to," returned Wilkins; "I am sure you know it."

"I would rather," said Guly, firmly.

He rose, and, with Wilkins at his side, again approached the desk where Mr. Delancey had resumed his stiff position, leaning back in his chair.

"He will finish, if you please, sir," said Wilkins, with the respectful bow of an inferior, but at the same time fixing his eyes sternly on the merchant's face.

Mr. Delancey assumed an air of attention, and Guly, taking his old station in front of him, commenced in a clear, distinct voice, and repeated the table unfalteringly, from beginning to end.

"There! why couldn't you have done that in the first place, without acting such a namby-pamby farce, I'd like to know?"

"I had not the power, sir."

"Well, what do you s'pose you're good for in a dry goods store, anyway, eh? Look at that!" and he lifted one of the boy's small white hands by the tips of the fingers, and held it towards the light, as if he would look through it, then dropped it with a contemptuous "Umph!"

"What shall we do with him, Wilkins?"

"Give him the embroidery department. His hands are just fit for such delicate work, and besides it will just put him under my eye."

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"Poh! he'll make such ruinous mistakes, that I'll never be able to stand it, sir. Give him Harper's



place in the thread and tape, up here, then he'll be under my eye."

Guly shuddered.

"He'll do well, sir, in the place I propose," Wilkins returned quietly, but firmly. "With a little instruction, I'll answer for him; and there's a freer circulation of air down there, something he needs."

"Well, take him along, and see what you can do with him. I expect nothing more than that he'll die on my hands, before he's earned enough to pay his funeral expenses."

Wilkins turned, and beckoned the boy to follow him.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### *The First Sunday at Church.*

Wilkins was head clerk in the establishment, and although he had all the books to keep, his work was lighter than that of any of the rest. He went to work later in the morning, and left it earlier at night. Besides being book-keeper, he was a sort of a superintendent of the whole concern; and the clerks looked up to him as second only to the proprietor himself. To win Wilkins' favor was to propitiate Mr. Delancey: a fact well known, and acted upon.

Guly's beauty, or gentle disposition, had evidently gained for him, through Wilkins, the best stand in the store. His work was light and agreeable, he had no heavy lifting to do, and the Beautiful, which in any form was delightful to him, was constantly before his eyes. In addition to this, the clerk who stood next to him, on his right hand, was a most estimable and kind young man, of the name of Hull; who used every effort to assist his young neighbor, in learning to correctly perform his work, and by his own example, taught him patiently to endure its tediousness. This, together with the frequent and kindly-tendered instructions of Wilkins, enabled Guly, who was naturally very quick, to readily acquire the knowledge requisite for his situation; and with his brother, nearly opposite, to speak to occasionally, and to see all the time, he felt that he was highly favored.

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As Mr. Delancey had never shown any interest in the matter of their board, they still continued to "victual," as Wilkins called it, at the restaurant, and sleep at the store. By dint of working a little before going to bed every night, the brothers, without reminding Wilkins of his promise to "see to it," had managed to make their sleeping apartment present a very habitable appearance.

As every moment of their time, since their arrival, had been taken up with business, they remained in their room the first Sunday, without going to church; feeling that for each of them to pour into the fond breast of their distant mother all the thoughts, feelings, and events, which they had experienced since they had left her side, would be as acceptable to Him whose day it was, as to attend church, leaving her to mourn in anxious uncertainty as to their safety or happiness. The succeeding Sabbath, however, they rose early, and, after performing their devotional exercises, prepared themselves to attend public worship.

While waiting for the bell to ring, they sought Wilkins, for the purpose of inquiring what church Mr. Delancey attended. Wilkins had taken possession of the merchant's seat at the high desk when they found him, and, as usual had his coat off, reading.

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He looked up, apparently a good deal surprised, as they put the question to him, and exclaimed, rather dryly:

"Why, you don't say you're going to church!"

"Certainly, Mr. Wilkins. Won't you go with us?"

"Ah! not I."

"Do you never go?"

"I used to, but it was a long time ago. You forget that I have been in New-Orleans five years."

"No, we don't forget that. Mr. Hull said, the other day, that Mr. Delancey would never get as good a clerk as you again, or one that would be as faithful, and remain with him so long. But does being here a few years make any difference about going to church?"

"I'm afraid you'll find so."

"How can you spend so much unoccupied time without church, Wilkins?" said Guly, earnestly, stepping up on the chair round, and seating himself quietly on the head clerk's knee.

Wilkins flung down the novel he had been reading, and, reaching out his strong arms, clasped both hands round the slender figure sitting there, and, throwing back his head, looked thoughtfully into the boy's blue eyes.

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"I spend it," said he, at length, speaking in a suppressed voice, and more as if talking to himself than another, "in racing on the Shell Road, in betting on fast horses, in excursions out of town,

and in visiting"—he stopped short, then added, through his shut teeth, after an instant's pause—"places which I hope to God you'll never know more about than you do now."

"Are you going to the race-course to-day?" asked Guly, suddenly lifting his head.

"I don't feel quite well. No, I reckon not," returned Wilkins, disjunctedly, and moving uneasily in his chair.

"I weary you," said the boy, gently essaying to leave his seat on the head clerk's knee.

"No! no! you don't!" cried the other, eagerly; and suddenly drawing the bright head down upon his bosom, he added, in a voice of deep emotion, "Oh, that I had you always thus to lie upon my heart, and keep the evil out!"

The church bell at this moment began to ring, and, having ascertained where the Episcopal Church was, the brothers started forth, and, arm-in-arm, walked briskly forward. Whenever Guly looked back at the tall store, towering up above its brick-and-mortar neighbors so proudly, he thought of Wilkins sitting in there in the gloom, all alone, and wishing for some one to lay upon his heart, and keep the evil out.

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When they reached the church, Arthur asked the sexton if Mr. Delancey's pew was full, and, on being informed there was no one in it but himself and wife, he desired to be shown to it. It was situated quite at the head of the aisle, near the pulpit; and the sexton's hand was on the door, before the merchant, who was sitting in his usual position, bolt upright, in the pew, noticed their approach.

When his eyes fell upon his two new clerks, the frown between his eyes deepened very visibly, while his whole face wore a look of angry astonishment. Holding the door shut, as the sexton, with his best bow, attempted to open it, Mr. Delancey leaned out, and, in a harsh whisper to Arthur, which was loud enough to reach Guly's ear, exclaimed:

"What the devil do you want? I hope you don't expect to sit with me? Up gallery with you! There's seats enough for your class there."

So saying, the merchant jerked himself back, and, resuming his stiff position in the pew, looked straight ahead with his stony eyes, as if utterly unconscious of any one else.

With burning cheeks the brothers took their way down the carpeted aisle, and reached the pillared porch.

"I'm not going up there to sit," said the elder brother, proudly; "if there is no place for me below, there is no place for me in the gallery;" and flinging off the gentle hand that would have detained him, he sprang down the granite steps, and started at a rapid pace down the street.

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Guly stood for a moment, gazing anxiously after him, half-tempted to follow, but seeing his brother took the direction towards the store, he decided to remain, and mounting the winding stairs, found himself in the spacious but scantily peopled gallery.

Guly's was a pure mind, unaccustomed to drawing sarcastic comparisons, or indulging in bitter fancies; but, as he looked down into the body of the church, he could not help wondering to himself which were the most acceptable in God's sight: the mass of life, bowing and swaying in their costly array of silks and laces, and fine cloth, kneeling on their velvet cushions, and bending their brows upon their jeweled hands, or the few earnest and devout, seated in the unornamented gallery, kneeling upon bare floors, seated on uncushioned benches, bending their hearts in simple worship to Him whose Word they came to hear.

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## CHAPTER V.

### *The Broken Sabbath.*

As soon as Arthur's rapid walking had taken him out of sight of the church, he slackened his pace, and walked moodily on along the almost deserted banquette, towards the Levee. Still smarting from the wound his pride had received, his cheeks burning with the flush of anger, and his heart heavy at the remembrance of his unkind words to Guly, the youth looked anxiously about for something to divert his thoughts, and while away the hours till church was out, when he hoped to rejoin his brother, and with him return to their apartment.

At this moment, however, he received a hearty slap upon his shoulder; and turning quickly, saw one of the clerks of the store, well known to be of low and dissolute habits, but who managed to retain his place by steady application to business during business hours.

Hitherto, Arthur had never had anything to say to him, beyond what was necessary in the store, having intuitively shunned him as an unfit associate. Now, however, he felt that any companion was better than solitude, for the unoccupied Sabbath hours; and although a sense of shame filled his breast, that he should ever have given the opportunity to such a man to approach him thus familiarly, he crushed it with an effort, and extending his hand, exclaimed, in a hearty tone:

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"Glad to see you, Quirk; whither bound?"

"Anywhere that I can get company," returned the other, giving Arthur's hand a close grasp. "This is the only day, you know, that a clerk has to himself, and I always make it a point to have a deuce of a time to begin the week with."

And the fellow burst into a loud laugh.

Arthur withdrew his hand hastily, and an expression of disgust swept over his fine features. The quick eye of the other did not fail to detect it, and, eager to retain the vantage he had gained, he said:

"You musn't mind my easy expressions, Pratt; they come to me somehow like second nature, and I can't help them; just let 'em pass; and tell me what you'd like to visit to-day, and what you'd like to see, and I'll show it to you; for there's no sight in this city that I ain't as used to as measuring tape."

"I've never been accustomed to go sight-seeing on Sunday," said Arthur, in a hesitating tone.

"That was because you were never accustomed to working every week-day before."

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"No, it was because I was strictly taught to 'Remember the Sabbath-day, and keep it holy.'"

"Fiddlesticks! all that'll do in the North, where folks put on their long faces every Sunday, and go to church, rain or shine, and don't cook any dinners, and don't read anything but pious books, but such things ain't expected here of anybody. Why, this is always a holiday here—the military companies are always drilled on Sunday, the best races are reserved for Sunday, the best plays at the theatre are on Sunday nights, and so are the best balls. Ha! ha! to talk of keeping this day holy here."

"You shock me!" said Arthur, with a shudder.

"Just what every young prig from the North is sure to say at first, but they get to be one of the 'fast ones' at last. I was quite sober myself when I first came here. I was from the land of steady habits, ye see—the only son of my mother, and she was a widder; but she died, and nobody cared for me here, so I just joined the b'hoys, and learned how to enjoy myself."

"I'll tell you what we'll do!" exclaimed Quirk, after another short pause, "we'll just take the cars, and go to Carrolton. That's a fine place, and it can't hurt your conscience any to visit it. Even the ministers ride up there on Sundays sometimes."

"How soon could we return? By the time church is out?"

"Oh, we can come back any minute we like. Hurrah! Now hop in, or we'll be left."

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The cars were just on the point of leaving, and they were obliged to run in order to catch their chance. The moment of reflection did not come to Arthur till he had taken his seat, and was rapidly moving away. If there came any pangs of conscience then, they were, from a dread of ridicule, studiously concealed from his companion, and consoling himself with the thought that it now was too late to repent, he gave himself up to the full enjoyment of his ride.

After leaving the city, as the charming suburban retreats, one by one, came out upon his view, Arthur eagerly regarded each one, appreciating its brightness and freshness all the more from his recent confinement in the city. The clear sloping meadows, the rural cottages, the fresh air, all served to enliven and cheer him; and, as the cars were crowded with pleasure-seekers, like himself, he forgot it was Sunday, and was happy in his forgetfulness.

Near Carrolton a beautiful wood burst upon his sight, skirting either side of the track, and casting soft deep shadows on the bright green sward beneath the branches. The trees were of noble growth, and from every limb hung pendant the tattered sheets of long gray moss, so common in the South, and so solemn and sombre in their effect.

"Was there ever anything more beautiful, even on the banks of my own Hudson!" exclaimed Arthur, enraptured at the scene. "Can we not persuade the conductor to stop, and let us down? I would enjoy a stroll there."

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"Nonsense!" returned his companion. "I can't go with you if you go there. I have a horror of that swinging moss, and can't bear to be near it. Those trees always make me think of ghosts, with rotten shrouds on 'em."

"That's a fine comparison, Charley," said a clear, sarcastic voice near them; and a young man, bearing the unmistakable stamp of the genteel loafer about him, stretched out a small white hand, with a large diamond glittering on the little finger, and shook Charley's over the back of the seat.

He was quite a youth, apparently not over twenty years of age; but there was an expression in his eye which would lead one to believe him older. It was an eye old in cunning, old in craft, and old in sin. It was small, deep-set, and of piercing blackness. His hair was of a soft chestnut, and curled slightly at the ends. His lips were thin, and his complexion sallow. His dress, in every article, was of the finest material, but arranged with a decidedly foppish taste; and, somehow or other, his whole appearance reminded one of those large bills, stuck up in depots, with "Beware of Pickpockets" on them.

Charley leaned back, after shaking hands with him, and whispered something in his ear; then,

nodding to Arthur, said:

"Mr. Pratt, I'll make you acquainted with Mr. Clinton. Mr. Clinton, Mr. Pratt."

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Arthur bowed, and accepted the hand cordially extended to him, and politely expressed his pleasure at the acquaintance.

"Well, just consider me one of you from this hour," said Clinton, rising, and turning his seat so that he might face his friends. "Just confide to me your intentions for to-day, and you'll find I'm with you, heart and hand."

Charley tipped a sly wink at him, unperceived by Arthur, and answered:

"We're only going to Carrolton, to stroll through the gardens; that's all."

"Ah, yes; going to contemplate the beauties of nature. I understand. Just so. Glad to hear it; for, of all things in the world, it's just what will suit me best. Just consider me one of you."

Arthur eyed his new friend with considerable curiosity, as he let off these little explosive sentences, and withdrew his eyes with an unsatisfied look, as the other ceased speaking.

"He evidently," thought he, "wants to seem a gentleman, and don't know how."

"Here we are!" cried Clinton, as the train stopped. "Now, my dear friends, let's hasten to leave these clattering cars, where I scarcely can breathe. Ah! you perceive this beautiful scenery has already inspired me. I s'pose, Mr. Pratt, you didn't know I was a poet before, did you?"

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"I was certainly not previously aware of your poetical talents, Mr. Clinton," returned Arthur, laughing, "but I shall never doubt it again."

"That's right, my boy. Like your candor. You're excusable for not noticing before that I was a genius. It was no doubt merely because you didn't look closely in my face. Any one can see it who does. There's the pretty Miss Julia Tippet, she declares she'd know me for one through a pair of green spectacles."

So saying, Mr. Clinton sprang to the ground, and being a little taller than the other two, he familiarly passed an arm over their shoulders as he stepped between them, and so passed on through the garden gate.

As they trod the neat shell walks, and inhaled the fragrance of the many blooming flowers, Arthur enthusiastically expressed his delight; and Mr. Clinton, suddenly drew in a long breath through his nostrils, and exclaimed, at the same time striking an attitude:—

"Delightful spot! I know not what could e'er draw hence my willing feet,  
Unless it be a chance I see, for some kind friend to stand a treat."

"There!" bringing down his right hand, with a hearty whack upon his knee, "if I haven't been off again into one of my spontaneous bursts of poetical effusion! Who ever saw that beat?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Charley. "I take the hint; what'll you have; mint-juleps for three, or three for old Cogniac?"

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"Thank you," said Arthur, as he met Charley's inquiring glance. "Nothing for me. I never indulge."

"Oh, you must have something, if it's nothing more than lemonade with a stick in it," returned Charley.

"Hurry up your pegs there, Charley!" cried Clinton, at the top of his voice. "Pratt's getting faint, and wants something to strengthen him!"

This was said in such a good humored hope-I-don't-offend manner, that Arthur could not repress a smile; and while the smile was on his lips the drinks arrived, and he received his with a bow. That he considered it good, was very evident from the manner in which he drank it, an act which Quirk and Clinton watched narrowly, over the brims of their glasses.

Arthur experienced no more pangs of conscience that day; neither did he recall his intended return by the time church was out. After drinking, his companions used every effort to make themselves agreeable, and showed him over the extensive grounds, strolled through the shady avenue on the Levee with him, and then, as the day was warm, declared themselves thirsty, and proposed that Arthur should treat them.

He eagerly assented, and for the first time in his life marched boldly into the bar-room, and ordered three strong drinks, all of the same description.

Then a military company arrived, and the excitement of the drill, the sound of the martial music, and the fresh uniform of the soldiers, combined with the noise and bustle of railroad travel, and the crowd of lookers on, seemed to dispel all remembrance of Sunday, and the whole afternoon passed in this way, in what then seemed real enjoyment.

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It was eleven o'clock in the evening when, heated and dizzy from the wine they had drunk, Arthur and Charley took their seats in the cars for home; with Mr. Clinton heavily reclining between them. They were a noisy trio, though an experienced eye might have detected readily that Clinton pretended to be much more intoxicated than he really was. When the cars arrived at St. Joseph-

street he alighted, bidding his two friends a hearty good night, and saying, as he shook Arthur's hand:

"Hope to see you soon again, Pratt, [hic]—from this day for [hic] ward, consider me one of you."

And, with a stagger which threatened a fall, he left the cars, and disappeared round the corner. As he did so, he drew a ponderous key from his pocket, and holding it up between his eye and an adjacent lamp, regarded it closely, then burst into a laugh: "I'll have some fun with this yet, I reckon; I'll teach the governor to forbid my having any of the keys. By the gods! I'll bring him round with this, or die in the attempt," soliloquized Mr. Clinton, swinging the key between his thumb and finger.

"By-the-by," he added, suddenly thrusting it deep into a side-pocket, "I'll just stroll down Chartres-street, and see what the boys'll do when they find it out."

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Mr. Clinton was evidently perfectly sober.

Whistling a tune thoughtfully, as he went, he reached Camp-street; when, taking the shady side, he struck into a run, which pace he kept up until he had crossed Canal, then he assumed a slow, careless walk; and as the moon had now risen, the lamps had been put out, and one side of Chartres-street lay in deep shadow.

To this side he kept, and when he had arrived nearly opposite Delancey's store, he stepped back into an archway, and remained quiet.

In a few moments he heard the voices of his late companions, and saw them coming down the other side of the street, leaning upon each other, and both evidently fully affected by the liquor they had imbibed.

As Charley gained the door, he sustained himself by holding with his left hand upon the door-post, while with the right he applied a small steel key to the key-hole.

"Why the devil don't it fit? Lend a hand here, Pratt, and see what you can do."

Arthur had seated himself upon the step, and sat with his head leaning on his hand, but he rose at Charley's bidding, and took the key.

"Why don't it fit?" said he, after looking at it a moment, intently. "Well, the reason is my trunk key don't fit this door, and I'd like to know how you came by it."

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"Your trunk key! well, where's the other? *Your* trunk key! *I* guess so! Well, here's one that will fit," and he drew out a brass house-door key, and shufflingly applied it to the lock.

"Devil! wrong again. Pratt, stand up here, and help me."

"We'll never get in at this rate, Charley."

"I'll give you a lodging, if that's what you're after," said a voice near them, and a hand fell heavily on a shoulder of each.

"Nabbed, by gripes!" cried Quirk, suddenly turning round.

"But just look here, old feller, I'd like to know [hic] what for you arrest a couple—of gen'l'men for—as is decently [hic] to go home to bed."

"Breaking into a store is a new way of going to bed. You're my prisoners; so march along with you."

"Do you take us for thieves," said Arthur, startled into soberness; "we belong there, and were trying to use our pass-key."

"Let's see your pass-key, then."

"It's lost! I can find it neither in my own nor my companion's pockets."

"Good story, but won't go down, so trot along."

And the watchman, stepping between them, seized an arm of each, and hurried them off to the guard-house.

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"Phew! that's more than I bargained for," said Clinton, stepping out of the archway, and looking after the retreating figures. "However, that's Grey that's got 'em, and I can make it straight by morning." So saying, he pressed his hand hard upon the ponderous key he held, and muttering, "Ah, a good time's coming," turned his steps toward the First Municipality.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Since noonday, Guly had sat in the darkened store alone. He could not go out in search of his brother, being ignorant of the streets; and besides, where in that great city could he have looked with any hope of finding him? When he returned from church, and found Arthur absent, he was

not only surprised, but deeply troubled. Knowing what a stranger he was in that vast metropolis, the thought crossed his mind that in the proud and angry mood that was upon him, he might have wandered off, and lost himself. But an instant's reflection told him that any one would be able to give the direction of Mr. Delancey's store, and that Arthur, in such a case, would not be slow to make inquiry.

He could but wait patiently, as there was no one near, either to accompany him in a search, or to give him advice. He seated himself to write to his mother, deeming that his time could not be more dutifully passed.

The letter was finished and sealed, and still no news of Arthur. Guly had seized his hat with the intent of going forth at all hazards, when the door of his room slowly opened, and Jeff's shining face was thrust in.

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"Please, young massar, may I come in?"

"Certainly. Close the door."

The negro entered with a shuffling gait, holding a tattered straw hat in his hands, and with a bow and sheepish look stopped directly in front of Guly.

"Anything I can do for you, Jeff?"

"Well, I hopes you'll 'scuse my 'trusion, young massar, but I thought as dis was Sunday, mebbe you'd be reading dat big book yourself, and would let me hear you."

"To be sure, Jeff, to be sure. Whenever that big book is read you will always be a welcome listener, and whenever I have time I shall always be ready to read it to you."

"Oh, young massar, you is so good to de poor nigger—sometimes when I look at you, I can't help tinkin you'se just some angel as has lost his wings, and a-waitin on dis airth till they grow agin."

"Hush, Jeff."

"Yes, massar; if you'se ready to read, I'se ready to listen."

Guly smiled at this misconstruction of his words, but opening the Bible he read aloud the fourteenth chapter of John; while Jeff sat with his elbows on his knees, and his chin in his palms, his large eyes fixed attentively on the reader.

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When the chapter was finished, Guly took the different paragraphs, and in a simple but concise manner endeavored to explain all which was difficult for his listener to understand.

"Thar!" said Jeff, flinging his old hat emphatically upon the floor, as Guly ceased, "If that ain't as good as a minister, dis child guv it up, dat's all! Oh, young massar, if you'd just call a meetin' ob de clerks in dis store, and read and 'spound to 'em sometime in dis way, dar'd be a better set in old massar's bizness, to say the least."

"Your master's clerks all seem to be well-disposed young men, I'm sure, Jeff—I never see them commit a wrong."

"You'se too good youself to see evil, sah; but mebbe de clerks *is* good when de Boss's sharp eye is on 'em."

"Oh!" exclaimed Guly, starting to his feet, and rapidly pacing the floor, "What a place of sin for a young inexperienced boy to be in, and under the influence of evil companions. Oh! my brother! my brother!"

"He'll be home by night-time, Massar Gulian, in my 'pinion. I'se jus sorry I told you, sah, since you take on so, but it just slipped out o' me like, an' I couldn't help it."

Guly drew a chair near one of the windows, and though he could see neither sky above or brightness below, he gazed out upon the brick walls before him, and his thoughts flew backward to the past. From that hour of reflection Guly rose up wiser and older. He felt how much depended on himself, and decided that henceforth his watchful eye should ever be upon the brother, who, though so much older than himself, required so much of tender counsel and care.

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The sun was down when he again approached the table where Jeff still sat, turning over the leaves of the "Big Book."

"Massar Gulian, you look in your eyes as though you was gwine to pray. May I hear you 'fore I go?"

Guly bowed, and knelt beside his dusky friend; and as he prayed, the great white tears rolled over Jeff's cheeks, and fell down on the box by which he was kneeling.

The prayer was ended and Jeff rose to go.

"Good night, Jeff," said Guly, holding out his hand.

"Good night, young Massar; God forever bress your heart."

Left alone, Guly sat down to patiently await the termination of what he could not possibly avert;

but the loneliness was so oppressive, the silence and darkness lay like such a weight upon his troubled heart, that he determined to descend to Wilkins' room, and if he were there to remain with him.

Having no light in his chamber, he opened the door, and slowly groped his way down the winding stairs. When he had nearly reached the foot he fancied he heard voices, and, surprised at such a sound coming from the direction of the head-clerk's room, he paused to listen; but the step on which he stood creaked loudly, and the voices ceased.

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Going cautiously on in the darkness, he reached the big desk, and further back saw a stream of light glimmering through the crevice of Wilkins' door. He evidently was at home, but unless his ears had very much deceived him, Guly felt certain he was not alone.

Not wishing to play the spy, the boy went forward, and was about to knock, when through the crevice of the door his eye fell upon a scene which again arrested his attention, and held him speechless.

Wilkins was seated at a low table, writing, apparently answering a letter, which lay open before him, written in a peculiarly beautiful and delicate female hand. The light of the lamp fell full upon his face, which was very pale; and his teeth were pressed hard into his under lip.

Behind him, with one hand clasped upon the back of his chair, stood a young girl; and though her features were of exquisite proportions and beautiful moulding, she displayed in the slight tinge of duskiness upon her skin, and the peculiar blackness of her large eyes, unmistakable proofs, to an experienced judge, of the quadron blood in her veins.

Her hair was long, and of midnight blackness; and fell in thick, close curls over the graceful scarf which covered her shoulders. Her forehead was high and fine, her eyebrows arched and delicately traced—her nose free from all trace of her negro origin, and her lashes long and curving upon her round cheek. Her mouth was small, and the lips parted over teeth of the most perfect regularity; but in this feature, more than in any other, as she stood watching Wilkins, as he wrote, there was an expression of proud bitterness, which came and went over those exquisite features, like gleams of lightning.

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As Wilkins finished writing, he carefully folded and sealed his letter, and handed it to the girl, without adding any superscription.

"There, Minny, give her that; but, remember how much depends upon your secrecy. There's a day coming when you shall meet your full reward for all you are doing for us now."

"Yes, Mr. Bernard," she replied, addressing him by his first name, and speaking earnestly, "I think of that myself sometimes, and tremble."

"And tremble! What do you mean?"

"Nothing, nothing; no matter now. Give me a pass, and let me be gone! The great gun has fired two hours ago!"

"You are too white to need a pass, Minny."

"Ay! but I am a slave."

The bitter emphasis with which she uttered these last words sank deep into Guly's young heart, and was the first intimation to him that she was not of unmixed origin. She looked so purely beautiful, as she stood there with that shade of scornful sadness on her face, that the boy forgot the part he was acting in standing there, and remained with his large eyes riveted upon her.

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"Here's your pass, Minny; but, mark me, it will not be claimed of you."

As he spoke Wilkins rose, and handed her the paper. She concealed the letter he had given her in her dress, then folded the pass between her fingers, and prepared to leave.

The head clerk had stood still until now, watching her with a strange, eager expression on his face; but as he saw her about to leave him he sprang suddenly forward, and throwing one of his huge arms about her waist, drew back her head with the other, and imprinted kiss after kiss upon her lips.

She struggled wildly, but silently; and at last, with an almost superhuman effort, freed herself from his grasp. She turned, as she did so, and lifting her small hand closely clenched, struck him furiously full in the mouth.

The blood gushed over his lips; and never, to the latest day of his existence, not even when he saw her lie cold and still in her coffin, did Guly forget the fearful expression in her pallid face, and the almost demoniacal glare in her black eye, as she marked the effect of her blow, and darted by him like some frightened bird, escaped from the spoiler's net.

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He shrank further into the darkness as she passed him, and saw her rush toward the back part of the building, where the large windows descended to the floor. She flung one up hastily, and leaped through it to the ground.

The next moment he heard the swift pattering of small feet in the alley, and the rustling of a woman's dress, as if some one were running.

The head clerk had thrown himself upon a couch, face downwards, after he received the blow, and Guly seeing he had been unobserved, thought best not to intrude upon him at this moment; and with a quiet, cat-like tread, and trembling violently with the excitement of the scene he had witnessed, he groped his way back to his own chamber.

An hour passed before he ventured to descend the stairs again; and then he found Wilkins sitting as he had seen him in the morning, at the big desk, with his coat off, reading.

"This is a late hour for you to be down stairs, my boy! What has happened to make you so pale? Are you sick?"

"No, sir, but I am troubled."

And Guly stepped toward him, and laid one hand upon the desk, while he related to Wilkins all that he had felt with regard to his brother, since he parted from him in the morning.

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"Tut, tut!" said he, shaking his head as the boy finished, "this is a bad business. If I had not thought you were together somewhere, I would have been with you. I'm afraid your brother has got into bad company, which I should be sorry enough for, I promise you."

Wilkins spoke this in a tone of such kindly sympathy, at the same time laying one hand gently upon the golden head beside him, that Guly's overwrought feelings could no longer be restrained; and the tears gushed thickly from his eyes.

"Don't," said Wilkins, tenderly, "don't! This will doubtless be the last time he will wander off in this way—he is impulsive and yielding, and you, who are less so, must guard him in future."

Cheered, though not convinced, by Wilkins' words, Guly once more sought his own room. He had never pressed that pillow alone before, and with a desolate and heavy heart, the golden lashes were allowed to droop, and the boy fell into a troubled slumber.

Through a narrow chink in the roof above, a moonbeam stole, and nestled down beside him. It lay there in Arthur's vacant place like the gleam of an angel's smile; and all it fell upon was purity and beauty. The night wore on. The boy slept, the moonbeam faded, and troubled dreams and desolate darkness alone remained behind.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *Della.*

The city clocks were tolling midnight, and the moon rode high in the heavens. In one of the most elegant houses Apollo-street could boast, sat a young girl. The room in which she was sitting presented a scene of almost oriental ease and luxury. There was the rich carpet, giving back no echo to the tread, the gorgeous divans, into which the form sank as into down, the glittering chandeliers, the rare and exquisite vases, statuary, birds, books, and all that the capricious, self-willed spirit, which presided there, could wish to draw around her. The lights in the chandeliers had been extinguished; and save that which crept in from the moon, and that emitted from a small night-lamp, burning behind its alabaster shade, the room lay in soft shadow.

The long windows descended to the floor, and opened upon a balcony, from whence was wafted by the slight night-breeze, the delicate fragrance of the jasmine, mingled with that of rare roses, and other choice flowers. At the lower end of the balcony, a flight of steps descended to the garden, where the music of a tinkling fountain fell refreshingly on the ear. This part of the grounds was protected by a high brick wall, thickly overrun with luxuriant vines, which entirely concealed a small door, long left forgotten and unused by the proprietor of these princely domains.

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This door opened into an adjacent court, little used save by the domestics, and thence egress was easy to the street. Seated upon a velvet cushion, the fair occupant of the apartment gazed eagerly out upon the garden-door. One slipper of small size and delicate hue lay a little distance from her, as if it had been cast impatiently from the unshod foot. Her brow was pressed against the window-sash, and every rustle of the vine-leaves, every whisper of the night-wind, had caused her to start violently, and called forth some low ejaculation of impatience or vexation.

"Past twelve, and not here yet!" she exclaimed, drawing from her belt a small French watch, glittering with jewels, and glancing at the hour with a frown.

"Ah! Dieu! what can have happened now? I shall be asleep before many minutes, unless—"

At this moment there came up from the garden a harsh grating sound, as of some one cautiously turning a key in a rusty lock. The listener started to her feet, and laid one hand upon her heart. There were light steps upon the stairs—a cautious tread upon the balcony—and Minny, the Quadroon, sank at her mistress's feet.

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"So, child, you've come at last! Where have you lingered this long, long time? I am most distracted with watching for you, and my head aches terribly."

Minny lifted up her pale face, with the black hair falling in strong contrast around it, and the



angry glitter not yet gone from her brilliant eye.

"Lady, I have lingered nowhere unnecessarily. You bade me be cautious, and it takes time to take stealthy steps. Besides, I was obliged to wait before I could approach him, and then—"

"Enough, Minny! and then he gave you a letter for me. Give it me, girl, quick!"

Minny drew the note from her bosom, and her mistress, approaching the lamp, put aside the shade which obscured it, and bent eagerly over the closely-written page she held. She read it again and again, and a smile of delight lit up the listless features, as she refolded it, and flung to the girl beside her to place in its delicate envelope.

"Oh! it is such a sweet note, Minny; such a charming, delightful note! How did he look, Min, when he was writing it? Did he frown, and bite his lips, and grow pale, in that frightful way he has sometimes, or did he look handsome and happy?"

"His back was toward me, Miss. I could not see how he looked."

"Stupid Minny! Another time get where you can look straight into those black eyes of his, and read what they say all the while."

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"Another time I will, Miss."

"What's the matter, Min? Come here, child. How you frighten me. You are as pale as a ghost! Tired with your long walk, that's it, puss! Kneel down here by me, and I'll play nurse for you."

The girl knelt, and her young mistress drew toward her a bottle of lavender water, and poured it upon the bowed head before her; putting it on with her own soft hands till the long black curls glittered with the bright drops, as if decked with diamonds.

"There, Minny, you are better now. Wipe my hands and undress me."

With gentle, but trembling fingers, the girl proceeded to obey; and as her mistress lay listlessly back in her large fauteuil, proceeded to remove each article of dress, without the slightest assistance from the languid form before her.

The jewels were laid away in their velvet cases—the ribbons folded and laid aside—the rich robe placed in the armoire, and the frilled and embroidered *robe de nuit* placed upon her, and fastened with its gold buttons about her neck and wrists, with no more motion on the part of that passive figure, than if it had been a doll in the hands of a child.

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Finding herself ready for bed, the young lady arose, and followed her maid into an adjoining apartment. The lace bar was held up, while she laid herself upon the luxurious couch, and Minny arranged the scented pillow beneath the fair young head.

"Anything more, Miss?"

"No, Minny; yet stay! That dear little note, hand it to me; and the bottle of ottar of roses."

The white fingers of the heiress clasped the exquisitely cut bottle containing the precious perfume, and one clear drop was suffered to fall upon the snowy envelope of the note. She then pressed the paper to her lips, and laid it away beneath her pillow.

"Anything more, my lady?"

"Yes, Minny. Did you ever have a lover? Some one, Minny, to love you with all his heart, and swear he'd die for you—and to write you such tender letters—and to—and to—"

Della Delancey slept with the love-letter of Bernard Wilkins beneath her pillow.

Minny had stood with every vestige of color faded from her cheek as her young mistress spoke, and her whole frame quivering with emotion, which she tried in vain to conceal. An expression of relief crossed her features, as her questioner fell away into slumber, and, hastening from the bedside, she sought the outer-room, and flung herself down into the large chair Della had so recently vacated.

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"Some one to love me," she murmured, brokenly. "Ah! yes, yes! One who swore to love me; one who vowed to cherish me, only to forget his oath. Fool! idiot! that I was, to thus yield up my passionate love, forgetful of my birth! But did he not promise all? Were we not wed? God of the just—who sees me—yes! yes! yes!"

Springing to her feet, Minny paced the floor wildly. Her white closed teeth glittered through the portals of her parted lips—her black eyes flashed and sparkled, and rained down the tears among the curls upon her bosom, while her white hands were clutched together, or wrung fiercely.

She looked not unlike a personified tigress, lashed into fury by the torment of an enemy.

Suddenly her whole aspect changed. The clutched hands unclasped, the tears ceased to fall, the knotted brow relaxed—and, choking down her sobs, Minny approached the bedside of her young mistress. Softly she raised the rose-hued netting, and slid her hand beneath the pillow. It rested there a moment quietly, and then was gently withdrawn, holding the note tightly.

Gliding away with her treasure, she seated herself by the lamp, and perused its contents. Every word, every line, every expression of endearment, and every sentence of fondness, she drank

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eagerly in, and seemed to write upon her heart.

Again and again she read it; but there were no more signs of emotion, save that now and then her teeth were pressed tight into her lip, or her hand laid hard against her heart.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### *The Prisoners.*

What pen can describe the anguish of Arthur, when he found himself the inmate of a watch-house! His arrest had completely sobered him, and his intoxication was succeeded by a deathly and overpowering sickness, which he found it impossible to overcome.

His companion treated the whole affair with the utmost indifference, and when the key was turned upon them had thrown himself heavily upon a bench, and immediately gone off into a drunken slumber. There were a few other prisoners besides themselves, bearing such a villainous, cut-throat appearance that Arthur shuddered as he looked at them.

As his sickness in a measure subsided, he threw himself face downwards upon the hard, unyielding bench, and to escape the jeers of his companions, drew himself close up in a corner near the door, and pretended to be asleep. But alas! no sleep came to those burning eyeballs through those long—long hours, and though racked with a torturing headache and feverish thirst, he knew no way to relieve himself, and dared not move lest he should again encounter the ridicule of the brutes around him.

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He thought of himself as he was a few short hours before, wending his way to church at his brother's side, happy in the consciousness of duty well performed, and proud in the love and esteem which he felt were but his due. He contrasted the morning with the night; and saw himself the inmate of a guard-house, herding with men whose very breath seemed crime and profanation, and whose every word was blackened with oaths or curses. He felt that the stain of guilt was on his hitherto pure brow, traced there by the finger of a justly angry God, whose laws he had violated, whose commands he had broken, and whose day he had abused.

He thought of the coming morning, with the public trial, when he would be turned forth with the stamp of a thief or drunkard upon him, and the finger of scorn pointing derisively at him. He thought of his blue-eyed, pure-minded brother, mourning his absence, and weeping over his shame. He remembered his mother—and the hot tears, so long pent up, gushed like raindrops through his trembling fingers, and bathed the hands which held that stricken head.

A sense of weight and oppression came over him—it seemed as if he could not breathe—and gasping, he sprang from his recumbent position. A glow of relief crossed his features as he saw that all the men around him were asleep, and glancing through the barred window he saw the streaks of light in the east, announcing the approach of day. At this moment he heard the key turned in the lock, and thinking that other prisoners were about being admitted, and not caring either to see or be seen by them, he again threw himself full length upon the bench. An instant more and a gush of cool air swept, over him, and a hand fell cautiously on his shoulder.

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He raised his head, and met the twinkling eyes of Mr. Clinton fixed upon him.

"Hush!" whispered Clinton, laying his finger on his lips, as he saw Arthur about to speak. "Not a word; pick yourself up as noiselessly as you can, and get out of this hole. You are free."

Arthur glanced towards the door, and saw there the watchman who had arrested them, standing with a dogged expression of countenance in the gray light, and shaking nervously in his hand a gold coin.

He comprehended in a moment, as it were instinctively, that Clinton had procured his release by a bribe; and though he felt to rejoice in his freedom, he shrunk at feeling that he must be under obligations to such a man for it.

He drew his hat over his eyes, and went out softly. As he gained the open air, Quirk joined him, leaning on the arm of Mr. Clinton, and evidently not yet wholly recovered from what he was pleased to denominate a "dem fine spree."

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"See what it is to have a friend, *mon cher!*" exclaimed Clinton, slapping Arthur upon the shoulder. "But for our acquaintance to-day, you might have come up for trial this morning, and been sent down for thirty days. 'Oh! my boy, always consider me one of you.'"

"Had I not so far forgotten myself as to be one of *you* to-day, I would probably have never seen the inside of such a place as this. Whatever expense you may have encountered in my behalf, this night, Mr. Clinton, consider me accountable for, and ready to refund at any moment."

Arthur spoke proudly, and experienced a sentiment of utter disgust, as he looked upon the two beings who had led him into sin, and been witnesses to his weakness. He felt that, in a measure, his good name lay in their hands, but he could not bend that proud spirit—humbled and chastened though it then was—to treat them in the slightest degree as his equals, or to accept, unrequited, any favor from such a source.

"Don't be huffy, boy," said Clinton, again; "and don't insult me by offering *pay* for what I've done! It's what I'd expect you to do for me in such a case, and I reckon I'd be a little grateful for it, too."

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"Don't parley with him," chimed in Quirk, bending to the spout of a public hydrant at the same moment, and drinking a long draught. "You see, Clint, he's a fresh hand at this kind of life, and don't know the ropes yet. Let him alone."

Arthur deigned not the slightest reply to this, and hastily turning into a side-street, left Mr. Clinton considerably in the rear, to bring up his "dear friend Quirk."

Free from the companionship of beings whom he detested, Arthur removed his hat, and lifted his brow to receive the breath of heaven. The sun was not yet risen, and save the occasional clatter of a market-cart, as it went jostling by, or the sluggish step of some sleepy servant, on his way to procure the breakfast for his fastidious owners, there was no signs of life or business in the streets.

Arthur was glad of this, and he thought of the alley-way between the store and the adjoining building, and the steep stairs which led from the back of this alley to his own room, and as he happened to have the key of this door about him, he hoped to effect an entrance by this way, and, if possible, to conceal from his brother the fact of his having been absent all night.

Elated by this prospect, he struck into a brisk pace toward Charles-street, and, having gained it, hurried rapidly onward in the direction of the store. He was within two blocks of his destination when two figures suddenly turned the corner ahead, and advanced towards him. There was no mistaking the slender form of the one with golden ringlets floating from his brow, and the tall, stalwart figure of the other was instantly recognized by Arthur, though part of the face was concealed by a handkerchief, tied over the mouth, as if the wearer was suffering from tooth-ache.

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There was no way of retreat, save to turn short round, and go back, which was something that pride would not permit him to do; so assuming as bold an air as he could, with that heavy heart in his bosom, he walked on and met Guly and Wilkins, face to face.

"Ah! Arthur, good morning," said the latter, indifferently, as if nothing had happened; "I see you are enjoying a stroll, as well as ourselves, this fine morning."

"Mr. Wilkins has been showing me about the city," said Guly, taking his brother's hand, "and giving me such directions about the streets as will enable me to go round alone."

"If your walk is not finished allow me to join you," returned Arthur, slipping his hand through his brother's arm, and turning back with them.

He was evidently surprised at the cool manner in which his absence was treated, and had been very far from expecting such a reception. From Guly, at least, he had thought to hear some exclamations of joy at his return, some questions and many reproofs.

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But this was the course which Wilkins had advised to be pursued before they started out, and Guly obeyed him to the letter. It was, undoubtedly, the best mode they could have hit upon—for, to have questioned him, to have rebuked him, would have been to again arouse that fierce pride, and call forth some false excuse for his behavior. As it was, he was left to believe that Wilkins was unaware of what had passed, and that Guly only guessed half the truth, or, if he did, was kind enough to conceal his thoughts. This roused a glow of generous feeling, and he felt that he could only be happy in confessing all to his brother.

The three walked on, chatting carelessly about indifferent matters, until Wilkins declared it to be breakfast time; when they turned back toward their restaurant.

As usual, the head clerk ordered his bottle of claret, and, as it was brought on, he offered it to Arthur. An expression of ineffable disgust crossed the youth's face as he refused it, which Wilkins remarked with a quiet, half-concealed smile.

It was with a racking headache and a fevered frame, that Arthur took his place in the store that morning. He could not plead illness as a pretext for absence, for there was one who he knew would be there that knew his secret all too well, and he could not trust him with it. As there were but few customers in that morning, however, he drew a stool behind the counter, and seated himself; an act which placed at defiance one of the strictest rules of the establishment.

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He had scarcely done so when Mr. Delancey entered the door, and passed up between the lines of clerks, with his cold eyes, as usual, turning rapidly hither and thither, never looking for the right, but always for the wrong.

As his glance fell upon Arthur he stopped short, and, in a tone loud enough to be heard all over the store, exclaimed:—

"Haven't you been here long enough, young man, to know better than to sit down during business hours?"

Arthur rose and put away his stool with a flushed cheek, stammering out something about not feeling quite well that morning.

"It's very evident," returned the merchant, running his practised eye over the wan lines of Arthur's face, "that you've been having a Sunday night spree, in order, I s'pose, to have a Monday morning benefit. But it won't do here; stick to your post, and if I catch you in that lounging

position again, you lose your place."

Without another word the merchant walked to the big desk, holding the head of his walking stick against his lips as he went.

Arthur raised his eyes, and although he had striven all the morning to avoid it, he caught the gaze of Charley Quirk fixed upon him, and received a quick, sly wink from his left eye.

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That wink affected him like a blast of winter wind, and he felt chilled all over. The thought rushed upon him, too, that Charley had been keeping up an artillery of winks like that, to the other clerks, while Mr. Delancey was speaking, and he was assured that his case was understood throughout the house.

Wilkins, who had been regarding him steadily from behind the open door, stepped down from his place, and, sauntering towards the proprietor, addressed a few words to him in an under tone.

The merchant nodded in reply, impatiently, and waved his hand.

The head clerk came back again, and laying his hand on Arthur's shoulder, said, quietly:—

"I overheard you, I think, saying to Mr. Delancey you were not quite well. You are unacclimated, remember, and must take care of yourself. Go up stairs, and see if lying down awhile will not restore you."

Although Arthur felt certain now, that Wilkins knew all, he felt inexpressibly grateful for his apparent ignorance of it, and his kindness towards him, and showed as much in his manner.

"You hesitate—would you rather not go?"

"To tell the truth, Wilkins, I dislike to pass Mr. Delancey on my way to bed. He will see, too, that my place is vacant, and perhaps discharge me."

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"No! You have his permission to go; your place will be taken care of by the next clerk."

"You are very kind."

"No—not a bit of it."

With a smile upon his pale lips, Arthur stepped out of the front-door, and turned into the narrow alley, which lay between the store and the adjoining building, and which was arched overhead, damp under foot, and hung with dirt and cobwebs. He reached a small door at the further end, which led to the right into a narrow paved court, where was a hydrant, which the clerks used for washing and drink.

He stopped here for a moment, to bathe his burning brow and quench his parching thirst. As he bent down to place his lips to the faucet, a dark figure sprang out from beneath the staircase behind, and darted through the alley door, and out of sight.

Startled and surprised, Arthur ran down the alley swiftly, in pursuit, and gaining the street, looked anxiously up and down, in a vain hope of seeing some one who would satisfy his curiosity as to who or what it was; for it had passed him so fleetly and lightly, that he could almost believe it had been a shadow. He could see nothing, however; but catching a glimpse of Mr. Clinton, leisurely sauntering down the other side of the street, smoking a cigar, he hurried back, lest he should be seen by him, and locked the alley door behind him, saying, as he did so—"It was a careless trick in whoever left that open; I'll see to it myself in future;" and then walked back to inspect the hiding-place of the shadow, or whatever it was.

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It was the niche formed by the steep flight of stairs; and, as there was a number of old barrels there, and other rubbish, it afforded a fine place for concealment, especially on a dark night. As it was directly in front of the hydrant, and Arthur's back had in the first place been toward it, whoever was there had evidently feared detection, when he should turn round, and so fled.

Into this court the long windows of the back part of the store opened, and it was this way that Minny had found egress on the night of her visit to Wilkins; and it was this way that Jeff, whose invariable honesty rendered him a privileged character about the place, always found egress on Sundays, and other hours when the store was closed.

Musing upon the circumstances which had just occurred, Arthur took the way to his room, and flung himself upon his bed.

It was easy to see what had been Guly's occupation during the previous day of loneliness. There lay the Bible open, on the little rough stand; there was the strip of carpet rumped before the chair, where he had been kneeling—and there was the folded letter, sealed and directed to his mother.

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Arthur turned upon his pillow with a moan. How differently had his Sabbath been spent, and how different, in consequence, were his Monday morning reflections! But his sorrow was not a repentant sorrow. It had been in the morning, when he first met Guly and Wilkins, but he was changed now. Had he not been rebuked harshly by his employer, in the presence of all the clerks? Had he not been openly accused of the error he had committed, read through and through by those cold, staring eyes? Had not the attention of all the clerks been turned towards him, and his secret been laid bare to them by the merchant's reproof, and quick, malicious

glances?

There was no longer any need of further concealment, with the resolution of future improvement—it was all known—and to draw back henceforth, would be but to be reminded that he had already fallen once, and could never retake the step he had made. Such was the view Arthur took of the case, however false a light his pride may have cast upon it; and he buried his face, with the glow of shame upon it, deep in the pillow, while, with bitter resentment, his young heart traced it all back to the primal cause—the contemptuous repulse he had met with at Delancey's pew door.

It is not a question for reflection, where the punishment for Arthur's first real sin should rest? [Pg 85]

Was it for that young heart, till now free from all taint or corruption, save the corruption of pride, to suffer alone? or was it for the older and stronger spirit—the spirit stronger still in pride, and so much older in firmness, and power, and discipline, to bear its share? [Pg 86]

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## CHAPTER IX.

### *Contrition.*

At noontime Guly told Wilkins that if he would bring him a trifle of fruit from the Restaurant, or something of that kind, he would spend the time allowed him for dinner with his brother, and would much prefer it.

Wilkins very cordially assented, and Guly mounted the winding stairs slowly and thoughtfully, pushed open the old door at the head of the staircase, which was covered with the big-lettered advertisements, and stood before his sleeping brother.

The bar was drawn back; and, fully dressed, Arthur lay upon the humble bed. Perhaps the first plunge into dissipation leaves a deeper impression on youthful beauty, than the continued practice begun in older years.

Guly was startled at the change in his brother's features, which one night of excitement had wrought. He could see it now, as he lay there sleeping, more perfectly than when he had been with him in the morning, with his face full of ever-varying expression. There was a wasting upon the skin; deep black marks beneath the eyes; the lips were pale, and the nose seemed pinched; and his whole appearance was that of one convalescing after a severe fit of sickness. [Pg 87]

Guly approached, and taking a low seat by the bedside, laid his face softly down beside his brother's on the pillow, and reaching over, clasped his fingers gently round one burning hand. He lay quite still, with his eyes fixed upon the sleeper's face. Who could tell, save He who knoweth all things, what thoughts were rushing through that throbbing heart, as it nestled there closer and closer, to all it held dear in that distant land?

The blue eyes filled suddenly full of tears, bright and pure, even as that boy's path of life had ever been, and dropped down, one by one, upon the pillow. There was no visible cause for them, but they kept falling, those pure bright tears, till the fair cheeks over which they fell were bathed, and the pillow damped.

Was there a shadow-like presentiment creeping over that young spirit then, telling him to nestle close, close, for the time was coming when those two hearts would throb no more beside each other, and that the waves of life's ocean would some day cast one upon the shore, and bear the other far out to sea? Even so! It was dim, ghost-like, and undefined; but still the shadow flitted there darkly!

The sleeper turned restlessly, and uttered a plaintive moan. It was not a moan of pain, but one of sympathy; as if the grief in the heart beside him had crept into his own. He lifted one arm wearily, and it fell back upon the pillow, and the unconscious fingers lifted the rings of jetty hair from the fevered brow. [Pg 88]

That bright brow! that pale, proud brow! how it gleamed out in contrast with those glossy curls. Guly gazed upon it, then lifted his head and kissed it; and the tears, still quivering on his lashes, fell upon it—that brother's brow!

Arthur opened his eyes, and gazed up steadily at the face bent over him. There was something in the expression of that face which went over his heart like a strain of touching music. He could not bear that it should be turned away from him, or that he should lose it, and he raised both hands, and, laying them among the silken curls, held it there.

"Oh, Guly! Guly! do you know all?"

"Dear Arthur! don't speak of this."

"Yet you have sorrowed for me; you have grieved, and been silent, and unrepentant. Oh, Guly! what a wretch I am!"

"Hush, Arthur! oh, don't, don't!"

The tears fell down again, unrestrainedly, upon that pale brow, gleaming up from the jetty locks, and for a moment neither spoke. [Pg 89]

"I feel, Guly, as though I had taken a long leap into sin—such a long one, that I shall never get back; and everything seems at work to keep me in it. What shall I ever, ever do—I am so weak—so—so—"

"Oh, Arthur, look up—look ever up. God's finger points out the way to you from the sky; trust yourself to its holy guidance, and be strong."

"Guly, I can't. It seems a long while since I prayed at all—since yesterday I seem to have lived an age, and it is black, all black!"

"Nay, Arthur, you have wandered a few hours from the fold, and your sight is darkened; but the Great Shepherd calls to you with His gentle voice to return. Listen, and obey."

"I should only fall again."

"Trust, and you shall be strengthened."

"Oh, Guly, I have not your mind nor heart. I cannot be patient, and meek, and charitable, through all things, as you can; I have so much pride that I *cannot* calmly bear reproof, and here I am fretted, and crushed, and ridiculed into sin all the time, and am too weak to make resistance."

"Try, and remember in your heart *how* we are here. Bear in your mind that we no longer have the wealth or influence that we once had; and that if we ever are to have them again, depends upon the way we acquit ourselves here. Learn to bear and forbear; and in the end, Arthur, you will come out so brightly, with your pride perhaps subdued, but not conquered, and we shall once more be happy."

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Arthur sighed.

"And oh, Arthur! oh, my brother! think, we two are all to each other here. We have nought to lean upon save each other's love and *Him*. Dear Arthur, if you should—if one of us should be led into temptation, and should fall, and should go down into the pit of sin, what a blank would be the existence of the other! Oh! let us pray that our hearts may be bound together, and that no shadow may be allowed to fall upon or divide us."

"Oh, Guly, Guly!"

Arthur started up, and throwing his arms about his brother's form, as he crept up closer to his side, drew the bright head down upon his bosom, and held it there, rocking backwards and forwards where he sat.

"Pray God, indeed!" he murmured, earnestly, lifting his swimming eyes to Heaven, "that I may sin no more. That I may ever keep bright the links of this dear love, which is to us as the thread of life; and oh! may He whose ways are the ways of righteousness, take us by the hand, like little children, and guide our steps aright."

"Amen! Amen!"

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## CHAPTER X.

### *The Merchant at Home.*

It was late when Della awoke, and Minny lay with her cheek on her hand, just fallen into her first sleep.

"Minny! Minny!"

"Bernard!" murmured the girl, in her half-disturbed sleep.

"Minny, I say!"

"Yes, Miss."

"Bring me my watch, Min, and show me the hour. Didn't I hear you say 'Bernard,' just now, in your sleep? You haven't any Bernard; that's for me to say."

"No, Miss, I haven't any Bernard."

"Well, then, you shouldn't talk so in your sleep."

"True enough."

"Well, no matter, Minny; it wasn't my Bernard you mean't, I am quite sure. May be you were talking about those priests on that great snowy mountain, somewhere in the world, which you made me so sleepy reading about the other evening?"

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"The Monks of St. Bernard, Miss."

"Yes; how droll!"

"Will you get up, Miss Della?"

"Yes; how late, Min? I forgot to look, after all."

"A quarter past nine."

"Papa must have gone."

"He never goes down street before seeing you."

"Dear papa! Minny, wheel my little chair in front of the dressing-glass. I'll be with you in a second."

"It is ready, Miss."

"There, Min, I left my note under my pillow! Bring it, and let me read it again while you dress my hair."

Minny obeyed.

"Minny, I wonder if it's as delightful to be a wife as it is to have a lover?"

"It seems strange to hear you talking about either, Miss."

"Why, Minny, I am old enough, I am sure."

"Yes, but you seem so very young; no one thinks about your being married yet."

"Mother does."

"Not to this man, Miss Della. For worlds I wouldn't dictate; but, Miss, if all this secrecy and deceit ends as it seems it will, isn't it going to break your mother's heart?"

"I expect so, Minny; every mother's heart is broken when her daughter gets married; but it heals up always, and is as good as ever."

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Oh! Della, Della!

"But, Miss, when she finds how deceitful you have been, after all her doting kindness, and love, and—"

"Don't be tiresome, Minny. Deceitful! oh, that's awful—you know I never was deceitful."

"No, no! There, don't cry! Call it secrecy or anything; but when it is discovered, I say, think what a house of misery this will be."

"Well, Minny, if there's misery it won't be my fault, I'm sure. You know very well that papa wouldn't have me notice Bernard, much more than I would Black Voltaire. If he would, don't you suppose I would be very glad to show him all my letters, and to tell him how we love each other, and all that? But now, if I did, he'd rave, and go into a furious passion, shut me up, maybe, and send Bernard to Europe, or some other horrid place. Oh, I should be frightened to death."

"That's the very thing, Miss; he looks so high for you."

"Bernard is just as high as papa was when he first came here,—but there's another thing; don't you know I'm not allowed to see any one an instant alone, that wears pantaloons? The very instant that a gentleman calls, and says he'd like to see Miss Della, doesn't papa or mamma, or that provoking old governess, march straight into the parlor, and receive them before me? And isn't it very provoking? Why, even little Charley Devans, a boy three years younger than I, called to tell me a little innocent secret his sister had sent by him, and wasn't there mamma, as straight as a marshal, in one chair, and my governess, stiff as my new parasol-top, in the other, and he couldn't say a word? But you know he met me in the street that day you walked out with me, and told me all about it."

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"Yes, Miss, but this is all for your good."

"No, Minny, it is all for my hurt. Though, maybe, they don't know it. Now, don't you see that if young Mr. Devans could have seen me alone but one little minute that day, he wouldn't have planned a clandestine meeting, and so make me do a very naughty thing, by walking alone with him, after having been charged never to walk alone with any gentleman?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Well, Minny, I don't often reflect, you know—but the other day, after I had received a note from Bernard, I sat down and reflected a long time. And it was on this subject. And I came to the conclusion, that all this watching—just raise that bandeau a trifle higher—and spying, for it is nothing else, on the part of mammas and governesses, has a very bad tendency, indeed. Don't you see that it throws a kind of mystery about the men, and, right away, young girls—and it's natural for young girls to be curious—want to find out what there is so very awful about them, and go to work to do it?"

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Minny looked up surprised; she had never heard her mistress talk so fast and so long before.

"And then, Minny, see how many very young girls get married to men almost old enough to be their grandfathers, here. Can't you see the reason? It's so that they can be their own mistresses, and say and do what they like. I've had them tell me so after marriage; and then they're almost always sure to begin to flirt a little, and enjoy themselves in this happy way they ought to have

been left to do when single; and then their old curmudgeons of husbands get jealous, and angry, and then there are dreadful times! Oh, dear! I think it is a terrible state of society!

"Now, Minny, I'll tell you just how I feel when a gentleman calls here. There's mamma, and maybe the governess, in the parlor (now I would rather have them there than not, if I didn't know just what they were there for;) well, the governess fixes her eyes on me when I go in, and seems to say, 'Don't forget your Grecian bend;' and mamma looks down at my feet, and seems to say, 'Be sure and turn out your toes'—and the consequence is, I forget both, and feel red all over, and know that I'm acting like a very silly little fool. I sit down, and both pairs of those eyes are on me; and both pairs of those ears are wide open, and I'm as ungraceful as a giraffe; when I know, if left to act naturally, and wasn't watched all the time, I could appear very well. Then a young man here, no matter of how high family he is, or how good or how worthy, if he happens to be ever so poor, and feels as if he'd like to take some young lady to a play or concert, or anything, he's not only got to take her, but two or three duennas to keep himself and her straight; and it's such a tax on him, that if he does it often he's always poor; and then mothers turn up their noses at him, and say he's not eligible, and all that.

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"Who could have been more strict, as it is called, with any daughter than Madame Gerot with Louise? Yet see how admirably she turned out! *Mon Dieu!* it was frightful! Then there's a dozen other cases I could cite almost like her. I tell you, Minny, young people can't learn each other's characters at all, unless they're alone by themselves a little time. But here, a man must pay his devoirs, and make his proposals, with a third person's eyes upon him all the time; and has almost to court the mother as much as the daughter, if not more. Oh! these things make courting very unpleasant, and marriage sometimes very unhappy, when both should be the happiest seasons of one's life. Ah, me! it's very hard to have mothers always act as if their daughters hadn't judgment enough to be trusted alone a minute."

"Do daughters prove themselves trustworthy always, Miss, when they are left alone?"

"If mothers would make daughters trustworthy, Minny, I tell you they must trust them. Society is not conducted in this manner in the North, yet I believe the young people there are better by far than they are here. But I don't care much about it now. I used to—but I shall be married some day to the man I want, and be happy in my own way.

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"There, Minny, does that fold, just arranged, look well? Do I appear quite elegant and pretty now?"

"Quite, Miss."

"What a long lecture I've read you, Minny. I feel quite exhausted, I declare, and quite like going to bed again. Here's Bernard's letter—put it with the rest, and take precious, precious care of it."

Fanning herself languidly, Della moved slowly away towards the breakfast-room. A servant stood waiting to open the door for her, with an obsequious bow, and she stood in the presence of her parents.

"Dear dort!" cried her mother, (making as she thought an affectionate abbreviation of daughter,) "what is the matter that you look so flushed and excited this morning? Your cheeks are really vulgarly red; dear me, I hope they'll pale off a little before evening."

"Good morning, Della," said Mr. Delancey, formally, who even at home sat in his usual position, bolt upright in his chair; "good morning; I'm glad to see that you have acquired a graceful manner of entering a breakfast-room."

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"If I keep on improving, papa, you will give me the promised winter in Havana I suppose?"

"I suppose so, my child. I wish to make you very happy."

There was a softness in Mr. Delancey's cold eyes, as he spoke, which one would no sooner have expected to see there, than they would thought to have seen a rock melt. Only his daughter could bring it there.

"Miss Della," said the governess, "your attitude is a trifle too stiff—a little more of the bend, if you please."

Miss Della tipped a little.

"Dort, darling," said Mrs. Delancey, "pray don't display such an appetite—it is really frightful to see you eat so much. A young lady like you should be very delicate at table."

"And pay long visits to the cupboard between meals, eh, mamma?"

Mr. Delancey looked anxiously to note the progress his daughter had made in the viands before her.

"Don't do anything *outré* in public, Della, no matter what you are obliged to do in private."

"No, papa."

"I want to see you very perfect in all things,—in all things, Della—do you understand?"

"Yes, papa."



"Make it your aim to be everything a young lady can be. Remember you are all the child that's left me now. All my hopes are upon you—try never, never to disappoint me!"

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Mr. Delancey rarely spoke so feelingly—it was a rare manner for him, and the effect of his words was very strange. Della's elegantly embroidered kerchief was clasped suddenly to her face, and she burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"Della, how un-self-possessed! you astonish me."

"You shouldn't have made that allusion to her brother," said Mrs. Delancey, sympathizingly.

"Dry your eyes immediately, Della; I am ready to go," said her father, sternly.

Della choked back her tears, and rising, approached her father, and gracefully put her lips to his forehead, and gave the usual morning kiss.

"No more scenes to-day, Della."

"No, papa."

The door closed, and he was gone.

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## CHAPTER XI.

"Then I'll look up;  
My fault is past. But oh, what form of prayer  
Can serve my turn?  
Try what repentance can: what can it not?  
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?"

HAMLET.

When Guly returned to his place that afternoon, Arthur was at his side; and when both raised their eyes to Wilkins' face, as they passed him, he read there an expression of calm tranquillity, such a trustful, happy look of hopefulness, that he could not restrain the cheering smile of encouragement, which came up to his lips in answer.

A great change had taken place in Arthur's face—or rather in its expression. There was no longer the glance of proud defiance in the eye—the flash of wounded pride upon the cheek, or curl of scorn upon the lip. All was subdued and quiet, and seemed to whisper of a peaceful, contrite heart. Still he studiously avoided the eye of Charley Quirk, and also seemed to wish to appear oblivious of the presence of the flint-eyed being sitting stiffly at the high desk.

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He could not trust himself to meet the gaze of either, lest the storm of pride and revenge, so lately banished from his breast, should return again in full force,—sweeping away, with its ocean strength, all the great resolves of future good, which he had piled up as a barrier against the door of evil in his heart.

Though his sleep in a degree refreshed him, his head still ached; and throughout his whole frame he experienced that feverish debility and painful soreness ever attendant upon a night of dissipation and exposure.

With a firm heart Arthur filled his place, and performed his duties unshrinkingly, cheered and encouraged by the beaming face of his brother, which ever and anon was turned toward him, with such a look of happy confidence and love, that it could not fail to carry inspiration with it.

Then night came; and after the goods, which during the day had been pulled down, were properly replaced, Guly took his brother's arm, and started out for a walk.

They strolled slowly along toward the Place D'Arms, which then possessed all that natural beauty, in the shape of its green lawns and ancient sycamores, which fashion has since seen fit to regard as an eyesore, and to remove for ever thence.

They were silent; for the mind of each was busily occupied with its own reflections; reflections good and effective in themselves, yet to which neither wished at that moment to give utterance, and no allusion, however distant, was made to the events of the previous day.

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Suddenly, a trembling hand was laid on Guly's arm, and a supplicating voice murmured humbly: "Un picayune, Monsieur; in pity, Monsieur, one picayune to buy me bread."

By the light of a street lamp, Guly saw a pale and wrinkled face, in which deep lines of grief or misfortune were deeply traced, raised pleadingly toward him. The face was so old, yet so very much lower than himself, that he at first thought the speaker must be in a sitting posture there, beneath the lamp. But a second glance showed to his wondering gaze the veriest dwarf his eyes had ever fallen upon. In height, the figure was not taller than a child of four years; yet the head was very large, the face possessed of its full growth of cunning and experience, the shoulders broad, but painfully humped, and the whole upper portion of the body immensely too large for the short and slender limbs, which served for its support. And yet, as if all this wretched

deformity were not enough, one leg was shorter than the other, and the foot was a club one. To assist him in walking, he carried a pair of crutches, apparently much too long for him, which raised his spindle arms in their loose sockets, and rendered the hump more horrible. When he moved, his crutches spread out on either side of him, as he swung along between them, taking up a vast deal of room without any apparent necessity. His coat had apparently been the property of some great man of the previous century, for it was braided and embroidered, and trimmed to an extent rarely seen in the present age; and the immense holes in the elbows, and the tatters in the skirt, laughed heartily at the rusty trimmings which it bore. It was so long and large too, that it almost precluded the necessity of any other clothes, for it quite enveloped his whole person, as he swung along between his crutches, dragged on the ground behind like the train of a lady's dress. His pantaloons had also once belonged to some full grown specimen of humanity, but had been torn off to suit the dimensions of the present owner—and, altogether, the appearance of this miserable object, with his one blind eye, and the cunning leer in the other, was calculated to excite both pity and disgust. The brothers looked upon him for a moment in mute astonishment, until again startled by that squeaking, supplicating voice—"Un picayune, Monsieur—one picayune to buy me bread!" [Pg 103]

Guly took a dime from his purse, and dropped it into the ragged cap which the beggar extended, while he held his crutches by pressing his arms close to his body. As the piece dropped into its ragged receptacle, he shook it up from the greasy folds, and tipped his left eye down to look upon it, not unlike a vulture glancing down at its prey. After eyeing it a moment, he held the cap toward Arthur, as if expecting something from that quarter. [Pg 104]

Arthur had already searched every pocket for the change, which he felt certain was there the day before; but, to his utter astonishment, it was all gone, together with a very beautiful portemonnaie his mother had given him when he left her, and in which, the day before, he had placed two ten dollar bills, for the purpose of sending home when he should write.

He knew he could not have spent it all in yesterday's rout, and the conviction forced itself painfully upon his mind that he had been robbed.

As the mendicant held forth his cap, he shook his head, and showed his empty hands, at which movement the old man raised his eyebrows inquisitively, and muttered a most disagreeable and chuckling "Hih! hih! hih! hih!" He then picked out the dime with trembling fingers, and slipped it quickly into some unseen deposit about his person; then, with one more lift of his grey brows, adjusted his crutches, and swung himself away.

The brothers gazed after the receding figure, until the mist entirely obscured it, and the skirts of the long coat could no longer be heard trailing on the pavement; then, again linking their arms, proceeded on their way.

Although Guly dwelt wonderingly upon the incident they had just met with, Arthur maintained a moody silence; nor could aught that his brother said, direct his thoughts from the new course the recent event had turned them upon. [Pg 105]

The time had been, when the loss he had met with would have been regarded as one of no importance whatever; but he felt now, and deeply felt, that it was more than he could afford to spend foolishly, more than even his generous impulses would have allowed him to charitably dispose of, and more by far than he could patiently submit to be defrauded of. As he thought thus, his good resolutions of the morning in a measure melted away before his indignant resentment, and vague plans were floating through his mind, as to how he might and would recover it, the bearing he should feel called upon to assume when next he met Mr. Clinton, &c., &c. To tell Guly of the loss he had sustained, after some reflection, he decided was out of the question. True, he had been gentle and forbearing with regard to all that had passed, but he would not reveal this new discovery to him—perhaps dreading more the rebuking silence of those loving lips, than the stormy reproaches he might have met with from another source.

Guly had seen that nothing had been bestowed upon the beggar by his brother; but he forbore to question him, lest it should lead them upon a subject unpleasant to both; and thus grew up the first concealment between those hitherto confiding hearts.

Reaching the square, they passed through the gate, and turned into a grassy walk, to enjoy ever so small a glimpse of verdant country scenes. Strolling on, they came suddenly upon a figure reclining at full length upon a bench, and smoking a cigar. As they approached, there was something in the man's appearance that seemed to startle Arthur, for he clutched his brother's arm closer, and turned abruptly to the left; but he was too late to pass unperceived, for, with a bound, the reclining figure gained its feet, and in an instant more Arthur's hand received a cordial grasp, while Mr. Clinton, as nicely dressed, as neatly curled, and as delicately perfumed as ever, stood before him. [Pg 106] [Pg 107]

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## CHAPTER XII.

"How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds  
Makes ill deeds done!"

"My dear fellow, how glad I am to meet you!" cried Clinton, cordially extending his hand in a manner which permitted the diamond on his finger to catch the light, in what he thought a most bewildering glitter.

Arthur would have shunned him, as his new resolutions and good genius prompted him to do; but there was that graceful form half-bent for his greeting, there was that smiling face, looking its hearty "How are you?" there was the social yet searching glance of that glittering eye, all saying, "Shake hands with me," and Arthur did.

"Mr. Clinton, how do you do?"

"Well, my boy, well; really hope you've got over the effects of your Carrolton ride. By-the-by, Quirk got you into that muss, not I, by Jove! You were inclined to be a little huffy this morning; however you were excusable—that's all forgotten. You'll do me justice now—there, give me your hand again, and tell me you consider me one of you."

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Arthur's generous heart could not withstand this merry, good-humored, yet apparently sincere appeal, and the hand was again given. He thought, too, that he might have been unjust in his reflections about Clinton, for he had met him only by chance on his way to Carrolton, and in truth he had urged him to no wrong, but had only joined him in what he was already doing. Then, had he not kindly been the means of liberating him from the watch-house, when he might otherwise have been left to meet the shame and expense of a public trial? Verily, he had much for which to be grateful to Mr. Clinton, and with one of those sudden impulses, natural to a hasty temper and impetuous spirit, he sought instantly to make amends for what now seemed the unjust and unkindly sentiments he had all day been entertaining toward his new friend.

"Mr. Clinton, I fear I have blamed you most wrongfully. However, let all this, as you say, be forgotten."

"That's it, my boy, I knew I wasn't mistaken in you. You've just the heart there, in your bosom, that I was sure you had when I first saw you. Believe me, I am proud to know that heart."

Arthur was but human, and, like all humanity, the gilded pill of flattery was swallowed without the aid of sweetmeats. He could not but remember, with a great deal of compunction, the great wrong he had, as he felt, done Clinton in harboring towards him such unkindly thoughts.

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"Oh, Mr. Clinton, pray pardon my neglect!" said he, suddenly turning toward that young gentleman. "Allow me to make you acquainted with my brother. Gulian—Mr. Clinton."

Guly bowed distantly. Those young eyes had seen deeper into the heart before him, in the few minutes that he had been an observer of its impulses, than Arthur had seen, or at least decided upon, in forty-eight hours of mingled acquaintanceship and reflection. True, the boy knew but little of the world; but there are some, and they are not the worldly and suspicious, but the pure-minded and gentle, that shrink intuitively from a polluting presence, scarce knowing from what they shrink. There was much in Mr. Clinton which Guly saw to dread, as a companion for his brother; and, at their first recognition, he was assured it was one of Arthur's yesterday acquaintances, and felt a pang of disappointment at not seeing him differently received by his brother.

"Where are you strolling?" asked Mr. Clinton, breaking a pause, which had followed Guly's cool reception of himself.

"Merely out for a walk," returned Arthur; "it's only before and after business hours, you know, that we have time for recreation."

"True, true," replied the other, stroking his chin, and speaking in a commiserating tone. "Ah, that must be terribly dull business, for young chaps like you. I always pity a clerk."

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"Indeed, sir," said Guly, "we neither deserve nor need pity; we have everything to make us contented and happy in our new situation, and appreciate it, I assure you."

Mr. Clinton glanced for an instant keenly at the speaker, then answered, with a light laugh:—

"Yes, yes, just so; I didn't apply my remark beyond myself; in fact, it's something *I* never could stand."

"We have extended our walk as far as we intended for to-night, have we not, brother? Mr. Clinton, we bid you good evening," said Guly, as they, for the third time, gained the gate by which they had entered the square.

Mr. Clinton looked up in astonishment.

"No! you don't mean to leave so? Come, let's just step over to Royal-street, and take a glass of soda-water. You will find it so refreshing."

Poor Arthur "felt his pockets bare," and was about to refuse, when Mr. Clinton slipped a hand through his arm, and drew him with him, saying, as he did so:—

"You know it's *my* treat this time, Pratt. Don't refuse a friend."

As Arthur moved away with him, Guly determined not to leave his side for an instant, while in the presence of so dangerous a companion, and though his heart went down as he saw Arthur thus

forgetting all his new-formed resolutions, yet he hoped for the best, and went with him resolutely. [Pg 111]

They entered a richly ornamented saloon, where all that could please the palate or tickle the taste was most temptingly displayed; and Clinton, tossing a gold half-eagle upon the marble counter, called for "a few choice titbits and a bottle of wine."

As the last desideratum was named, Guly glanced anxiously toward his brother, but Arthur's eye was turned another way, and when the collation was brought he sat readily down at the table by Clinton's side. Guly did not wish to appear ill-bred or impolite, and he accepted the hearty invitation of his new acquaintance to "sit by," with as good a grace as he could command. Of the wine, however, he could not be prevailed upon to touch a drop—though he did not fail to perceive the sneer that curled Mr. Clinton's thin lip at his refusal.

"You don't mean to say," said the last mentioned gentleman, half-pityingly, "that you expect to remain in New-Orleans any length of time without learning to drink wine?"

"I shall never touch a drop, sir, unless absolutely necessary in a case of sickness."

"Bah! anybody would know you were from the North, my dear fellow, just by that speech. Nobody hesitates to drink wine here, unless those who are too poor to pay for it"—and the speaker glanced keenly, but slyly, at Guly's face, then added: "Why, it's impossible here to avoid drinking, even if you would. A young man calls upon a lady, and the first thing she thinks of offering him after a seat is a glass of wine. It is always there on the sideboard, and to refuse would be an act of utter impoliteness. What could you do in such a case, my boy, eh?" [Pg 112]

"I should, I hope, have sufficient courage to tell the young lady I never drank, and must be excused; and if she liked me the less for it, I would bear in mind that if such an act deprived me of her good will, her good will certainly was not worth retaining."

"I should like to see you tried once, with a pretty girl in the case," returned Clinton, gulping down a second glass.

"I cannot wonder at the depraved state of society in this city," said Guly, earnestly, "when woman, who should be the first to frown upon and discountenance such practices, not only is the tempter, but the hearty partaker of them. I am certain if the other sex were more strict—would positively refuse to attend places of amusement on Sabbath evenings, would refrain utterly from drinking wine themselves, and offering it to others—there would be a great change here for the better. Woman little thinks how much of man's depravity can be traced back to be laid upon her shoulders." [Pg 113]

"Nonsense!" said Clinton, with a short laugh. "Women, you'll find when you've been here long enough, have less to do with it than rain-water full of wriggle-tails, as they call those young animals that fill our cisterns in summer time, and the no less disagreeable—to one not a native here—muddy water from the river as a beverage. One is absolutely forced to 'tip the goblet red,' in order to have something palatable to rinse down his food. Woman, indeed! Poh! come, have a glass, and be social."

"No," said Guly, firmly, drawing back; "I will not drink. However you may scoff, Mr. Clinton, at woman's influence, it is to that I impute my strength to withstand temptation here. My last promise to my mother, was never to become a wine-bibber, and I shall keep it."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Clinton. "Here's a bumper to your resolution and your mother," and touching glasses with Arthur, he swallowed the contents of his goblet; though his companion, with conscience awakened in his breast by his brother's words, scarcely touched the sparkling beverage to his lips.

"You spoke of the depravity of this city, also"—continued Clinton, shoving back from the table, and wiping his lips. "It isn't, in my opinion, one-half, or, to say the least, any more depraved than any of your Northern cities. The only difference is, here everything is done open and above board; what sin there is, is before your eyes, and you don't feel when you tread our streets, that you are walking over hidden hells, and sunken purgatories, which is, I think, more than you can say in behalf of your Northern cities. Now, isn't it?" [Pg 114]

"The fact of all the dissipation and Sabbath-breaking here being openly carried on, is the very worst argument, Mr. Clinton, you could bring forward. It proves how much worse the tendency, when it can so harden the heart of society as to regard it without a shudder, and to look upon such things as right. Sunday absolutely loses its identity here, in the manner in which it is kept; and a little more law, more rigidly enforced, would, I am certain, elevate the standard of society into a purer and more ennobling atmosphere. If men still persisted in sin, the fear of punishment would force them to keep out of sight of those who would be Christians, which, for some, must be really a hard matter now. Yesterday, in coming from church, I met a full company of soldiers, in complete uniform, out for a drill. I passed many stores thronged with customers, even as on a week-day, and received an invitation to attend a horse-race on the Metarie Course; all of which, you will admit, was in jarring discordance with the sermon upon which I was trying to reflect, and the Prayer-Book in my hand."

Clinton burst into a loud laugh.

"The time will come when you'll know better than to reflect upon sermons here, and will put your Prayer-Book in your pocket, instead of carrying it in your hand. People go to church in this place [Pg 115]

to see and be seen; to learn the fashions and see new faces—not to remember sermons or read prayers. I heard a minister declare, the other day, that he could preach a sermon over every six weeks, and not one in twenty of his hearers would remember to have heard it before. I've had serious thoughts of turning minister myself; donning a gray wig and white cravat, and 'spounding the Bible, as the blacks say, to my deluded hearers. 'Pon honor, it's the most lucrative situation a poor devil can have. Preaching a short sermon, morning and night, to an inattentive but fashionable congregation, who are sure to make a minister popular among 'em, if he don't touch their peculiar sins too closely, give him an immense salary, let him off on full pay for four months in a year, and pay his debts when he accepts a call in another quarter."

"A comfortable situation, I must confess," said Arthur, with a smile. "When you take a stand in the pulpit count upon me for one of your hearers."

"A thousand thanks for your promised patronage," returned Mr. Clinton, with a bow of mock gravity; "but suppose we discuss the matter moving;" and rising, he led the way into the street.

As much as Guly wished to be rid of Mr. Clinton's society, he saw the thing was impossible, at least at present, and submitted to a farther endurance of it with as much suavety as possible. Still keeping by his brother's side, he walked on in silence, anxiously awaiting the moment when their companion should see fit to leave them. [Pg 116]

"Hallo!" cried Clinton, suddenly stopping before an illuminated window, and peering earnestly into it, "the new numbers for the next lottery are up; come on, let's go in, and take one jointly."

Arthur thought of his lost portemonnaie, and felt strongly tempted to run the risk of recovering his money in that way; but he remembered that he had nothing wherewith to buy a ticket, and hesitated.

"Don't," said Guly, earnestly, "don't be led into such folly, Arthur. Come, let's go back to the store."

"Not till you have tried your luck once," said Clinton, persuasively; "come, it is but a trifle if you lose it, and think of the chance you run."

"I've left my purse at home," said Arthur, blushing at the falsehood he stooped to utter; "I would really like to join, but can't to-night, really."

"Pooh! if the money is all, I'll advance that; and you can pay me when you like. Come along."

Arthur entered the shop reluctantly, it is true, yet ashamed to confess to his social, open-hearted companion, the compunction he felt. The ticket was purchased, and half given to Arthur.

"If you are determined to purchase a ticket, Arthur," said Guly, gravely, "I must insist that you do not run in debt to Mr. Clinton for it," and opening his purse, he handed to that gentleman the sum just expended for his brother's half of the ticket. [Pg 117]

"You are very particular," remarked Clinton, with something like a sneer, and pocketing the change, while he glanced with a look of impertinent curiosity at Guly's grave but beautiful features.

"Do you go our way?" inquired Arthur, turning toward him as they left the shop.

"No; sorry to say I don't," returned Clinton, lighting a cigar, and offering one to each of the brothers, who refused it. "I am really sorry to part with you; but if you must go, good-night," and with a graceful move of the hand, the young gentleman bade an adieu to his friends, and turning down another street, was soon out of sight.

The brothers walked on for some distance in silence. Guly was the first to speak.

"Have you enjoyed your walk, Arthur, as much as you would have done, had we been left to enjoy ourselves in our own way?"

"Well, I must say, Guly, that I've had a pleasant time. I think young Clinton a charming fellow, and must confess he has enlivened the last hour exceedingly."

"And your heart and conscience are both quite as unburthened as they would have been had you not met him?" [Pg 118]

"I'm sure I've done nothing to burden either, Gulian," returned Arthur, somewhat impatiently. "You must remember I am several years older than you are, and am expected to act differently from a mere boy like yourself."

"Did you remember that yesterday was your twenty-first birthday?" inquired Guly, quietly.

"No!" said Arthur, with a slight start; "and your sixteenth birthday was last Monday! How differently have they passed from what they used to do at home, when they were always celebrated together."

"Mother must have remembered us yesterday," remarked Guly. "How she would have loved but to look over here upon us!"

"I would not have had her seen me yesterday!" exclaimed Arthur, warmly, "for all the wealth this city ever saw. Her heart would have broken."

"Yet you persist in recognizing your yesterday's companions, and in a measure practising yesterday's pursuits. Mother never allowed wine to make its appearance on our birthday-fetes, my brother."

"True, but that was in the North, and our parents were always very strict. What would you have me do when I meet such a social companion as Clinton? He has such a pleasant, happy way with him, that one really can't refuse him; and for my part, a glass of wine, more or less, will hurt nobody, I guess, materially."

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"The social glass has been many a man's ruin, dear Arthur; and it is better to resist temptation in the beginning, than to fight the influence of liquor in the end. I wish I could coax you to promise never to taste another drop."

"What folly," said Arthur, laughing. "Why, my little Puritan, as long as it is the custom here, why not indulge a little? I think I can promise you never to be intoxicated. I shall shun that. But when I'm with young men of such habits, it would seem very odd in me to refuse, and I must now and then take a harmless glass."

"Then, Arthur, why not choose companions of different habits? You certainly will admit such a course is wrong for any young man. See the influence even, which Clinton's society has had upon you this evening. He has really induced you to think such practices here are allowable, and even commendable. This morning, without arguing the case, you voluntarily confessed it to be very wrong. Oh, Arthur, I already begin to wish we were out of this dreadful place."

"You are a chicken-hearted little body," returned Arthur, playfully; then speaking more gravely, he continued: "Well, Guly, it is not, after all, so much my fault. I am of an age to wish to enjoy myself. I have been accustomed to having every comfort and happiness around me; the fond love and refined society of a mother, together with the noble presence and good advice of our father. Look at the change! We have come here poor, but with delicate and luxurious tastes. We have no father, no mother, no home. One rough and dingy apartment to sleep in, is the only spot we can look upon and call ours, and that we share in common with the refuse lumber of the store and a colony of spiders and bedbugs. Beyond our washer-woman, we haven't the acquaintance of a single member of the other sex in this city; and, apart from each other, not one to call a friend. It isn't a very pleasant state of affairs to reflect upon, Guly; and this morning, when I lay alone up stairs on the bed, I couldn't keep from thinking that these wealthy merchants who employ so many clerks have much to answer for."

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"How so, Arthur? You surely couldn't expect a merchant to direct and govern the private pursuits of every young man in his employ?"

"No, surely not. Those clerks who have their homes and relatives here in the city, are well enough off; but when, like us, they come from the North, without even an acquaintance here, wouldn't it be better, not only for the clerks, but for the merchant himself, if he would show a little kindly interest in them and their welfare? Here, for instance, are ourselves: Mr. Delancey was made acquainted by our first letter with all the train of circumstances which forced us to this course. He is well aware that our family is as good as his own, and why then has he not said to us that we would be welcome visitors at his house, and thus given us one place where we might occasionally spend our leisure hours, and call it home? Would it not at once have placed us in our own sphere, and kept us from looking for social friends among strangers, of whose character we know nothing? With the firm standing and position that Mr. Delancey has here in society, to have taken this kindly notice of us could not have lowered or affected him one particle in the social scale, and would have placed us in that position which we have ever been accustomed to occupy. It would have bound us more closely to him; and instead of clerks, coldly and rigidly performing our assigned duties for him, it would have rendered us his grateful and sincere friends, happy to do aught in our power, either in or out of business hours, which would oblige him or advance his interests. At least, I know this would be the case with me, and I think that when I speak for one I do for both."

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"I must admit, Arthur, that you are right. Though I have not quite as impulsive a heart as yourself, and am not nearly as proud-spirited, I cannot always bear meekly the curtness and harshness with which Mr. Delancey treats us. And with clerks, as a general thing, it is certainly more for an employer's interest to win them as closely as possible to himself; for, of course, if he forces them to seek companionship among whomsoever they may meet, and they fall into low and dissipated habits, which renders them unfit for business, then, of a necessity, that interest suffers; and were I the employer in such a case, I am sure I could not hold myself entirely free from blame."

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"Oh, in such a case, the employer thinks no farther than to give a clerk his walking papers, and to show him the door. They never pause to remember that they were probably the primal cause of his downfall; neither will they make amends, by even giving him the good name he brought to them, for another situation. When I reflect upon these things, Guly, sometimes there's a great deal of bitterness comes up in my heart, which I cannot keep down, though I try ever so hard."

"Never let it rise there, Arthur. While we both live, dear brother, we are certain of one heart that is as true as life itself. Let us cling close to one another, and try and be happy and contented together, and no harm, save sickness and death, can approach us. In loving one another, we are but being true to ourselves."

They had by this time reached the store door, and as Guly ceased speaking, Arthur stepped upon

the step, and placing both hands on his brother's shoulders, held him a little way from him, and looked earnestly into the beautiful eyes raised up to meet his own.

"Guly, whatever happens—though I hope and am sure nothing will that is unfortunate or sad to me or between us—try and love me all the same; forget my faults and remember my virtues—if I have any; I want always to think of your heart as trusting mine, and loving me."

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He looked away for a moment, with his eyes bent thoughtfully upon the ground, then parting the hair from his brother's brow, he bent down hastily and kissed it, as if from an impulse which he could not resist.

Guly looked wonderingly up in his face for a moment, then drew him away into the shadow of the archway adjoining, and, laying his head upon his shoulder, wept.

"Love you, Arthur!" he exclaimed, throwing both arms about his brother, and drawing him close to his heart; "Through all and through everything, come what might or may, I can never love or trust you less than now. Your happiness is my prayer and watch-word; all I ask of you, dear, is but to be true to yourself and me."

"Bless you, Guly—there! don't shed any more tears—we shall henceforth, I am sure, be very happy together."

"Then, what prompted you to speak so strangely and forebodingly?"

"I could not define the feeling, if I should try. It was nothing more than a flitting shadow, cast from my restless spirit upon my heart. Come, let's go in."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

"Our early days! how often back  
We turn on life's bewildering track,  
To where, o'er hill and valley, plays  
The sunlight of our early days!"

D. W. GALLAGHER.

They went in through the alley-way, and gained their bedroom by the steep back-staircase. Guly, who was fatigued by his day's labor and evening walk, immediately prepared for bed, and sought his pillow eagerly. But Arthur, after rising from their devotion, walked toward one of the windows, and stood for a long time gazing out upon the neighboring wall of brick, as if he found there deep food for reflection. Guly lay looking at him, wondering what he could be thinking of, and even while he wondered his eyes gradually closed, and he fell fast asleep.

As Arthur heard his soft but regular breathing, and felt assured his brother slumbered, he threw off his coat, and seated himself on the bedside, gazing fixedly down upon the innocent and happy brow before him. There was a thoughtful softness upon the watcher's face, that came not often there; and ever and anon he raised his hands, and pressed them tightly upon his eyes, as if to keep back some emotion which would fain force itself thence.

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"What can have put these thoughts in my mind to-night?" he murmured, impatiently, rising and walking the floor with bowed head and folded arms. "I could almost believe the wine I drank was drugged with memories of the past, and dark forebodings for the future. What form is this that rises constantly before me, with haggard face and burning eyes, pointing its skinny finger backward, ever backward, like an index turning ever to the days gone by? It haunts me like a ghost; and turn I here or there, 'tis always crouching close before me, pointing that skinny finger backward. Heavens! what does it mean?"

With a sharp shudder, Arthur again sought his brother's side, and sat down upon the bed.

"If I should ever—if I should ever—*ever* fall so low, /! Oh, impossible! What a horrible picture! Yet, surrounded, as I am, by danger and temptation—the beautiful habiliments in which vice here presents itself—the constant laceration of my haughty pride—would it be, after all, so impossible? Oh, my poor heart, be strong. Still that white figure pointing backward. Can this be the foreshadowing of my own fate? Oh, never, never! the wine I have taken has heated my brain. Guly! Guly! wake up! I cannot bear to be here by myself!"

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And, with a moan of anguish, Arthur buried his face in the pillow.

Guly started up quickly, and looked wildly around, like one suddenly aroused from a nightmare; then his eye fell upon the prostrate figure beside him.

"Dear Arthur, tell me what ails you to-night; you seem strangely at variance with yourself. Tell me what troubles you, my brother."

"A ghost in my heart, Guly. I can't tell what brought it there—I feel it, I see it constantly—a pale, haggard figure, pointing with its bony finger backward."

"You have been asleep, and dreaming, Arthur; undress and come by me here, and we will talk of something else."

"No, no, Guly, not asleep, but wide, wide awake—in my heart, in my soul, everywhere!" exclaimed Arthur, flinging his clothes hastily off, and creeping to his brother's side, as if flying from some horrid phantom.

Guly threw an arm about him, and with the other hand stroked the dark locks soothingly back from the excited brow.

"There, Arthur! brother! hush! don't sigh and shudder so, don't; it's all fancy, all mere idle fancy. Do you remember, Arthur, how, on such a night as this, the moon used to shine down upon the tall trees and green lawn at home? And when all those merry friends used to visit us, how their figures would flit in and out so brightly through the long green avenues, and the shadows falling at their sides—do you not remember, Arthur?"

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"The shadows falling at their side? Yes, Guly, I remember."

"And how, when on such bright nights we sailed upon the Hudson, the diamond foam broke away from the prow of our little boat, like a peal of jewelled laughter, if such a thing could be? When we get the old home back, Arthur, we will find that old boat out, and have it, too—eh, brother?"

"Dear Guly, yes."

"Everything will be so like its old self, we shall almost think all our troubles and separation one long dream. When that time comes we can have no more of earthly happiness to ask for—our old home and our old joys."

"And our old friends, Guly, gliding through the green avenues, with their shadows under their feet. Our old friends, with their old shadows—"

Arthur was asleep; soothed to slumber by the gentle words and fond tones breathed upon his ear, and he lay quietly, with his face calm, and his cheek upon his hand.

Dreams came to him in the hours of that long night, and he was happy. Time and distance were annihilated, and he was back upon the shores of old Hudson, sporting with its waves, and gliding on its waters. There was the old boat, with the sparkling foam parting from the rushing prow, and the music of the dipping oars was falling gently on his ear.

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Again he was on the green lawn, and the moon was looking down upon the tall trees, and the soft green grass which lay before the broad door of the olden home. There were the gayly-robed figures, flitting in and out along the shaded avenues, their shadows falling by them always, and he was in their midst—a child, merry-hearted, but fretted and proud—toyed with by this one, caressed by that, and the favorite of all, commanding but to be obeyed, frowning but to be more attended, angered but to be coaxed to good-nature, first in his parents' hearts, and high in the proffered love of every guest, reigning, like a boy-king, over all he surveyed.

Then his dream for a moment grew clouded, and a tiny form, with snowy robes and gentle blue eyes, rose up before him, and took his place upon his mother's bosom, and he knew he had a brother. The form expanded, and grew in height, and the hair hung in golden ringlets down to shadow the beautiful eyes. And a tiny hand sought his, and tottering steps fell lightly at his side. Still the form grew, till in his dream it seemed to rise above him—not *grown* above him; but the feet stood upon a silver cloud, which kept rising higher and higher, till the tiny hand he clasped in his was drawn perforce from his grasp, and still standing on the silver cloud, the light form, the golden hair, and blue eyes, passed from his sight; and looking up, he learned to believe it was an angel, not a brother, which had been sent to him. And while he looked yearningly after it, a mother's hand fell upon his shoulder, and her sweet voice trembled as she pointed upward, and bade him follow. Then he showed her his empty hand, from which the tiny hand had been drawn, and stepping quickly backward, he plunged headlong over an unseen precipice, and fell, fell far down, where all was darkness; but finding no bottom, and shuddering with the thought that so he must go dizzily rushing through that blackened space to all eternity! But, looking up, a glorious light broke through the surrounding gloom, and the light form, with the golden hair, was coming down—down with a smile of thrilling happiness, and outstretched arms to save him. It reached him, it clasped him to its warm bosom, and he felt a quick heart throbbing there, and knew again it was his brother, with the sunny curls and radiant smile, who had saved him from that bottomless pit, and mounted, holding him upon his heart, to purer and to brighter realms.

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Thus the spirits of his earlier days thronged his fancy, as he slumbered there; but the pale ghost in his heart, pointing with its skinny finger backward, came not to him as he lay there dreaming, with his cheek upon his hand.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

"Ah! may'st thou ever be what now thou art,  
Nor unbeseem the promise of thy spring;  
As fair in form, as warm yet pure of heart,



Love's image upon earth without his wing,  
And guileless beyond hope's imagining."

BYRON.

A month went by, and Arthur during that time never once went out without his brother, never tasted a drop of wine, nor met those companions whom he had begun to deem so social-hearted, and so necessary to his happiness. He seemed to shrink fearfully from the thought of coming in contact with them, and invariably after business hours sought his brother's side, passing his leisure in whatever mode Guly chanced to propose.

His proud will was kept in constant curb, and when he received the stern rebuke of his employer, or the taunt and sneer of those who would have led him their way, he answered nothing, but turned away with swelling heart and silent lips.

Guly noticed that nightly, as they prayed, Arthur's voice grew more earnest, and his manner more humble and contrite; and he began to censure himself for the unjust fears he had entertained on his brother's account, while his heart rose in thankful praises to Him "who doeth all things well," for the happy change.

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None knew, save Arthur himself, the cause of it. Since the night when the "ghost," as he called it, first entered his heart, and since the dream of home hovered over his pillow, he had felt as if it might be possibly a visionary counterpart of one of those events which "cast their shadows before," and he had striven right manfully against every impulse which might in any way tend to make himself the fulfiller of it. Often, when the stern reproof, or the sly sneer, had awakened his resentment and called the flush of anger to his cheek, a glimpse into his throbbing heart placed the seal of silence on his lips; for, with a shudder, he beheld the haggard figure, with its burning eyes, pointing ever its skinny finger backward.

It was something which he could not understand, yet which exerted over him an all-powerful influence. He often thought upon it, trying to devise what it could mean, and what could have brought it there within his heart; and the only answer his reflections ever gave him, was that the fore-shadow had risen to warn him from the awful gulf.

Wilkins had of late kept a quiet but steady eye upon the movements and character of the brothers, and, in spite of the usual coldness and indifference of his great heart, he had begun to feel a deep interest in them, and everything pertaining to them. Guly especially, he had learned to feel towards even as a younger brother. Still, with that unaccountable feeling, which sometimes forbids a generous sentiment to betray itself to another, he veiled his earnest friendship under a guise of mere clerkly companionship, rarely giving way to those bursts of tender feeling, which rendered him, in Guly's young eyes, an absolute enigma.

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One day, as Arthur was about leaving the store for dinner, Wilkins called him back, and gave him some money to deposit in the bank, which he had to pass on his way to the restaurant.

"We are so busy to-day," remarked the head-clerk, as he gave it to him, "it is just now impossible for me to leave before the bank closes, and you can do this as well as myself."

Arthur bowed, and viewed the bills with a glow of proud pleasure in his breast, at the trust reposed in him, and started away. Guly left his place an instant, and stepped quickly to the door, prompted by a feeling for which he could not account, to look after him; and stood gazing upon his brother's receding figure until lost to sight in the stream of busy life, which flowed through the narrow street.

As he resumed his station, a light and exquisitely beautiful female form glided in at the door, and stopped at Guly's counter. As he bent forward to inquire her wishes, she threw aside the veil, which concealed her features, and revealed to the boy's bewildered gaze the most dazzling, beautiful face he had ever beheld.

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She was quite young; apparently had just entered upon her fifteenth year, an age which in the North would be considered only as the dividing step between childhood and girlhood, but which in the South, where woman is much more rapidly developed, is probably the most charming season of female beauty, when the half-burst blossom retains all the purity, freshness, and fragrance of the tender bud. She was slight and delicate in figure, yet beautifully rounded and proportioned; bearing, in every movement, that charming child-like grace, which is so frequently lost when the child merges into the woman. Her complexion was that of a brunette—but beautifully clear; and her cheeks, with their rich color, might well bear that exquisite comparison of somebody's—a rose-leaf laid on ivory. Her hair was of a rich chestnut brown, and having been cut off during severe illness, was now left to its own free grace, and hung in short close curls about her full pure brow.

Her eyes were of the same hue as her hair, large and full, and replete with that dewy, tender expression, when she lifted the long lashes from them, which sends the glance into the depths of the heart. Her mouth was small, and the full lips, like to a "cleft pomegranate," disclosed her polished and regular teeth.

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Guly's eye took in the exquisite picture before him at a glance, and the words which were on his lips when he first bent forward remained unspoken, while he looked the glowing admiration which filled his heart. She seemed slightly embarrassed as she met his gaze, and, in a voice of

clear richness of tone, she remarked:—

"Mr. G— is no longer here? I have always been accustomed to seeing him, and have my work ready for disposal."

"I occupy Mr. G—'s place, Miss," replied Guly, with a slight blush upon his young cheek, as he resumed his erect position. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Ah, Miss Blanche! how do you do?" exclaimed Wilkins, getting down from his desk before she could answer Guly's question. "It is a long, long time since we have seen your young face here. What has been the matter?"

"Ah! Monsieur," she replied, in a tone of inexpressible sadness, and addressing him in French, "I have had much trouble in the last two months. I have been greatly bereaved. My poor mother, sir —" she could go no farther, but broke down as she glanced at the black dress, and burst into a fit of silent but bitter weeping.

A shade of sympathetic sorrow passed over Wilkins' face, and with a delicacy of feeling which would not have been expected in him, he stepped around to that side, where she was exposed to the view of the customers and clerks, and stood there as if he would, by the intervention of his huge form, screen her sorrow from the vulgar gaze. [Pg 135]

After a few moments Blanche dried her eyes; and with a violent struggle for self-control, seemed to swallow her grief into her heart.

"You must pardon me, Mr. Wilkins, for giving way here. I thought, Monsieur, I could do better; but my grief lies very, very heavy here;" and she laid her hand, with touching grace, upon her heart.

"Ah, Mademoiselle," returned Wilkins, also in French, "I feel deeply for you, believe me. And you are alone now, and have no friends?"

"Oui, Monsieur, I have my blind grandfather, poor grandpapa; he is very feeble and infirm." She paused, as if the subject was one too painful to dwell upon, then drew toward her a little bundle, which she had laid upon the counter, and said: "I have here my broderie. I hope, Monsieur, you have not engaged any one else. I have worked day and night to finish what I had undertaken. I hope they please you."

Wilkins took the little roll, and drew thence several specimens of exquisite and tasteful embroidering, consisting of one or two heavily worked *mouchoirs*, several collars, some insertion, edging, &c., &c. He examined them with a close and critical eye, then laying them down, with an encouraging smile, said:— [Pg 136]

"These are more beautifully done than any we have yet had, Mademoiselle. These, really, command the highest price."

"I am very glad, Monsieur," Blanche replied, quietly.

Wilkins drew a small reference-book from his pocket, and after glancing over its pages a moment or two, he counted out a few pieces of gold from a drawer at his side, and Guly saw that, under pretence of making change, he added to the sum a little from his own purse.

"There, Mademoiselle, that is well earned."

"Here is more than I received last time, Monsieur; and you have had to wait for the work. Are you sure this is right?"

"Quite right. As I before told you, it is better done than any you have given us before. Take these articles, Guly, and put them in the box marked 'French Embroidery.'"

Guly obeyed, and his fingers lingered on the fair work before him, with an unconscious touch of admiration.

"You think you can bring your articles weekly, now, Mademoiselle?"

"I think so, Monsieur Wilkins. I have nothing to occupy my time now, except a few little favors for poor grandpapa." [Pg 137]

"Very well. Mr. G. has left, as you see. Henceforth Mr. Pratt will receive your work, and pay you for the same, as he has charge of this department. Let me make you acquainted. Guly, this is Blanche Duverne," said Wilkins, in his brief, peculiar manner.

Blanche held out her small hand, with an air of naïve and innocent frankness, and Guly took the rosy finger tips, as he bent across the counter, and pressed them to his lips.

It was an act totally unexpected by Blanche, but it was done with such a noble grace by the boy, and with an air of such delicate refinement, while a glow of boyish bashfulness swept over his fine face, that the most fastidious could not have found in it just cause for resentment, much less the guileless and innocent child-woman before him.

As Guly released her hand she looked at him more attentively than she had done before, and said, sweetly, in pure unaccented English—

"I hope we may be very good friends, Guly."

"Amen," said the boy, with a smile.

"And you will sell my work to your choice customers, won't you?"

"Invariably."

"Adieu."

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"Adieu, Miss."

She flitted out of the door so like a spirit, that she was gone almost before Guly was aware she had left her seat. He longed to go to the door and look after her, but a sense of timidity withheld him; and having no customers just then he took down the box which contained her work, under pretence of arranging it more nicely, but in reality to look upon the delicate labor of those rosy fingers once again.

Wilkins was watching him, mischievously, from his desk, and Guly looked up, and caught his eye, with a blush and a smile.

"Tell me, Wilkins, who she is."

"A poor girl, and very pretty."

"And friendless?"

"Only her grandpapa, you heard her say."

"Poor thing, she does this for a living."

"For a living? Yes. And it's a hard one she gets, after all."

"You know all about her! What else? Tell me more."

"She is very good and pure."

"May she always be so. Go on."

Wilkins looked at him searchingly for a moment, but the boy met his glance steadily, and the head-clerk withdrew his eye with an air of one who is suddenly made aware of entertaining unjust suspicions; and he went on, with a smile, getting down from his desk, and standing near to Guly meanwhile.

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"It would not be to every one, Guly, I would give poor Blanche's history, or what I know of it; but to you I am certain I can do so safely. To begin then at the beginning: She was the daughter of one of the wealthiest bankers in this city, who died several yeas ago insolvent, and left his wife and child destitute. Of course, their former friends cut them, all except a very few; and they took a suite of rooms in the Third Municipality, and removed thither with their few articles of furniture, and their blind and helpless relative. The mother's health began to fail, and after a little while she was unable to do anything toward their support; and all the duties of the household, together with the labor for a livelihood for the three, fell upon little brown-eyed Blanche. She went to work heroically, and turned her accomplishments to profit, and is, as you see, one of the very best *brodeurs* that can be found. She loved her mother devotedly, and I suppose it almost broke her little heart when she lost her. She has sickened and died within the last two months, as you heard her say. She had all that care upon her young shoulders, beside that of her old grandfather, yet she has neglected neither, and finished her work with it all. Think of it! As you perceive she has an innocent little heart, is a stranger to guile, and is ready to believe every one is what he professes to be. God help her, poor thing!"

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"And is that all you know of her, Wilkins?"

"This is all. I know her well; for four years she has brought her work to this spot, and sold it at this counter."

Guly's eye dropped upon that counter almost reverently.

"Where are her relatives, Wilkins?"

"North, I believe. Her father was a poor but talented man when he came here, and his family, though highly estimable at the North, were also poor. He met his wife in some of the high circles, to which his letters admitted him, and they fell in love, and married, though in the face of decided opposition from all her family. Her friends never noticed her afterwards, though he rose, as I told you, to high station and standing; so when he died there was no one to apply to."

"How did you learn all this, Wilkins?"

"She told it to me herself."

"But her Northern friends, they may have grown rich by this time."

"No. She told me her father's family consisted only of his parents and one deformed brother. When he was making a fortune so rapidly here, I believe he received a letter from this brother, stating that he was coming on to try his fortune here, too. But Mr. Duverne, Blanche's father, wrote back to discourage his intentions, for he seemed to think it was too long a journey for one

so helpless as he. They never heard from the brother again; for, soon after, Mr. Duverne died, and the state of his affairs became known, and all intercourse between the families ceased."

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"And they never knew whether he came here or not?"

"Oh, he of course never came, or they would have heard of him, you know."

"Is Blanche French?"

"By the name, you see she is of French descent; and she speaks the language like a native born *Francaise*; however, her mother was purely American, and her father never spoke a word of French in all his life. She has acquired it by mingling, no doubt, with the Creoles here."

"You speak it yourself, Mr. Wilkins?"

"Yes; and I acquired it in that way."

"You know where Blanche lives?"

"Yes."

"And visit her sometimes?"

"Occasionally."

"Can I accompany you there some evening, sir? I would like to know her better."

"To be sure you may, Guly; especially, as you are henceforth to be somewhat associated in the business line. As I have told you, Blanche is a noble little girl; I respect her highly; very few know where she lives, and I wouldn't take every one there. You understand?"

"Certainly. I shan't name her residence to any one."

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"Very well, then; whenever you say—*you alone, remember.*"

"Thank you, Wilkins; when I can go I will tell you."

"Just so."

Wilkins stepped back to his desk, and Guly still stood arranging the new pieces of embroidery. There was for him a charm about them. Accustomed as he was to seeing such things, he could not get tired of looking at these. They were far more beautiful than any of those which were really French, and had come from over the seas; and from every graceful twig and twining tendril, there looked up at him a pair of soft brown eyes, whose gentle glances went down, and made themselves a home in the boy's pure heart.

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## CHAPTER XV.

—"He is a man,  
Setting his fate aside, of comely virtues;  
Nor did he soil the fact with cowardice—  
An honor in him which buys out his faults—  
But with a noble fury and fair spirit,  
Seeing his reputation touched to death,  
He did oppose his foe."

SHAKSPEARE.

"Mr. Delancey, will you wait one minute, sir!" exclaimed Arthur, coming in, apparently much excited, just as Guly replaced the box on the shelf.

The merchant stopped just as he was going out of the door, and planting his cane firmly down upon the floor, turned round with the frown between his eyebrows quite visibly deepened.

"Well, sir, what will you have?"

"Your attention, if you can give it, sir—one moment at your desk."

"Whatever you've got to say, say it here."

"No, sir, I must see you privately."

Wilkins and Guly both looked at Arthur in mute astonishment. His face was flushed and heated, his breath came short, like one who had been running, and his eyes and lips, and whole manner, evinced intense agitation and excitement.

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"Is it such particular business, young man, that you must detain me now?" said the merchant, somewhat angered at the prospect of detention from his usual dinner hour.

"It is very particular business to me, sir; and interests you not much less."

Mr. Delancey waved his hand impatiently, for Arthur to precede him to his desk; then, with hasty step, and planting his cane each tread visibly on the floor, he followed him, and seating himself with formal precision, took off his hat, and leant stiffly back in his chair.

"Well, sir?"

Arthur would almost have as soon undergone the terrors of the Inquisition as to brave the tempest he expected soon to fall upon his devoted head. He called up all his courage, however, and began.

"This afternoon, sir, I took some money from Mr. Wilkins to deposit in the bank."

"Well? come, be quick."

"I put it, as I thought, safely in this pocket; I went from here straight to the bank. I don't know how it happened, I'm sure I can't imagine," said Arthur, growing confused, with those stern, strong eyes staring straight into his, "but when I got to the bank I found, sir, I had lost it."

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"The devil you did!"

"I am sorry to say it, it is true."

"And what were you doing, on your way to the bank, that you hadn't an eye on that money, I'd like to know?"

"The money I supposed was safe, sir, and I walked straight along without thinking about it, till I reached the bank."

"A likely story that! Who did you talk to, or see, on your way? any of your companions?"

"I saw only one person, sir, whom I knew at all; one whom I have not seen before for several weeks."

"And that very one, I dare say, picked your pocket. What was his name? who was he?"

"He is a gentleman, sir, who would not do such a thing, I'm sure, any sooner than you would. He is a friend of mine."

"What is his name, I say?"

"Clinton, sir. No one that you know, probably."

The merchant leaned forward, and peered keenly into Arthur's face, as if to see if there was aught of hidden meaning in his words; and his features grew ashy pale while he asked, in a hoarse whisper:—

"*Clinton?* Clinton what?"

"Mr. Clinton is the only name I know him by. I haven't heard his given name," returned Arthur, surprised at the merchant's agitation.

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Mr. Delancey said nothing for a moment; but sat leaning forward, with his pale face dropped in thought upon his breast.

"Did he talk with you long?" he asked, at last.

"No, sir. He walked with me one block."

"You had the money when he left you?"

"I did not touch it from here to the bank, sir; and knew nothing of it from the time I left this door, till I reached the bank counter."

"Hem! yes, yes, a very likely story. It couldn't have got out of your pocket without hands, young man; and if your friend wouldn't do such a thing, and your pocket was safe, I don't think but what you know something about it."

"Me, sir? Mr. Delancey, you don't mean to say—"

"Tut, tut, I know about you young chaps; I might have known I would have just such trouble when I took you, I suppose you think I don't know that Henriquez's billiard table is between here and the bank, eh?"

"If you do, you know more than I do, sir."

"Dare you tell me that? Here, haven't you been gone a good two hours?—and all that time going to the bank, eh?"

"I tell you the truth, Mr. Delancey; and I am sure you are aware of it."

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"Well, there's no use talking now; you will not convince me if you talk till doomsday. That money you've got to replace out of your salary."

"Why, sir, it was three hundred dollars."

"There! there! how do you know how much it was, if you didn't look at it, I'd like to know."

"I heard Wilkins say this morning he had such a deposit to make. Ask him, sir, if he didn't."

"I've heard enough about it. You must make it up, that's all; and you'll be more careful henceforth."

"And, sir, you will retract what you insinuated had become of it? I'll willingly make it up to you, if it takes every cent I earn; but I'll not have a blight upon my reputation, even in your opinion, sir."

His words fell upon empty air; for Mr. Delancey had already left the high desk, and was striking his cane heavily down with each step, as he stalked down through the store. Arthur sank upon a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"A hard fate," he murmured, bitterly. "First to suffer the loss, and then to be accused, or at least suspected, of appropriating it. Heavens! it is too much; I will not and cannot stand it."

"Be calm, Arthur," said Wilkins, in his full deep tones; "look up, and tell us what has happened."

Arthur raised his head, and told his story unhesitatingly.

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"This is a bad business, my young friend. I am extremely sorry; but the only way for you is not to mind it. This is Mr. Delancey's way. Intercourse with the world has rendered him suspicious, and you'll never convince him that you don't know something about the money. No one else that knows you will ever think so, though; and you will stand just as high as ever. Yours isn't the first case of this kind."

"It is too outrageous, Wilkins, and I won't bear it. Do you think I'll tamely submit to be called, or thought, a thief?"

"What can you do? It is useless to talk or feel thus; say nothing, go steadily on, and Delancey himself will forget, after awhile, his suspicions. As to replacing it, I feel that you have been unfortunate through my means, and I will assist you in that."

"I don't wish you to, thank you, Wilkins. I don't care so much for my money as I do for my good name. To be robbed of it in this manner, is more than I can possibly endure."

"Let me beg of you to think no more about it. Follow my advice, and all will yet be well."

Arthur sat moodily down, and gave himself up to thought. He fancied there was no possible way to extricate himself from the difficulty, and that it would be useless to argue with such a man as his employer. With flushed cheek and thoughtful air he rose and took his place behind the counter.

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Wilkins watched him anxiously, and then, as though Guly were the elder, instead of the younger brother, he sought him for a consultation. He was busy with a customer, and Wilkins noticed that he was displaying some of Blanche's new work, and wondered whether it was that, or interest in his brother's behalf, which brought such a bright glow to his cheek.

"It is very beautiful," said the lady who was buying, examining one of the collars closely, "Very beautiful; is that your lowest, Master Pratt?"

"The very lowest, Madame. I have been gratified in being able to show these articles to you *first*. They are quite new, and I know how well you like the first choice."

"No one else, then, has bought from these before?"

"No, Madame."

"It is high, but I'll take it."

"Yes, Madame."

As the lady left the store, Guly turned to Wilkins, with a bright smile:

"You see I have kept my promise to Blanche, and have sold her work to a 'choice customer.'"

"I see," said Wilkins. "A word with you, Guly."

Guly stepped toward him.

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"Arthur has—"

"Poor Arthur! true enough! how could I forget him; what was the matter, Wilkins? I have been so busy, you know."

"He has got into sad trouble; I feel very sorry for him; but I can't help him an iota, that I see; it's too bad, I declare."

Wilkins then gave Guly the details, as far as he knew them, of Arthur's misfortune.

"Well, Mr. Wilkins, this is outrageous!" exclaimed Guly, with a vehemence unusual to him. "It would require the virtue and forbearance of a saint to bear up under such things. It isn't the money so much, though I'm very sorry he lost it, but it is his good name; to have that sullied, even in thought! It is enough to drive any one to desperation."

"Don't tell Arthur so, for the world," said Wilkins, very earnestly.

"No, no, I'll not—can I go to him?"

"Of course."

"Dear Arthur," said Guly, beckoning his brother a little one side, "I know all. You know how I sympathize with you, my brother; but cheer up, we can live through it all; and you will be, in the end, thoroughly acquitted of what Mr. Delancey suspects you of, even in his own heart. The only way to convince him of his error, is to show him by your future course how much such an act would be beneath you."

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"Oh, there's no use, Guly; I never could convince such a flint-hearted man in the world, of my innocence, if he chose to think me guilty. I was horrified at first, but I've thought of it, and thought of it, till I don't care much. It's my fate, I suppose."

"Don't give up in this way, Arthur; think of your own proud self, of how much depends upon you, of our dear mother, and all that. Don't allow yourself to be crushed."

"Guly, just think of it—a *thief!*"

"Only so in the opinion of one who will not reflect upon it long enough to see its utter impossibility."

"And all this year's labor lost, Guly; and nothing to send home now to mother."

"We'll try what we can do with *my* salary, Arthur."

"Pooh! the whole of it just covers the amount lost; and how are you going to live?"

"Don't give it up so, don't! There is One who will never desert those who trust Him. Remember that, Arthur, and look up."

"It is my fate to be forced to look down. It is useless for me to try to struggle against it. I can't be otherwise."

"You are too desponding, Arthur; many a man, now rich and happy, if he could tell his experience in getting so, would no doubt relate a harder life than yours can ever be. This should only serve to make you stronger."

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"If Mr. Delancey was only a different-tempered man, perhaps I could do better. If he had sympathized with me, and assured me kindly of his belief that it was all an accident, oh, I would have felt so differently, so happy in comparison! There is no pleasure in serving such a man; it is only rigid duty, rigidly performed, for one you cannot but hate. He is never so happy as when mixing gall with the honey of one's happiness. I am miserable, Guly, miserable! and I can't rouse myself. I wish I was as meek and forbearing as you are, I could be happier; my pride, my strong unbending pride, has been, and ever will be, my curse."

Arthur's tones seemed to struggle up so heavily in his sorrow, from his heart's depths, that Guly felt strongly inclined to tell him there were very few, however meek and charitable, who would submit to an insult of this kind quietly; but he remembered his promise to Wilkins, and refrained.

"If I could reason with Mr. Delancey, if he would talk with me as it is his duty to talk with me, I am sure he would think differently upon the matter; but for me to stay here for the ensuing year, as I now am forced to do, whether or no; and for me to feel that every time those cold eyes are turned upon me, they believe themselves to be looking on a thief! Oh, my God! Guly, it is too much!"

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Arthur was intensely excited, and the veins in his forehead stood out like cords, so swollen were they, and his face was deeply flushed.

Guly's heart ached for him, and he was trying to think of something which he could say to comfort him, when he was called away by a customer, and, with a kindly pressure upon his brother's hand, he left his side.

Arthur also stepped back to his place; but every attitude he assumed, every changing expression of his handsome face, told the restless misery of that young heart, and the crushing weight upon that lofty spirit.

Guly waited anxiously for night to come, that he might talk to, and try to encourage, Arthur. When the lamps were lighted, and the customers had gradually thinned out, he was about to cross over and speak to him. To his surprise he saw that his place was vacant, and he was nowhere to be seen. A sharp pang went through the boy's heart, succeeded by a sickening faintness; and he leaned against the counter for support, filled with undefined fears of sorrow, and danger, and unhappiness.

With a blush at his apparently causeless emotion, he stepped to the clerk who always stood next to Arthur, and inquired if he knew where he had gone.

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"No," the young man said; "he went out about half an hour ago, and Mr. Quirk was with him."

"Quirk!" ejaculated Guly, involuntarily, while the pang went through his breast again; and seizing his cap, he started forth, in the hope of discovering Arthur's whereabouts.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

"Press me not, I beseech you, so;  
There is no tongue that moves, none, none i' the world,  
So soon as yours could win me; so it should now,  
Were there necessity in your request, although  
'Twere needful I denied it."

### WINTER'S TALE.

Through the damp streets, where shone mistily through the heavy fog the lamps on the corners, Guly, with anxious heart and hurried step, wandered alone. He sought every place of which he believed his brother to have any knowledge, and left no spot unvisited where they had ever been together. All in vain. None of whom he inquired had seen Arthur, and of many he could not bring himself to inquire, blushing at the thought of his brother being known to them. Still, as he turned to retrace his steps, he found himself involuntarily looking into the richly furnished saloons, where the show of luxury, and display of wealth, lead so many, through their very love of gorgeousness, to drink, to distress, to death! Each time, as his eyes turned thitherward, a sigh of relief rose from his heart to find that Arthur was not an inmate there. Thus seeking, thus hoping, he found himself again before the door of No. —, Chartres-street. Having no pass-key, he rapped for admittance, for the store was closed, and all around it dark. Wilkins' voice bade him enter. Trying the door, he found it unlocked, and going in, saw Wilkins sitting by the coal fire—which the chill air of November now rendered necessary—alone, and apparently in deep thought. With as cheerful an air as he could assume, he approached him, and laying a hand upon each shoulder, as he stood behind his chair, bent forward, and looked up in the thoughtful eyes gazing on the fire.

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"What can be the subject of your meditations, Mr. Wilkins? your face looks sad enough to be the index of a sorrowful heart?"

Mr. Wilkins made no reply, but lifting his arm, drew the golden head upon his bosom, and held it there, stroking back with listless fingers the soft bright curls.

"Has anything unpleasant happened since I went out, Wilkins?"

"No, Guly; nothing has happened. I was alone here—the fire was bright, the arm-chair empty, so I sat down, and fell to thinking, that's all. Have you been to see Blanche?"

"Blanche! I don't suppose I could have found her, had I thought of trying."

"True enough. We are going there together. What of your brother, Guly?"

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Guly told him of his ineffectual search; the fact of his not having seen him in any of the saloons, and the hope he entertained of seeing him walk in, by and by, feeling happier for his walk, and seating himself there by the fire.

Wilkins shook his head, doubtingly.

"Your brother's spirit is one which needs to be peculiarly dealt with, until he grows a little older, and less impetuous. I'm sorry to say it, but he has more pride than principle just at this age; and he ought to have the blessing of a home and a mother's love, till the principle could be made to predominate. Get a chair, Guly, and sit close by me, here."

Guly brought the chair, and placed it close to his companion, and seated himself. Wilkins drew his head again upon his bosom.

"It is about *him*," continued Wilkins, "that I have been thinking this evening. I really take a deep interest in his welfare, and wish I knew how to guide him. For his sake I wish my own heart was more disciplined, that I was not so utterly incapable."

"Don't let such thoughts as these prevent you from using your influence with my poor brother, Wilkins. I am too young, too weak, too inexperienced, to control him. He would naturally scorn the advice of one so much younger; but *you*, oh! don't let too lowly an opinion of yourself deprive Arthur of the counsel and guidance he so much needs."

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"Ah! Guly, you don't know me. I might tell him how he should do; but my example, if he should ever chance to see it, would disgust him with my advice. Had it been different when I first came here, I might now be a better man. I was an orphan, came here from the North, had no soul in this vast city to love or care for me, and for five years I have lived here loveless and lonely, save when with those companions which a friendless being is almost sure to fall in with here; and I can turn to no one, feeling that they care for me."

"Wilkins, I love you; indeed, I love you as a brother."

"I believe you, Guly; though we are so different; though my cherishing you is like the lion mating with the lamb, still I believe in my heart the honest love I feel for you, God has blest me by causing you to reciprocate. I have been a better man since I first held you here on my heart. A better man, Heaven knows!"



"Wilkins, in all the five years you have been here, do you mean to say Mr. Delancey has never asked you to his house, or noticed you any more than he does now?"

"I have never been asked to enter his door, Guly, any more than you have. He would as soon, I suppose, turn a herd of swine into his drawing-room, as to ask his clerks there. He is very proud."

"That isn't pride, Wilkins; it is meanness. A truly proud man would adopt the contrary course, I am sure; and so attach all his employees to himself, and to his interests."

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"Ah! he never thinks of that. His negroes get better treatment than his clerks, by far; and there isn't a soul among them but what loves him dearly, and would die for him, I don't doubt, at any moment. So you see he can be kind, strange as it may seem."

"It is strange, Wilkins. Mr. Delancey is a man I cannot understand or appreciate. I don't think I like him at all."

"He certainly has done nothing to make you, my poor boy. His pride, for it is pride, renders him very disagreeable. If all the sin, which his harshness and indifference has caused in others, were laid up against him, 'twould make a mighty pile. There's a day of retribution coming for him, though."

As Wilkins spoke he bent forward, and rested his head on his hand, with a peculiar smile upon his lips.

"A day of retribution! What do you mean, Wilkins? Is there any trouble brooding for him?"

"All pride must have a fall," muttered Wilkins, as if to himself, while he gave the coals a vehement thrust. "Don't ask me anything more about it, Guly."

"But you have roused my curiosity," said Guly, looking up in surprise. "If it isn't a secret, I would like to know more of what you mean."

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"I mean a great deal, and would tell you sooner than any one else; but it would do you no good if I would tell you, which I can't, and so we'll say no more about it."

"Has Mr. Delancey any children?"

"Two—a son and a daughter; at least he *had* a son."

"And did he die?"

"Oh, no; he fell in love with a poor but worthy girl, who has no doubt made him an excellent wife, or at least would have done so had it been in her power. Instead of taking his daughter-in-law to his heart and home, and making her what his wealth could have made her, with her worth and beauty, he met the whole affair with stern opposition, and after his son's marriage turned him from him with a curse, and disinherited him. How the poor fellow has managed to live since, I can't imagine; for he had no profession, nor anything to live by but his wits. I heard once he had become reckless and dissipated, and had sworn vengeance on his unnatural father, but I've heard very little of him of late."

"This is shocking. A clerk can expect but little from such a father. Oh, horrible!"

"He is a man you will probably never know, however long you may live with him. Had it not been for the necessary contact my position in his employ brought us into, I should never have known him at all."

"And you believe he really deemed Arthur guilty to-day?"

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"That is more than I can answer. Mr. Delancey is close with regard to money matters."

"My poor brother! Wilkins, promise me to do all you can for him. Oh! I know how much danger surrounds him. What can I, so young and feeble, do? We two are all that is left our mother. Help me—I'm sure you will—to save him."

"I will, Guly—by my sworn love to you, I will. Sometime, my boy, when I may greatly need a friend to help me through a trouble or sorrow that is coming upon me—when those that know me may shun me—you, who love me, will be that friend. May I rely upon you?"

"Depend upon me?—yes, truly, Wilkins—in anything that's right."

Guly's heart was racked with more sorrowful anxiety for his brother than he could, or cared to, express; but in spite of his efforts to restrain them, the bright tears fell down his cheeks at Wilkins' kind words, and dropped upon the broad breast which supported him. Wilkins raised his hand, and wiped them away.

"Don't cry, Guly; your grief unmans me."

"Oh, Wilkins, how can I help it?"

Wilkins answered nothing, but drew the slight form closer in silent sympathy. The hours went on, and midnight still saw them sitting there together—the golden head upon the broad, kind breast, and the eyes of both looking thoughtfully into the coals.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

"She's beautiful, and therefore to be woo'd;  
She is a woman, therefore to be won."

KING HENRY VI.

—"Bright  
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;  
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when  
Music arose, with its voluptuous swell,  
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,  
And all went merry as a marriage bell."

CHILDE HAROLD.

Della sat in her large chair, before the dressing-glass, with her delicate feet buried in the rich softness of a velvet cushion; her hands were folded in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon Minny's face, which was clearly reflected in the mirror, as she stood behind her mistress, arranging the shining bands of long fair hair.

"Minnie, how very, *very* white you are! How came you to be so white, when your mother is the blackest slave papa owns?"

A scarlet flush rose to the quadroon's cheek.

"My father, Miss, was as white as your own."

"Were you born here, Minn?"

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"My mother was in your father's service when she gave me birth, Miss Della. Will you have your bandeaux single or double for this evening?"

"Double, Minn, so the wreath can lie nicely in between; and make those braids as rich as possible. I wish to look my best to-night. You have always lived here since you were born, Minn?—was a baby when I was a baby?"

"Yes, my dear Miss, and my mother was your nurse; your own mother not liking to spoil her figure by nursing her child, you were put to my mother's breast. So mother tells me."

"Well, if you had been a white child, that would have made us foster-sisters, wouldn't it? That's the reason old Mag loves me so well. I never knew of this before."

"It's something very common here, you know, Miss, for white children to have their foster-mothers among the slaves. Fashionable ladies always think it ruins their forms to have a child at the breast."

"Yes, I know, Minn; and I think it a very shameful practice, too. I never want to be a fashionable woman, if it is going to deprive me of performing a mother's holiest offices for my children. I'm sure after a child of mine had been reared at a black mother's breast I should feel they were black children, had black blood in their veins, and I never could feel right toward them again."

"You are one in a thousand, dear Miss Della; and such feelings are right, and good, and noble. But if you ever wish to be truly a mother to your children, don't marry a fashionable man, whose pride will be to show you off all the time in gay company, and who will be always fretting to keep your beauty good. It is such husbands that make bad mothers. A woman can't be a votary of fashion and a good mother."

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"I never shall marry a fashionable man, Minny—you *know* that; but when I *do* marry I shall try and be a good, and true, and dutiful wife, nothing more. I haven't a taste for high life—that is, gay life, which has no heart in it. But, Minny, let's go back to you; I commenced about you; what made you change the subject, child?"

"Did I, Miss?"

"Yes. Who was your father, Minny?"

Minnie's cheek lost its flush, and became pale as death.

"I cannot tell you, Miss."

"But you *know*."

Minnie made no answer, but her hands shook violently, and the braids she had just fastened fell loose again from her trembling fingers.

"What ails you, Minn? why don't you answer me?" said Della, looking up earnestly at Minny, in the glass.

"I never told you a lie in the world, Miss Della; and I don't answer you because I can't tell the truth now."

"You *must* tell me if you know, Minny; and you must tell the truth, too."

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"Oh, Miss Della," said the girl, sinking at her mistress's feet in a fit of wild weeping, "don't, don't ask me this. I never knew it myself till yesterday, and then I wrung it from my mother, who charged me, if I valued her life, never to lisp it again. It made me wretched. Oh, Miss Della, it would kill you."

"Kill me? How can it affect me, silly child? What nonsense."

Della lifted up the beautiful head which was bowed before her, and turned the pallid face toward her own.

"Tell me, you foolish one," she persisted, her curiosity fully aroused. "I must and will know about it now;" and she stamped her little foot with an air of command, which, toward her favorite, was very rarely assumed.

Minny pressed her hands, clasped one upon the other, hard against her heart, as if its throbbing was painful, and raised her eyes, full of a strange, wild light, to her mistress's face.

"I would sooner die than tell you, Miss."

There might have been something in that agonized look that called forth emotion, or there might have been something in that cold, fixed gaze, which stamped for the instant the father on that upturned, ashy face; for as she met the glance, Della suddenly clasped her hands to her face, and, with an exclamation of horror, fell back fainting.

Minny sprang wildly to her feet—"Oh, Miss Della!" she exclaimed, as she bent over the senseless form before her, pouring out her passionate accents as if there was an ear to hear them. "Oh, Miss Della, how could you crave this knowledge to-day, of all other days? Had it been yesterday morning, or ever before in all our life here together, I would not have known, and you would have never known. To-day, of all days! Oh, I have broken this poor, sensitive heart; woe is me, woe is me! Oh, if I had only died before I learned this dreadful secret, only died! only died!"

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With trembling hands, and eyes raining down their gushing tears, Minny bathed the pale brow, and brought rare perfumes, and chafed the little hands.

"Miss Della! Miss Della! I knew it would kill you—and you only guessed; I never told you—oh, no, never, never, never!"

Slowly Della returned to consciousness, and as her eyes unclosed, they fell upon the agonized face of her weeping attendant. She closed them quickly, and raised her hand so as to wave her from her sight, but it dropped listlessly back into her lap, and she lay still in the large chair, apparently as weak and helpless as an infant.

"Oh, Miss Della! God forgive me for what I have done, though I never meant to do it—never thought to do it. What could have turned your thoughts on this to-day?"

"Go away," murmured Della, faintly; "go away, so that I may open my eyes and not see you."

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Minny moved a few paces back.

"I can see you in the glass yet; go away so that I can't see you anywhere, Minn."

Weeping bitterly, Minny retired to the other apartment; and Della, with folded hands, sat quite still with downcast eyes and pallid cheeks, looking like a statue of meditation.

A little French clock upon the mantle-piece struck the hour, and went on with its monotonous tick, tick—that unobtrusive voice of warning and admonition—until the half hour was sweetly chimed, and still Della sat there, pale, and still thinking. At length she rose, and with an energy unusual with her, walked hastily back and forth across the room. It had a soothing effect, and her brow was calm and resolute, yet shadowed as if with some new lesson of life, harshly forced upon her. She seated herself once more before the mirror.

"Minny, I am ready for you now."

Minny came, with her face calm and corpse-like, and once more essayed to bind up the rich bands of hair.

"Place my wreath a little more front. My cheek needs the shade of that bright rose to relieve its pallor—so—that effect is charming."

"Your hair is dressed, Miss."

Della sprang to her feet like one who resolutely tossed some load from the heart, and taking the hand-mirror from the table, surveyed the arrangement of her hair altogether.

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"Beautiful! Minny, you have excelled yourself to-night."

"Thank you, Miss. What dress?"

"My India mull, and the rose-colored ribbons."

The dress was brought, and Della stood before the full-length mirror while Minny fastened it.

"Tie my shoulder-knots in your prettiest manner, Minny."

"Yes, Miss; and my reward shall be a rehearsal of the list of conquests?"

"I suppose so," smiled Della; "Minn, I pet you a great deal too much."

"I know it, Miss; and make me love you a great deal too well."

Della sighed.

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and Mrs. Delancey, in full evening costume, entered the room.

"Most ready, dort, darling?"

"Yes, mamma, I will be down in a few minutes."

"You look very sweetly in that simple dress; what prompted you to choose that to-night, treasure?"

"An instinctive knowledge, I presume, mamma, that I would look very sweetly in it," replied Della, archly.

Mrs. Delancey was a fine-looking woman—very fussy and very French. She smiled, and displayed her brilliant teeth at her daughter's answer, then stooped, and kissed her brow. Mrs. Delancey loved her child, with all the strength of affection she was capable of feeling. She was even first in her heart in some moments of pride and ambition, and second never, save to her love of fashion and display.

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"Clasp this string of pearls about your throat, it will relieve the plainness of your attire."

"I'd rather not have it relieved, mamma."

"What a strange whim," returned the lady, proceeding to fasten on the necklace.

As the toilet was declared finished, Mrs. Delancey stepped back to observe the effect.

"*Charmante, ma chere!*" she exclaimed. "Remember, love, your father and I wish you to be particularly agreeable to General Delville this evening. He is a splendid match, rich as a Jew, and of such fine family!"

"He is the gentleman who was of age when papa was born, isn't he, mamma?"

"Hush, child; what of that! He may be a little old, but all the better—you'll be left a charming young widow the sooner."

Della lifted a bracelet from the table, and fell to examining it with the closest inspection, while her little satin-slippered foot kept up an unconscious, nervous tapping upon the carpet.

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Mrs. Delancey looked at her watch—"Nine o'clock, Della; the guests will begin to arrive, shortly. You need not come down till your father comes for you. Remember, *ma chere*, General Delville, particularly."

So saying, the proud mother swept from the apartment.

As the door closed upon her, Della stepped through the open window, and passed out upon the balcony. Minny busied herself with putting aside the jewels which had not been wanted, and other unnecessary articles of dress, which the capricious fancy of her mistress had drawn from their proper places during the process of preparation.

A half hour passed before Mr. Delancey sought his daughter's apartment; when he entered, Della was seated gracefully on an ottoman, arranging a bouquet of orange flowers and mignonnette. It was a sweet picture, and the father stopped to look upon it.

Della looked up, and her eye went quickly from her father's to Minny's face, then dropped again upon her flowers.

"Are you ready, Della?"

"One minute, papa."

"You are looking very lovely to-night, my daughter. Be careful and have your manners to correspond with your looks. My choicest friends are here this evening, and I wish to see you Queen of Hearts."

"Especially to General Delville?"

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"Especially to General Delville, Della. I shall be very happy to see you his wife, and it is in your power to become so if you choose."

"I should like to know how many wives he has already, before I take that step, so that I may know how strong a fortification my eyes need against finger-nails."

"Fie, Della! the General has never been married, and you will no doubt occupy the first place in his heart."

"I have always hoped that when I married such might be my lot, but it cannot be in this case, I

know. If General Delville has lived in New-Orleans till he has grown old enough to be my grandfather, he can't have much of a heart left."

"Della, you astonish me!" said her father, with the frown deepening. "One would think you had no ambition whatever to make a good match."

"Papa, do you love me at all?"

Mr. Delancey started at the abrupt question, and gazed upon his daughter in surprise.

"Love you, Della? the whole of my heart is centred in you."

Della sighed, as if the answer did not quite please her, and taking her father's proffered arm, went down the broad staircase, and into the magnificent drawing-room.

Wealth, and beauty, and state, and grandeur, all were there; yet first, and fairest, and brightest, shone the merchant's daughter. The happy father and proud mother watched her, as with a light step she flitted through the thronged rooms, the "observed of all observers," and there was a light in her eye, an animation in her tread, and a glow on her cheek, which was all the more beautiful for being rare. [Pg 172]

She leant upon Mr. Delville's arm, the envied object of many a young heart there; and when seated at the harp, her clear, unaffected voice rose in strains of thrilling melody. General Delville was at her side, listening with earnest attention, and turning the leaves of her music with all the grace of a more youthful courtier.

Aware, as he was, of the sanction of the father and the eagerness of the mother, it was no wonder that the General strove to win to his withered heart so fair a flower. He had been a great traveler, and had feasted his eyes on the beautiful women of the East, and the more frigid beauties of northern climes. He had been courted rather than courting, and had gone through life dreading to take to his heart a wife, lest, when too late, he should find his wealth had been the talisman that drew her there.

But in Della, he thought he saw a sweet and guileless girl; and put forth all his attractive powers of conversation and graces of person (which, old as he was, became him well,) to interest her in himself. Her father watched the progress of their acquaintance with a delight which manifested itself, even in *his* cold eyes, and Della received the assiduous attentions of her white-haired admirer with a triumph for which she was excusable; yet with no desire to win him closer than now. [Pg 173]

The evening wore away, the splendid supper was over, and the guests, one by one, took their departure. Many a youthful suitor made his adieu to Della that night with a jealous pang, as Delville's apparent success arose to his mind. When the rooms were cleared, Mr. Delancey called his daughter to his side.

"I cannot let you retire, Della, without telling you how much you have pleased and gratified a father's heart this night. I am more than ever proud of you; you will well adorn the station in which Delville can place you. Bless you, Della. Good night."

"Good night, papa."

Della moved gracefully away, and slowly mounted the broad staircase leading to her chamber.

"No blessing of love—no blessing of affection," she murmured softly, as she went on, step by step—"only a blessing through his pride—cold, hollow, empty pride, with nothing noble, nothing lofty in it; having for foundation only an eligible match for me, or my station, or my appearance. What a life, what a life!"

Della expected to find Minny asleep, as the hour was late; but when she entered her apartment, Minny was there, walking the floor with her hands clasped thoughtfully before her. [Pg 174]

"Undress me, Minn. I am weary—wearily."

"Haven't you been happy, Miss?" asked the girl, as she knelt to unfasten the slender slipper from the pretty foot.

"Yes—and no, Minn. If triumph could make me happy, I must have been, so far as that is concerned; but in thinking of you I have been unhappy; and I have thought of you all the evening."

"Of me, Miss, in the midst of all that gaiety!"

"Of you. Would you like to be free, Minny?"

"Free, Miss Della? to have my freedom, and leave you?"

"Yes, Minny, if you would like your freedom, you shall have it this very night; papa will do anything I say with regard to it, and you may go, dear Minn, whenever you choose. You shall have money to carry you where you like. In the North you might do well; marry some rich abolitionist, perhaps, and be very happy. I am in earnest, Minn; you have but to speak."

"Miss Della, if I have offended you in any way, if I have hurt your heart by any means, if I have spoken, acted, or looked anything that displeased you, do anything to punish me save sending me

from you. What would my freedom be to me away from you? Miss Della, you will never know how poor Minn loves you."

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The girl had spoken in such a subdued voice, uttering her short sentences between the sobs that were trying to struggle up, that, as she paused in her task, and looked in her mistress's face with an expression of such tearful, doubtful anxiety on her features, Della was deeply touched, and sat a moment with her handkerchief pressed to her eyes. She took it down at last, and went on very calmly and thoughtfully.

"Minny, it is very painful for me to talk of this, but you must understand me: I'm afraid I can never be quite happy again, with you performing such offices as this for me. The discovery I made this afternoon—that unfortunate discovery for both of us—was terrible—very terrible!"

"Oh, Miss, that of all things you should have asked me that! I will never, never remember it, if you will only forget it, and let me be to you what I have ever been."

"I was right in what I suspected—I am sure I guessed the truth—you must tell me now, Minny," said Della, taking one of Minny's hands in hers, and speaking in a tone half doubtful that she might be wrong. "My father was your father, *n'est ce pas*, dear Minny?"

Heedless of the kindness with which the words were spoken, Minny threw up her hands with a gesture of despair, then flung herself full length upon the floor, in a burst of passionate grief.

"Get up, Minny; get up, and come by me here; come!"

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With the deep sobs still bursting from her lips, the girl rose, and sat, with bowed head and falling tears, at her young mistress's feet.

"Minny, you understand me now, don't you? Think of it, Minny: you are my sister!"

"Oh! none the less your slave, Miss."

"My father's child must never be a slave to me."

"Miss Della! Oh that this knowledge should have ever come to either of us; don't for the love of mercy talk so; don't put me from you; what am I but a negro's child, the fruit of the white man's sin?"

"I know, Minny, I know the world would never look upon this as I do; but you are in my sight as much my sister as if my father had lost a first wife and wedded again, and we were the fruits of the two marriages. The same blood is in your veins that is in mine. He who gave you being, to me is 'father,' to you is 'master.' You are more beautiful than I, as well as better fitted for the society into which I am forced to move, yet you are a slave!"

Della leaned back in her chair a moment; and again held her handkerchief to her eyes; she controlled herself quickly however, and continued:

"I set the case before you just as it is, Minny; I want you to view it in its true light—then choose between what I offer you, and what you must otherwise be. Don't tremble so, Minny; I never have felt towards you as a mistress would to a slave. When I look back, I remember you were the only playmate I ever had, the closest and best companion of my wayward girlhood; and I feel that I have always loved you, always respected you, and, Minny, I always shall. I am certain, Minn, that though there may be black blood circling round it, there never was a purer heart, a nobler soul, than yours. Were it not for my father's sake your position should be different in this house, but in honor to him I can only do you good by sending you where your birth and parentage will ever be a mystery. Minny, dear, will you go?"

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The girl had sat during all this time quiet as a statue, at her mistress's feet. As she heard her stop speaking, she raised herself upon her knees before her, and clasping her small hands above her, exclaimed:—

"As God hears me, Miss Della, I would rather stay by you, rather be the veriest slave that ever breathed, a mere thing to answer to your beck and call, so that I may be near you, and love you, and do for you, than to be the wife of the richest white man that ever lived—to be looked upon as white myself—or to move in those circles which you would fain believe me fitted for. As God hears me this is true!"

"Heaven bless you, Minny! Then we will never part."

With an exclamation of joy, Minny clasped her young mistress to her heart, and poured forth, with passionate vehemence, her prayers and tears and blessings. It seemed as if she could never cease, and Della twined her fair arms, jeweled, and white, and beautiful, beneath the thick black curls, which covered Minny's neck, and gave her kiss for kiss, and tear for tear.

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"When I am Bernard's wife, Minn, then I can make you happier. You have all those dear letters safe, quite safe?"

"I keep them as the apple of my eye, Miss. You can never make me happier, dear Miss, than I am now. I can never wish to be more blest than I am this minute."

"Dear Minny, you have a woman's heart, and that must know a woman's longings. When I have it in my power I shall at least try to make you happier, though it may be in a different way. You

have always been more a friend and a fond companion than a slave to me, and now, now—" Della paused, as if it were impossible for her to speak the words she would, then added, after a moment's pause, "Minny, never let this dreadful secret go farther, place a seal upon your lips, and let it die with you for my sake. And, if you will stay, Minny, rather than to go and be free and happy in your own way, I will do everything for you, love you, care for you, all—only never, never let this dreadful truth be known."

"Never, Miss, so help me Heaven! Only let me stay with you, and be what I have ever been to you, and I will be content. Try, dear Miss, to forget all that's passed to-day, and let us stand together in the old light."

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"No, Minny, I can never forget it. The old light can never shine on me again; but I will try always to remember it as I should; and now, Minn, finish, undressing me; or rather, teach me to undress myself."

"I claim this as my privilege, Miss, and never want you to learn how."

Della smiled, and patted Minny's cheek. There had a change come over her in the last few hours, such as she never thought to experience. It seemed as if she had become more of a woman in that short space than she had ever thought she would become. Her judgment and heart, too, seemed suddenly to have expanded; and she felt more respect for herself than she had ever done before. She had always been one who thought for herself, notwithstanding there were so many to think for her; and, with a spirit above all affectation, she looked at things in a plain, common-sense, and true light. When the first shock was over in regard to her relationship to Minny, she had struggled with her natural feelings of wounded pride, till the matter stood before her as it was. Her father was not one to win his child's affections, and Della had always feared more than loved him; but of one so cold and stern she had never in all her life thought this. But now that she knew it, she almost wondered how it was she had never suspected as much before. Few girls, in Della's position, would have talked with a slave as she talked to Minny—would ever have thought of placing matters in so strong a light before her; but Della was guileless and innocent at heart, with a child-spirit in some things, yet more than woman's strength in others. She never thought Minny could take advantage of the new aspect of affairs she painted for her; she only felt that Minny was enduring a life of wrong, and longed to give her redress. And Minny's was a great, and noble, and truthful heart. From earliest childhood she had been taught to regard Miss Della as her mistress, and was never absent from her side. Della had been educated at home; and Minny, with her quick mind, and an occasional lesson from her young mistress, together with her earnest desire to learn, had acquired more real knowledge than Della herself, though lacking some of the light accomplishments in which her mistress excelled. Thus had they grown up together, and they were not to be parted now.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Alas! the heart that inly bleeds  
Has naught to fear from outward blow;  
Who falls from all he knows of bliss,  
Cares little into what abyss."

BYRON.

When Arthur left the store, the evening after the unfortunate affair of the bank deposit, he had gone forth with no definite purpose, no chosen course for his footsteps, only with a longing desire to feel the breath of Heaven upon his hot brow once again, and to look up at the stars, which he felt glad would gaze on him always the same, from the deep blue sky above; no matter what changes came o'er the heart of man, or how black the frown adversity might bend upon him. Perhaps had the youth, that night, been left to commune with his own rebel thoughts, and to the companionship of those holy stars, and the still voice of the night, he would have become himself again, and sought his pillow with a heart refreshed from the storm that had swept over it. But his evil genius pursued him; and before he reached the first corner, he heard a quick step behind him, and turning, stood face to face with the last person he at that moment wished to meet—Quirk, his fellow-clerk.

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Since the Sabbath which they had spent so disgracefully together, he had shunned Quirk in every way. He had avoided his glances, shunned his presence, and turned a deaf ear to his sneers and gibes. But now there was no way to avoid him, and Arthur greeted him with as good a grace as possible.

"What the devil's the matter with you, Pratt?" he exclaimed, after the first words of recognition. "I can see plainly there's been a muss between you and old D., someway, but I'll be hanged if I could find out what 'twas about. He hasn't found out we lost that pass-key, has he?"

"D—n the key," said Arthur, uttering his first oath with cool nonchalance; "I don't know whether he's found it out or not, and care less."

"You'd have to care, I reckon, if he did find it out, though," returned the other. "Don't you see the store is liable to be entered any night, if a clever fellow happened to find that key? You see the

number of the store and all is on it."

Arthur walked on for a moment in silence, then replied:

"If a 'clever fellow,' as you say, had found it, and wanted to use it for such a purpose, he'd have been in, I guess, before now—that key has been gone a month or more."

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"Aye, but the nights have been too fine; starlight or moonlight all the while; and may be he is waiting for the new stock of goods, who knows?"

"Well, if that's going to happen," said Arthur, earnestly, "I only hope it will not come just yet; I've got trouble enough for one season."

"Trouble! what have you got to trouble you, I'd like to know? But I forgot, you haven't told me what occurred to-day; and that's just what I come after you for, to find out."

"Well, I may as well tell you, I suppose, if you are so anxious to know. Delancey, I don't believe, will keep it to himself, and you may as well know it from me as him."

"Never hope for him to keep anything secret that could hurt a body; I never knew him to screen a clerk's faults yet. He is of the opinion that to make the matter public, is the best way to ensure better luck next time. Let's step in here, and take something refreshing; and you can tell me the story over our glasses."

Arthur complied, and entering one of those gorgeous saloons, which can be found in almost every block of the Crescent City, Quirk stepped to the counter, and ordered a bottle of wine, and, in an under-tone, added:—"A private apartment, also, if you have one empty."

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The clerk, who was a portly, sensual-faced, red-haired man, raised his brows, and, tipping a sly wink at Quirk, said:—"Up stairs or down?"

"Both, perhaps," returned the other, with a laugh; "but if we want an upper one, we'll let you know. Down stairs for the present."

The man had by this time lighted a lamp, at the wick of which he had been working for some time, and taking the bottle of wine, he led the way into the back part of the saloon, where was a door partially concealed by red moreen hangings. He shoved aside the curtain, and passed into a long vestibule, elegantly furnished, with doors opening on each side, not unlike the state-rooms of a steamboat. These doors led into small apartments, carpeted, lighted, and containing four chairs and a card-table, with a pack of cards.

"You are perfectly private here, gentlemen."

"Yes," replied Quirk, seating himself with the air of a man who has bought his comfort, and means to enjoy it. "Ah, Quibbles, what shall we do for cigars? I forgot them."

"We have some prime Havanas, sir; how many did you order?"

"Oh, bring me half a dozen; that's enough after wine."

Quibbles departed on his mission.

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"This is a nice place, Pratt, to tell secrets in; don't you think so?"

"I do, indeed," said Arthur, looking around with a knowing air, and thrumming on the table with his fingers.

The clerk at this moment returned with cigars and wine glasses, and drew the cork of the wine bottle.

"Quibbles."

"Yes, sir."

"Has Clinton been here to-night?"

"Not yet."

"When he comes tell him we are here, and send him in, will you?"

Quibbles bowed, and retired.

"Is that the proprietor of this establishment, Quirk?" asked Arthur, helping himself to a glass of wine.

"Ho, ho, bless your heart, no. The proprietor is one of the pillars of an up-town church, and would feel his reputation ruined, and himself disgraced, if seen behind the counter of such a concern. He hires this man to play proprietor, and keeps the place open for the benefit of those who prefer bar-rooms to churches. You see, Christians go into anything that pays well, here."

Arthur bent over his glass with something like a frown on his young brow; then holding his wine up between his eye and the light, he shook it slowly, and watched the ruddy reflection playing on his hand.

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"Didn't I hear you ask if Clinton had been here, Quirk?"



"Aye, just so."

"Does he frequent this place?"

"Well, between you and me, he does."

"Does he use these?" said Arthur, lifting a few of the cards, and letting them fall slowly through his fingers.

"Well, sometimes he does one thing, sometimes another; you see this is a very extensive establishment, and sometimes he drinks in the saloon, sometimes gambles in here, and sometimes passes the evening up stairs with the ladies, and occasionally does all in the course of an evening. He's a fine fellow, I tell you; a fast un, though."

"What ladies are in the house, the family of the man out yonder?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Quirk, uproariously; "what a prime innocent it is, though. Why, my boy, this is one of the fashionable establishments of the city."

A glow of shame crossed Arthur's cheek, as the truth flashed upon his mind, and dashing his glass angrily down, blushing at the thought of being led into such a place, he was about to pass out of the door.

"Why, hold on, Pratt; have you forgotten what you came here for? You haven't told me a word of what you were going to."

"Nor shall I in this hole," returned Arthur, laying his hand upon the door-key; "if you want to hear it you must get out of here." [Pg 187]

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Quirk, trying to detain him; "hold on till we finish this bottle."

"Not I," replied Arthur, "I've had enough;" and dashing open the door, he rushed against the trim figure of Clinton, who was just about to enter. [Pg 188]

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## CHAPTER XIX.

"Fate is above us all;  
We struggle, but what matters our endeavor?  
Our doom is gone beyond our own recall;  
May we deny or mitigate it? Never!"

MISS LANDON.

"Whither so fast, whither so fast!" cried Clinton, so cheerfully, as he laid both hands on Arthur's shoulders, and playfully detained him, that he could not answer the speaker with a frown; so, holding out his hand, he shook that of the new comer heartily, and suffered himself to be led back into the card-room.

"If you hadn't have come just as you did, Clin, this chap would have been off like a shot from a shovel, his young modesty was so shocked just by my telling him the state of affairs in the house here," said Quirk, tipping back in his chair against the wall, while a sneer mingled in the smile upon his lips.

"Well, if he isn't used to such things, I don't wonder," returned Clinton, drawing Arthur to a seat by his side, and squeezing cordially the hand he still held. [Pg 189]

"You're a pretty one to side that way," said Quirk, half angry at Clinton's remark. "If he ain't used to such things, it's time he was initiated, if he ever expects to be a man."

"Time enough, time enough," replied Clinton, good-naturedly, shaking the bottle to see if there was anything left in it, then touching a table-bell at his side, he summoned Quibbles.

"A couple of bottles of champagne here, and clean glasses."

They were brought instantly.

"How came you to drop in here, boys, to-night? I declare it is an unexpected pleasure."

"Pratt had something on his mind, and came in here to tell me of it; but he got so d—d huffy, I don't suppose I shall hear it now."

"Something on your mind, eh, Pratt?" said Clinton, in a commiserating tone, as he filled Arthur's glass, and shoved the bottle to Quirk; "if so, here's to the end of it."

They touched glasses, and drank off the sparkling draught.

"Now for the story, whatever it is!" cried Clinton.

"It is no story, only a little affair that happened after I left you this afternoon," returned Arthur.

"Indeed! after you left me! I am all impatience, my dear fellow, let's hear."

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In as few words as possible, dwelling as lightly as he could on what Mr. Delancey had said to him, Arthur told it all as it had happened, his companions listening attentively meanwhile.

"Why, my dear soul!" cried Clinton, clapping his hand on Arthur's shoulder, as he finished speaking, "your pocket must have been picked. There's always a crowd in the street at that time of day, and somebody has just been cute enough to rob you."

"So Mr. Delancey thought, and he said probably you did it," returned Arthur, though in the tone of one who tells what he feels assured is false.

"The deuce he did!" exclaimed Clinton, filling the glasses again, and holding up his own to conceal the flush upon his face.

"Well, it's too bad anyhow," said Quirk, with returning good nature. "You don't get any credit for honesty, and have to bear the loss besides—outrageous!"

"How did the old man know anything about me?" said Clinton, with an indifferent air; "I'll have to call him out, if he touches upon my character in this style."

Quirk laughed, and Arthur hastened to explain to Clinton how the remark had been made, and how light a bearing, after all, it had upon himself.

Clinton received it with a careless bow, as if, at best, he considered it a matter of no consequence.

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"And so he actually insinuated that you had it, eh, in the end?"

"Yes—and that's the most I care for; if he had believed me honest, I could have borne the rest unmurmuringly; but to be thought a thief!"

"It seems hard enough, don't it?" said Clinton, in a tone of sympathetic kindness, well-calculated to win on the trusting heart beside him, and laying one hand familiarly on Arthur's knee.

"It's a deuced piece of business, that's all about it!" cried Quirk, growing excited with the wine he had swallowed; "it's an insult I wouldn't take from any man—old or young, or little or big; I'll be dem'd if I would."

An insult! that was a light in which he had not exactly placed it before, and Arthur's blood rose at the thought. Clinton remarked it, with a twinkle of gratification in his keen eye, which he strove to conceal from Arthur's observation.

"It's enough to drive one desperate! I scarcely know what I should do under such circumstances," said he, suddenly, with his eyes fixed keenly upon Arthur's flushed face.

"There's no way for me to do but to put up with it," returned Arthur, doggedly; "I've got to stay there, and make it up; and I may as well do it quietly as to make a disturbance about it, because it's got to be done."

"It's enough to tempt one to try the strength of the old adage—," continued Clinton, thoughtfully, and pausing in the midst of his sentence.

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"What's that?" asked Arthur, without looking up.

"Why, to take the game as well as the name," said the other, with a short laugh, and without taking his eyes from Arthur's face.

"True enough," cried Quirk, "you might as well be a thief as to be called one, according to my opinion."

Arthur placed his elbow on the table, and looked into the lamp-blaze thoughtfully, with his head on his hand.

"You are both ready to advise," said he, after a moment's silence, "but I doubt if either of you know what you'd do in my case, after all."

"I'd be avenged," said Clinton, resolutely; "but you are not me, and I don't ask you to do as I would."

"That's just the thing!" cried Quirk; "and if you can hit upon a plan, carry it out; there'll be some satisfaction in that."

"Revenge!" said Arthur, bitterly; "how can I be revenged? It would be a sparrow struggling against a vulture."

"You admit you have been wronged?"

"Most unjustly so."

"And you would be avenged, if you could?"

"Yes, if I spilled my heart's blood."

Arthur had drank deeply of the wine, and his blood was heated with it, and his worst passions

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aroused. He had been goaded into the belief that he had been grossly insulted and had taken it submissively, and that revenge was his only resource. He threw aside his chair, and strode back and forth across the narrow room, with the excited tread of the caged lion.

Clinton watched him furtively from beneath his brows for a moment, then rising, linked arms, and leaned toward him in a confidential manner.

"My poor friend, I pity you from the bottom of my heart; count upon me whenever you are in want of a friend, will you?"

"Always, Clinton; thank you."

"And if I should try to think upon some good plan, lay some good plot, by which you could gain retribution for this great wrong, would you then be courageous, and carry it out handsomely?"

"Would I? Never fear me there. I'll show you that I'm not one to bow my neck to the insults of a money-holder. I'll carry out anything you say."

"Bravo! my boy; you've got the right kind of spirit in you; that's what I like to see—you're a man of pluck."

"About when do you think you'll have this grand plot ready for me, eh?"

"The first dark night."

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"You'll consult the clerk of the we-weather as to when that is c-coming, eh?"

"I suppose so," said Clinton, laughing. "Meanwhile, come down to my house the last of the week, say Friday night, and I'll have all things in cap-a-pie order for you."

"How do I know where to find you, my more than brother," said Arthur, clasping Clinton's hand closely.

"Quirk knows the way. You'll come?"

"Depend upon it."

"Good! that's settled; now for a bumper on it."

"Well, I don't know, Clinton; I—I—declare I'm afr-afraid I'll be (hic) drunk if I drink any more."

"Nonsense! down with it; let's finish the last bottle."

The wine was swallowed, and Clinton, taking Arthur's hand in his, shook it heartily.

"Ah! my boy, you've proved yourself 'one of us' to-night; glad to claim you as a b-hoy. Whenever you're in want or trouble, signal the b-hoys, and you'll be helped out of it. It's a better society than any of the Odd Fellows or Free Masons can ever be, and costs you nothing besides. What say you now for a stroll?"

"Agreed! for my part, I am ready for anything."

"Then hurrah, boys!" cried Clinton, beginning to sing a lively air; and lighting their cigars, they passed out into the saloon.

"Put all this in my bill, Quibbles," said Clinton, as he passed that gentleman, on his way to the door.

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"That'll do, sir—all right."

With noise and laughter, and rude jest, the drunken trio went down the street. It needed but a glance to show that the younger of the three, he with the bright complexion and jetty hair, was but a novice in dissipation, and more than one felt a glow of pity, as he jostled past them in the light of the bright windows of Royal-street. Alas! alas! Arthur; where was the ghost in your heart now? that haggard figure, pointing ever with its skinny finger backward!

They kept on until they reached St. Ann-street, into which they turned; as they did so, their attention was attracted by the appearance of a slight female figure, with a short cloak about her shoulders, and the hood drawn over her head. The moment she heard the unsteady steps behind her she hurried her pace, which was already rapid, and sped along with feet winged with fear.

"By Jove! that's a graceful little minx!" exclaimed Clinton.

"She's inclined to lead us a chase, too," said Quirk.

"Let's after her."

"Agreed."

And with a shout, the three started in pursuit, scarce conscious, in their excitement, of the object they had in view.

With a scream, the light form bounded onward, and fled away like the wind. Strong limbs followed; but her feet were fleet, and lightly clad, and with the hood falling from her head, and hands clasped upon a parcel she carefully carried, she seemed almost to fly before her pursuers. With a cry of delight, she saw the gleam of a lamp come through an open door, a little beyond,

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when, as she attempted to spring an intervening gutter, her foot struck the curb-stone, and she fell to the earth.

In an instant she was lifted in the arms of Quirk and Clinton.

"Oh, grandpapa! grandpapa!" she shrieked, in thrilling accents, "what will become of your poor, poor Blanche? Help! help!"

Her cries were unheeded by her merciless captors, and they bore her down an adjacent street.

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## CHAPTER XX.

"Oh! Clifford, how thy words revive my heart!"

KING HENRY VI.

"Villains!" cried a deep, powerful voice, as a huge form met them, in full career, staggering through the darkness; "villains! unhand this girl, or, by Heavens, you'll rue the hour you ever placed a finger on her."

"Help! help!"

"And who are you, I'd like to know, that dares to put his finger in our p-p-pie?" returned Quirk, trying to dash past the tall figure with his burden.

"I am one that dares to protect defenceless virtue, whenever I see it thus assailed. This girl is not what you take her for, or she would never cry for help; and I tell you to put her down, or I will make you," returned the other, lifting his strong arm, and still preventing them from passing.

The girl struggled in the grasp of her captors, and moaned.

The new comer sprang forward with a bound, and clasping his arms about her, strove to draw her from their hold.

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"Not so fast, not so fast," said Clinton, placing one hand over the girl's mouth; "remember we're three to one here, and if you don't want your head broke, you'd better keep away."

"That's the kind," said Arthur, coming forward; "hold on to her, Clin—"

The words were no sooner spoken, than the speaker fell to the pavement, leveled by a heavy blow from the arm of the intruder, and a second blow sent Quirk, staggering, into the gutter, while at the same moment the girl was snatched from the now yielding arms of Clinton.

As she gained her feet, she flung back her hair from her eyes, and looked up in the face of her rescuer.

"Monsieur Wilkins!"

"Good Heavens! is this Blanche?"

At the mention of Wilkins' name, Arthur and Quirk sprang to their feet, and started on a run down the street, followed by Clinton.

"A devilish muss this," cried Quirk, as they paused on a corner, a few blocks from the scene of their discomfiture.

"It was too dark for him to recognize a soul of us," returned Clinton; "if it hadn't been for the lamp gleam coming suddenly through that window, she would not have known him."

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"I hope he didn't know me," said Arthur, rubbing his forehead, which had struck the pavement as he fell, and feeling considerably sobered by his fall, and the recent flight. "I don't want this scrape to go back to Guly."

"Who's that? your young milk-and-water brother! Pshaw! what does he know about the fun of such things? If you want to enjoy yourself, I advise you to keep your sprees a secret from him; he has no soul to appreciate such affairs."

"You are more than half right there."

"He's the kind of character I can't bear to be near," said Quirk, emphatically.

"You couldn't pay him a higher compliment than to say that," returned Arthur, warmly.

"Well, well, don't get into a miff about a trifle now. Clint, where shall we go to?"

"I shall go home, I reckon; my head aches," said Arthur.

"No, you won't go home either," replied Clinton, pulling him along with him, good-naturedly. "Let's make a night of it, now we have begun. What do you say for the Globe ball-room? There's a high affair there to-night, and

'We'll dance all night till broad daylight,  
And go home with the gals in the morning.'

"Agreed," said Quirk; "come along, Pratt. Your foot's in, and it'll be dirty, whether you pull it out first or last; you may as well have the good of it."

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With a heart responding to this idea, Arthur suffered his companions each to take an arm, and went on with them to the Globe ball-room. The haggard ghost, the pale figure of warning and remorse, was gone for ever from Arthur's heart.

Wilkins, the moment he discovered who it was he had rescued, gave scarce a thought to the flight of those who had opposed him; but, with a gush of thankfulness in his heart, he drew Blanche's arm within his, and led her back toward her own house.

"How came you to be in the street at this hour, Miss? Do you know it is after midnight, and young girls like you are never safe in these streets at such hours?"

"Oh, sir," said Blanche, bursting into tears, "my grandpapa was taken very ill. I had no one to send, you know, and of course I had to go for assistance myself. I looked all up and down the street, and saw nobody, not even a watch-man; so I put on my cloak, and ran for the doctor. He wasn't home; so I went a little further to see old Elise, who always gives me medicine that helps grandpapa, and she detained me a little while preparing it; and when I came out, *they* came behind me; I tried my very best to run away, but I fell down, and they caught me. Oh, Mon Dieu! Monsieur! what if you hadn't come just as you did!"

"You would have been a most miserable little girl, without doubt, Miss Blanche."

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"I can never thank you enough, Monsieur."

"You can repay me by never going out at such a time again."

"And when another case comes just as extreme, Mr. Wilkins, what can I do? I couldn't let poor grandpapa die, could I?"

There was such an earnest intonation of voice in these words, and such a simple innocence of manner, that Wilkins couldn't repress a smile.

"If I furnish you with a tidy little black girl, will you take good care of her, Miss Blanche, and let *her* do your errands?"

"Oh, Monsieur, that would be too much for you to do."

"No; I own a number of slaves, and the daughter of one of them is too young to be put out to a place, and is just old enough to work for you."

"You are so very kind!"

By this time they had reached Blanche's home, and as she tripped up the steps, she said:—

"Come and see grandpapa to-morrow, Mr. Wilkins; and let him thank you for his kindness to his little house-keeper."

"I will come, Miss Blanche."

"And, Monsieur," she added, coming out again after she had passed into the door, "bring Guly with you, won't you?"

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"Oui, Mademoiselle."

The door closed, and Wilkins passed on, thoughtfully, towards Royal-street. In the excitement of the recent adventure, he had almost forgotten what had called him forth at that time of night, and now walked on, like one who wanders forth purposeless, into darkness and solitude. But suddenly, in passing a brilliantly lighted café, the thought of Arthur crossed his mind; and, for the first time, the idea flashed upon him, that he might have been one of those concerned in the capture of little Blanche.

He stopped short, and was about to turn back, to endeavor to trace the fugitives, when he remembered that Arthur had as yet but just commenced the downward path, and that he could not already have become so fallen as to commit so base an act as that which he had just witnessed. It had been too dark to recognize faces, and his own excitement had prevented him from thinking to notice the voices; and the more he thought of it, the more convinced was he that Arthur was not among them. He had sat with Guly by the fire until the midnight hour had passed, waiting for Arthur's return; but when the fire died out, and the lamp faded, and he still was absent, he persuaded Guly to go to bed, promising that he would seek his brother before he slept. Guly would fain have accompanied him, but Wilkins induced him to remain, not wishing to familiarize the pure heart of his boy-friend with the scenes in which he felt convinced he must look for the wanderer.

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Wilkins faithfully kept his word, and left no place unsearched wherein he thought it possible to find Arthur. He believed he would find him in some one of the popular places of resort, standing ever open, with their false glitter and dangerous splendor, to lure their victims to destruction. But 'the wee small hour ayont the twal' found him still searching, and still unsuccessful.

Disappointed, with lingering steps he turned toward the store, but, as he stepped upon the sill, a slender figure darted from the alley-way, and laid a chill and trembling hand upon his arm.

"Bernard!"

"Heavens, Minny! what brings you here?"

"Hopes and fears, and memories, and sorrows, which *will not* die."

"Pshaw, girl! harping on the old string yet! What of your mistress?"

"She is well, and by this time happy in her dreams."

"And did she send you to me? how came you here?"

"I came here with the pass, which gives any negro a right to the highway; and though I forged it, it served me well."

Minnie stepped back into the shadow of the archway, and Wilkins, obeying the convulsive grasp of that delicate hand, followed her.

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"Bernard," said she, dropping her voice almost into a whisper, which echoed deep and clear through the dark and narrow alley, "I have come to you to-night, for the last time in my life, to stand before you for a moment in the light of other days."

She paused, as if some smothered emotion overcame her; and the trembling hand upon his arm slipped down, and was clasped an instant in Wilkins' grasp. It lingered there but a moment, one wild sad moment to Minny, and was withdrawn hastily, with a gush of tears.

"I cannot tell you," she proceeded to say, in a tone of touching sadness, and speaking every word with impressive distinctness, "I cannot tell you what came over me to-night, as I sat by the tall window, looking up at the pale stars, and listening to the night-wind, but it seemed to me like some vivid dream, or some shadowy vision of the past, and as my mistress fell asleep, I sat there still, looking up at the stars, with my vision between me and them. Listen, Bernard, and let me tell you what it was."

Wilkins' heart was touched by the soul-reaching sadness of the girl's manner, and he folded his arms patiently upon his breast, and leaned back against the brick wall of the archway, with his head bent forward to listen.

"I saw myself, Bernard, at first, as I was when first you came here. I knew none of the sorrows of my situation then, if there were any; at least I did not think it was anything to be a slave, and I was light-hearted and innocent, and very happy. I saw myself tripping along with my basket in my hand, as I so often used to do in my frequent errands to the store, and I met you, and at last, one moonlight night, you started with me from the store, and talked with me kindly and gently, and left me only at the gate of the great house where I lived. Bernard, do you remember?"

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"Yes, Minny, I do remember."

"And the next night, and the next—and still the next—they all came before me to-night so clearly. You were by my side, and talking sweetly, gently, lovingly. Yes, you told your love to me, Bernard; I saw you in my vision to-night as plainly as I saw you in reality then. On your knees before me, me the quadroon, clasping my hand, kissing it, blessing it, praying, imploring, beseeching me to be your wife. You were younger then, and less ambitious. I loved you so passionately, so wildly—Oh! my God! with what intensesness—and I told you so. To-night, looking up at those stars above me, I seemed to hear the old cathedral bell, I saw the doors swing slowly open, I heard the solemn service, you clasped me to your heart—your own."

"Girl! girl!" cried Wilkins, striking his hand upon his brow passionately, "why do you come to call all this up now?"

"Hear me, Bernard," said Minny, laying her hand again upon his arm. "You must hear me out. My lips shall never call the past to your mind again, never; but hear me now. I kept my place, and you kept yours. We met clandestinely, when we could, and where we could; and when I found that bondage kept me from your side, and that you had neither the gold to buy me, nor the courage to have it said you bought your wife, then, then I learned the bitter lot the quadroon has to bear. I was as white as you, as free in heart and motion, with high and good impulses, and a cultivated mind; and yet I had no liberty to go abroad, and make my home with him I loved, and, for the first time in my life, I cursed the fate which rendered me a slave! A little time went on, and what a change! Oh! Heaven! that I should e'er have lived to see it! you grew cold and distant as you rose in life, and when you gained the position you now have here, I saw, because my very love made me see, that an ambitious heart had turned your thoughts higher than the poor quadroon, the beautiful but wretched slave. You loved my mistress! my master's daughter! She whom he would rather this day bury in the Potter's field than see your wife—and you know it! Oh! what agony then was mine! It was my turn then to weep, and pray, and plead; was I not your lawful wife, your own? Ha! what answer did you give me then? That our marriage was a mere form, that it was illegal, and I was—what? No marriage could be performed lawfully, you said, between a white man and a woman with the blood of my race in her veins. I wonder that I did not go mad then; I was taken terribly ill, but it was my fate to live on in misery. I lived to see you and Miss Della meet often, after that first meeting at the masked ball, and I lived to see her love you. When I found her secret out, I gave you up for ever; and from that moment my love froze up, and

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has hung in my heart like an unthawing icicle ever since."

"Have done, girl!" cried Wilkins, suddenly laying his heavy hands on her shoulders, as she stood before him with the starlight she so loved, just making her pale face and glittering eyes visible; "have done, I say, or I will curse you. Hence! I have heard enough of this; why do you come prating here, to tell me what I already know too well?—out upon you!"

In his impatient anger, Wilkins threw her from him, and strode hurriedly, up and down through the narrow alley, where they stood. Minny waited until his excitement had in a measure subsided, and he stood once more with folded arms before her, and his dark eyes looking into hers.

"Now," said he, speaking half in mockery, half in awe of the firm-hearted girl beside him, "now, my sin, my concentrated lightning, my beautiful passion, my quintessence of gall and bitterness, go on. I'll stand and listen now till doomsday, if you will it, though your lips drop burning coals into my bare bosom, and scorch my soul. Go on, I say, I'll listen."

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Minnie drew herself up proudly before him, as she heard his words, and stood with her beautiful head erect, and her keen eye fixed upon him, unwaveringly.

"Had you possessed a soul to burn over a woman's woes, and a woman's wrongs, it would have been scorched out long ago, Bernard; but let that pass. I came to you this night, not only to tell over my own wretchedness, a reviewal of which had risen up so forcibly before me, but I came to you anew as the spirit of the past, to call up in your breast the memory of what you have been, and to ask you if the future brings a change. And now, Bernard, on all your hopes of happiness, here or hereafter, answer me truly. Do you sincerely love this girl, whose guileless heart you've won?"

"And whether I do or not, girl, is it you I must make my confessor? No, never. It is a matter which concerns you not at all. Whether my heart be black as hate, or pure as an angel's pinion, I lay it bare to no one. Whatever my feelings or intent in this matter, they are my own."

"Not so, Bernard. If ambition has prompted you to gain her affections, if love of wealth has sent you a wooer at that shrine, having in your breast no faithful heart to bestow in return for hers, let me beg, let me implore you, to stop where you are. Be merciful, compare the home which you can give, to the home from whence you take her. Compare the happiness which you can bestow to that of which you rob her, and feel, that if you take her, with all this, to a loveless breast, you take her to misery, to desolation, and death!"

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"Do you deem me a villain, woman?"

"What you have been, you may be again."

Wilkins mused a moment; then, in a softer and more subdued tone, said:—

"No, no; oh no! God only knows—but never that to her, oh never!"

"Bernard! my mistress is dear to me; her happiness more sacred to me than my own. If I believed that you would ever play her false, if I believed that a sinister motive led you to accomplish this end, as I stand before you here, I would expose you as you are. I would lay bare to her the secrets of the past. I would warn her to recall the love which she has lavished on you, though the next hour should be my last, in consequence. Her happiness shall never be wrecked while I have the slightest power to guide it clear from danger."

With his impetuous spirit growing calm, as Minny became more excited, Wilkins looked upon her, as she confronted him, with her soul in her face, and his eyes kindled with the admiration his impulsive but generous heart could not but feel.

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"Most nobly spoken, Minny!" he exclaimed, earnestly, "and now, as Heaven hears, let me speak what I feel is truth. Minny, there is a first love, a wavering, flickering, effervescing sentiment of youthful hearts, faithful and enduring in some instances, but not in mine, and this, God forgive me, I gave to you. True, I believed then I could never change; but the change came, with the exhalation of my heart's first passion, and though I never hated, I found I could no longer love you. Our marriage was illegal; I did not know it when it took place, but I learned it afterwards, when my love had chilled, and with perhaps a cruel, but a just hand, Minny, just to us both, I severed the cord which had bound us so sweetly, and our parted hearts drifted out of each other's sight, on the billows of life's ocean."

"Aye, Bernard, the one, a torn and shattered wreck, cast helpless on the desolate shores of sorrow and despair; the other, strong and uninjured, floating away to new and pleasant places, with only the shadow of a sad memory following it."

"Too true, Minny, too true! alas for the restless impulses of my misguided spirit. Alas for the trusting hopefulness of thine. But, Minny, as I stand before you now, with my whole heart open to your sight, I can most truly declare, that my love for Della is all that you would have it. She is trusting and innocent. I will never blight the one, or betray the other. I will hold her to my strong heart as some tender flower, which needs protection from a wintry blast, and from the world's cold breath; I will shield and guard, and cherish her with my life. God help me so to do!"

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"Amen, Bernard, amen!"

"Minny, are you satisfied?"

"Yes! my heart trusts you once again. Even more hopeful for its trust for another, than even for itself."

"Bless you, Minny; and now 'tis time your anxious heart found rest. I will see you safe to your own gate, and then good-night."

Minny suffered Wilkins to draw her hand within his arm, and lead her forth once more beneath the starry skies. They walked on silently, each engrossed with their own reflections, with only the occasional interruption of the watchman, or the rattle of some noisy vehicle, hastening along the stony streets. Minny at last stopped at the entrance of the vacant court, leading to the secret garden door. As she was about to withdraw her hand from his arm, Wilkins retained it, firmly, yet respectfully, in his own.

"I have been thinking, Minny, more deeply than I ever thought before, of the great wrong which I have done you. The time may never come again when we shall meet as to-night we've met, and before we part, I must hear your lips pronounce my forgiveness."

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"From the bottom of my heart, Bernard, I forgive you all that you may ever have done to me; either in word, or thought, or deed."

"I have been a wretch, Minny."

"But," continued the girl, without heeding the interruption, and speaking in an earnest, thrilling tone, "by the Heaven that is above us both, Bernard, I here swear, that if you are ever cold or cruel to the new bride you are winning, as true as there's a heart in my bosom, I will be her avenger—mark my words; though I should have to follow you to the ends of the earth, that revenge shall be mine."

A moment of silence ensued, and Minny stood like a breathing statue of retribution, with her glittering eyes fixed upon the face before her.

"Ah, Minny, the chill breath of desertion and sorrow has extinguished the last spark of affection which once glowed in your breast for me, or you could never speak thus. But fear not; your young mistress shall be to me as the apple of my eye, even as the core of my heart."

"Enough, enough. Good-night."

"Stay, Minny; can you learn to think of me kindly; and, in coming days, to witness my affection for another unshrinkingly?"

"I have already learned to do so."

"And you will not let these gloomy visions of the past rise up between you and the far-off stars?"

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"Never again, never again."

He pressed the trembling hand he held between his own, and touched it to his lips.

It was drawn quickly from him; a stifled sob fell upon his ear, and he stood alone.

Slowly he turned his steps homewards, and with every echo of his solitary footfall, with every sob of the passing night-wind, came back upon his troubled heart, with thrilling sadness, Minny's last mournful words, "Never again, never again!"

Again he reached the store, and the lock, obedient to the ponderous key, turned noiselessly, and Wilkins entered. It was dark and gloomy, and a chill passed over him as he fastened the door, and groped his way along between the deserted counters. The scene through which he had just passed had called up bitter and unpleasant memories, and there came over him a sense of lonely desolation, such as he could not endure to experience. He stopped a moment as he reached the high desk, and stood there, silent and thoughtful.

"I will go to him," he muttered; "there is something holy in his presence, which will make me happier."

With cautious steps he mounted the winding stairs, and sought the room where Guly lay. The moment he approached the bedside, the boy started from his restless pillow.

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"Arthur, is it you?"

"It is me, Guly," returned Wilkins, in a low voice.

"You! and you come without him?"

"I come alone, Guly."

"And has anything happened—oh! do not keep it from me! Is Arthur hurt? What brings you here, Wilkins, if it is not that?"

"I came here, Guly, with my own troubled heart, to look upon you as you slept, and to go away happier. I have no news, either good or bad, of poor Arthur."

Guly was silent a moment, then taking Wilkins' hand, he said:—

"I cannot tell you how much I thank you for the long and dreary walk you have taken for my sake. Some day I hope to be able to repay your kindness."



"Don't mention it, Guly; a mere trifle."

"It was a great deal to me; and now, Wilkins, would you just as soon lie down by me as to sleep in your own bed? It must be nearly morning, but this is a gloomy place to lie in alone, with only a troubled heart for company."

"True, Guly; I will be with you in a moment."

They lay down together, and soon slept, side by side, exhausted by watching and weariness; and the boy's fair head was pillowed on the man's breast, rising and falling there like a golden shield, resting on the bounding heart, "keeping the evil out."

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## CHAPTER XXI.

"'Tis done! I saw it in my dreams.  
No more with hope the future beams;  
My days of happiness are few.  
Chilled by misfortune's wintry blast,  
My dream of life is overcast.  
Love, hope, and joy, adieu—  
Would I could add, remembrance too."

BYRON.

Arthur was at his place in the morning, almost as soon as Jeff opened the door. His face was pale and haggard, and wore upon it a look of unbroken gloom, and his eye wandered restlessly, as if dreading to meet another's gaze. He had arrived at his post so early, however, that no clerks were yet in the store, and for some time his only companion was the busy negro.

"Jeff," said he, at last, in a hesitating tone.

"Yes, massa, I'se here, sah."

"Did you sleep here behind the store-door last night, as usual?"

"Yes, massa, ob course."

"Did my brother go to bed early that you know of?"

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"Well, no, massa, he didn't. He and Massa Wilkins sat back dar by de fire pretty late, sah!"

"Indeed! what could they have been talking of to keep them sitting up?"

"Well, massa, I don't 'spect 'twould be berry hon'ble in me to tell, case I know dey taut I was sleepin', and didn't know I couldn't help hearin' ebery word dey sed."

Arthur blushed as the thought crossed his mind, that the negro's sense of honor was higher than his own; but his curiosity overcame his scruples, and he went on questioning Jeff, as he rubbed up and trimmed the lamps for evening.

"Perhaps you heard my name, Jeff, eh?"

"Well, 'casionally, I 'spect I did, sah. Bery common ting for brudders to talk of one anudder," said Jeff, rubbing away on the lamp he held with redoubled earnestness.

"Did Mr. Wilkins leave the store, that you know of, after it was closed?"

"Well, I bleeb he did, sah! He couldn't a come in widout he'd been out, and I know one ob my toes got pinched in de crack ob de door by his coming in when 'twas most mornin'."

"My brother was not with him then, was he?"

"Well, I had my eyes shut, sah! and it was too dark to see if I'd a had 'em open. 'Alus de darkest hour 'fore day,' you know, sah."

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"You don't know whether my brother asked Mr. Wilkins to go out, or not, I suppose?"

"Really, couldn't tell anyting 'bout it, sah," said Jeff, mounting on a wooden stool, and taking down another lamp carefully. As he gained the floor his eyes met Arthur's face.

"Bless de Lord, young massa, how came you by dat offal bump 'long side ob your head?"

Arthur drew his hat hastily over his brow, and turned away with a dissatisfied air, without giving any reply.

He stood in the door, half-angry at the unsatisfactory answers he had received, but ashamed to show, even to the black, that he felt any real interest in the matter. Preferring, too, to continue the conversation in any way rather than be left to silent communion with his thoughts, he turned suddenly, and said:—

"Jeff, wouldn't you like to be free?"

"Free, massa!" exclaimed the negro, rolling up his great eyes at his questioner, in earnest wonder; "why, what de debil put dat in your head? No, sah! I wouldn't be free for nuffin. If dares one ting in dis world more mean dan anudder, I 'spect it's a free nigger. Guy! de Lord deliber dis chile from anyting ob dat kind."

"You astound me, Jeff. This is all nonsense."

"You'se not de fuss pusson from de Norf, massa, dat's been 'stounded by what de niggers say in de Souf here. I 'member wunst old Massar hab a fren cum here from somewhar, State of York, I tink 'twas, an' he taut a great sight ob him, and took him roun' de city in de big carriage, and made big dinners for him, and 'vited all his notorious 'quaintances to meet him at his house, and all dat. Well, all de time dat Master was makin' so much ob him, dat man was catching ebery chance to try and git his niggers away from him, and de Master knowin' nuffin 'tall 'bout it, and treatin' him like a king.

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"Well, one day, dis ole debbil cum to me, ('scuse me for calling him so 'fore you, Mister Pratt, but he warn't nuffin else,) an' stood an' looked at me awhile, as I was workin' away, and he sez, 'Jeffrey'—he allus called me by my hull name, and wus a kind of pious-lookin' man, wore a white neck-tie, and alus folded up his hands kinder solemn when he spoke—'Jeffrey,' sez he, puttin' on a bery long face, 'I do feel so much pity for you!'

"'Caus why, massa?' sez I.

"'Why, 'cause I see you here sich a fine, strong, young man, with sich able powers o' your own, and sich excellent caperilities to make a fine livin' for yourself, a workin' here, day in and day out, an' a givin' all your life fur de benefit ob anudder. Oh, I feel so sorry fur you!' an' he sighed when he sed dat, like a tired mule.

"'Well,' sez I, 'massa, I'se contented where I is. I hab my victuals and clothes, and a good hum, and for all I can see, dat's all my Master has. Ob de two I does tink I'm de best off. Sometimes, when I see him cum in lookin' all pale and flurried like, from his business, I tink to myself I wouldn't hab all his 'sponsibilities on my back fur de world. Guy! I'd rather be de slave dan de master, any time; and as fur when de time comes to die, I reckon I'll take jist as much out of de world as he will.'

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"'Poor benighted soul,' sez he, liftin' up his hands again, mighty solemn, 'so they've really learn't you to talk so, eh? To think ob perwertin' a human soul in dis way! Drefful! drefful!'

"'Now,' sez I, 'massa, nobody told me to say dat at all. Don't you 'spect brack man's got sum common sense, and can see as fur into a cane-brake as anybody else? A brack man's nebber a fool 'cept when he's coaxed to run away from a good master, sah! Better bleeb dat.'

"'But only to tink,' sez he, 'ob bein' whipped like a hoss when you do anyting wrong, and all dat.'

"'Well,' sez I, 'I 'spect if you've got any chillen, you puts de gad on to dem when dey do wrong, too. I'se got a kind Master, and one ob de bes young Mistresses in de world. Fur my part, I'm happy as de day is long.'

"'But,' sez the ole feller, 'if you get away, and go North, see how much happier you'll be. You'll have all you earn to yourself, and can buy your own clothes, and can have your own hum, and be out ob de chains of slavery—be a free man, tink ob dat! Cum, if you want to go, I'll help you to run away.'

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"'Tank you, massa,' sez I, 'but I'd rather stay, and hab ebery ting provided fur me, to tryin' to be free, and habbin' to dig like a dog to airn my living, an' den not half live. But if you want to set me free so bery bad, and feel so 'stremely bad 'bout my sitation, if you'll jist walk into de house, an' offer to buy me ob my Master, you can get me, I 'spect, because I ain't one ob de best niggers in the world, an' I'll jist try dis freedom you talk ob, for awhile.'

"'Buy you!' sez he, wavin' of his white hand at an orful rate, 'nebber! 'Spose I'll lay out my money to buy a nigger free? Be dem, no! Go free! you've a right to be free; jist cut, and run 'cross de line, an' be happy."

"'Cross de line, and go to de debbil!' sez I. 'No, sah! I'se got too much respect for my Master to leeb him in dat style; 'side dat, I'd never 'spec to go to Hebben in de wurld, 'cause I might jist as well rob him ob so much money, fur he paid a good price for me, I tell you. No, sah! I say. I'll stay where I am as long as I can, fur, 'cording to my idee, dar's nuffin meaner in all creation dan a free nigger, 'cept it's a hypercritical abolitionist.'

"'Lord! I had to run den, as if de ole scratch was at my heels, fur he flung his cane at me so hard, dat when it struck, it stood straight up in de ground. I peeked roun' de ara winder when I got out ob reach, and he was shakin' all ober, he wus so mad, and swarin' fit to kill. Yah, yah, I fixed de ole feller dat time, Massa Pratt, I 'sure you."

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Arthur could not help smiling at Jeff's enthusiastic relation of the circumstance, and at the same time he saw it was useless to carry on a conversation upon this subject with one of his quick wit; so he only remarked to the negro, who seemed waiting for some encomiums, that he "served him right," and then turned away, and began arranging the goods in his department for the day's sale. Steps were now heard upon the stairs, and Wilkins, followed by Guly, came down into the

store, the latter looking pale, and half-sick, from the previous night of lonely and anxious vigils. Wilkins passed Arthur with a cheerful "good morning," and Guly advanced to his side, trying to smile; but the attempt was futile, and he gained his side, and took his hand, silently.

Arthur's heart had not become so hardened, in so short a space of time, as to lose all its generous impulses, and he was deeply touched by the expression of his brother's face, so full of grief, yet with such an apparent effort to conceal all sorrow from him. Wilkins was engaged with his books, and Jeff was busy in the back part of the store; and, assured that he would not be observed, he threw an arm about his brother, and drew him close to his side.

Guly lifted his large blue eyes, sad and moistened, to Arthur's face.

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"Dear Arthur," he whispered, "could you but know how much I loved you, you would never—never—" he could get no farther, and stopped suddenly, struggling to keep down his rising emotion.

"I would never go astray thus, you would say, Guly; but think not so. It is my fate; I cannot turn aside from it, nor avert it; when I would stop and struggle, on this slippery, downward path, I find it impossible, and I rush on, like one who must keep moving, or fall."

"You do not call upon One to aid you, who would surely hear your cry."

Arthur was silent.

"If we knelt oftener, side by side, as we used to, dear brother, do you not think that your heart would grow more humble and more submissive? and that we both would be happier far?"

"Guly! do not charge me with having totally neglected those duties. The past night must, indeed, have been a long one, if you can believe that we no longer do as we *used to do*. Night before last, remember, Guly, I was by your side, looking over with you the pages of the Holy Word, and kneeling to Him who bids us obey it."

"True, Arthur; but the night has seemed to me almost interminable. It is very lonely without you, Arthur."

"I am not sorry you miss me, Guly; it seems to whisper of so much love; and your love is very dear to me. Remember what I told you the other night upon the step, and always try to feel this affection for me."

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"Always, Arthur."

"There is a terrible weight upon my spirits this morning," added the elder brother, speaking huskily; "I have never felt such a heaviness of heart before. All that was ever bright in my past life, comes up to my memory with a pall wrapped around it, and the future shows no fairer scene. In truth, I have witnessed more vice since I parted from you, Guly, than I have ever imagined the world contained."

"Don't you feel ill, Arthur? If you will lie down, I will see that your place is taken care of."

"No, Guly, I am getting used to it; I require no rest now; and I may as well bear up, after a night's dissipation, first as last."

"I beg you, Arthur, not to talk in this way. Surely you do not mean to continue this course; you will not, you cannot, I am sure. What would I ever do, dear brother, left utterly alone and friendless here?"

"My poor Guly! alas, I dare not promise myself to make another attempt to do better; my pride is my misfortune; and I feel as if the hopes and promises of all my young life were dead. I am wretched, wretched!"

At this moment Quirk entered the store; and as Arthur looked up, he caught the leer of significant meaning, sent from a quick wink of the eye, and a momentary elongation of the visage, of his late companion.

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He smiled in return, but at the same moment blushed deeply, as if ashamed to be seen exchanging significant glances with such a being. He also gently withdrew the arm which was about his brother, and moved a little away from him. The clerks now began rapidly to fill their respective places, and the brothers started forth, accompanied by Wilkins, to the restaurant. Wilkins observed, that at breakfast Arthur helped himself freely to claret, and drank heartily, as if to satisfy a burning thirst. He made no remark upon it, however, and the meal was altogether a sad and silent one. All were reflecting upon the events of the past night, a subject which each felt a peculiar sensitiveness about broaching, and with the mere table ceremonies, which even in such a place the brothers did not fail to observe, the breakfast was finished.

As was frequently the case, Wilkins was the first to be through, and as soon as he had taken the last mouthful, he took his hat and started for the store, as if there was something painful in the silence which had fallen over them. Though left to themselves, the brothers did not resume the subject they had been discussing before Quirk's appearance, and though Guly longed to ask about the bruise standing out blue and prominent on his brother's brow, he could not frame the words with which to ask the question. He felt, too, that the knowledge might bring him much more trouble and uneasiness, than the unexplained sight of the blow, and they passed forth into the street, with linked arms, but divided hearts, and turned their steps toward the store.

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They had gone but a short distance, when Guly's attention was attracted by a gathering crowd upon the opposite side of the way, and, with a natural feeling of curiosity, he hastened across the street, accompanied by Arthur, to discover the cause of the excitement.

What was his astonishment, to see extended upon the pavement, face downwards, while with his long arms he swept his crutches around him, like a pair of oars, to keep his tormentors, the boys, away, his old acquaintance, the dwarf. He had evidently fallen down, and in his descent had dropped his greasy cap, from which had rolled a few of his precious picayunes. He either was unable to rise, or else would not do so, lest while he was engaged in righting himself, the boys should rob him of his scattered silver. They had gathered about him at his fall, but he had swung his long crutches so dexterously around him, keeping his one eye fixed gloatingly upon the bits of change meanwhile, that not one dared to approach him closer.

The moment Guly's eye fell upon him, he hastened forward with an exclamation of pity upon his lips, and in spite of the crutches, he stepped behind the unfortunate old man, and raised him to his feet. Without hesitation he commanded the boys to leave the picayunes untouched, placed the cane properly in the dwarf's hand, then restored to him the cap, and its scattered contents, at the same time adding a trifle from his own purse, to the little stock.

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"Hih, hih!" chuckled the little man, for the first time looking up, as he received his treasure; "hih, hih."

His one eye, with its odious expression, lit suddenly upon Guly's face, and became illuminated instantly with a new light. It regarded him earnestly, and though he stepped back to avoid the gaze, the immense head, with that one eye burning in it, turned still toward him, on the slim, wrinkled neck.

"You pick me up, Monsieur?"

Guly smiled, and nodded.

"Hih, hih; I am obliged to you; will you keep the boys away till I get started?"

"They shall not touch you."

Taking one more earnest look of Guly, he threw his weight upon his long crutches, and swung away between them, with the skirts of his coat, as usual, trailing behind him.

"You have met this miserable object every morning, for more than a month, now, Guly, and he has always begged for alms, and you have never refused. How do you know whether he is worthy or not?" said Arthur.

"His deformity is sufficient to testify to that, brother."

"With your salary, I can't imagine how you can afford it."

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"A picayune a day is a mere trifle; I save for him what I might otherwise spend in selfish indulgence."

"Well, charity begins at home. *I* can't afford to be so benevolent."

"Whoso giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," replied Guly, with a smile, as they entered the store.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

"I love that soul so nobly proud,  
That misery cannot blight;  
The soul that braves the jeering crowd,  
And sternly claims its right."

ANON.

Guly took his place with a more cheerful heart than the early morning had promised him; for the consciousness of having performed a kindly deed, imparted a buoyancy to his spirits, which on the previous night he had almost fancied he could never experience again. He had been in his place but a few moments, when a lady entered to purchase some embroidery. The article she desired was an expensive one, and the contents of the whole box were searched before she found it. As Guly was folding it for her, he perceived, as he held it between him and the light, that there were several threads broken here and there between the delicate fibres of the work, as if it had been eaten by an insect. He immediately pointed out the defect to his customer. She examined it, and finding that the piece had suffered in the same way throughout, she expressed her thanks to him warmly for having made her aware of the imperfection, and also manifested her regret at not being able to take the article under such circumstances, for she had intended it as a bridal gift to a young friend of hers, and would have felt deeply mortified if the discovery had been made after the presentation. After a few more trifling purchases, she turned away, and Guly restored the rejected piece of work to its place, and put the box upon the shelf. As he turned round, his eye

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fell upon the face of his employer, who stood bolt upright on the opposite side of the counter.

Guly bowed politely, and wished him good morning; but the hard face before him relaxed not a muscle, and stared straight and rigidly into the boy's eyes. It needed no second glance to show that Mr. Delancey was very much enraged.

"Did I see you, sir," he demanded, at last, in a tone far from being inaudible, "point out to a customer a defect in her purchase, and so lose a sale?"

"I certainly did so, sir; you would not have me sell an imperfect piece of goods, knowing that it was so, for perfect, and take the full price for the same, would you?"

"What was it to *you*, I'd like to know, after she had examined the piece, and declared that it suited her, whether there was a blemish in it or not, if she had not discovered it?"

"She might have discovered it afterwards, and would no doubt have thought I meant to deceive her, and, in all probability, I should have lost her custom altogether." [Pg 230]

"Nonsense! young man; she would have sent it to her milliner to make up, and in an hour the imperfection would have never been discovered. The next time I see you do a thing of this kind, you lose your place."

"Then I must, sir," returned Guly, firmly; "I can never sacrifice principle to profit, under any circumstances."

"You're a fool," said Delancey; pale with anger at the firm but mild demeanor of his clerk. "How much would the sale have amounted to?"

"Thirty-five dollars."

"It shall be taken from your salary. Teach you better another time."

"Very well, sir. Wilkins, be kind enough to mark my salary thirty-five dollars less, if you please."

Mr. Delancey had carried on his part of the conversation in so loud a tone, that it was audible to a number, who were not too busy with their own affairs to pay heed to it; but Guly felt deeply chagrined to observe, as Mr. Delancey turned away, that his late customer had been standing just behind the merchant, examining some goods at another counter, and had probably heard all that had passed. As she left the store she looked up at Guly, with a smile, bowed to him, and passed out. [Pg 231]

As small as Guly's salary was, he looked upon the loss which he had suffered as a mere trifle, when compared with the pleasure he received from an approving conscience. He felt that he had acted right, not only in exposing the defects in the desired article, but in remaining firm to his sense of duty under the anger of his employer.

The incident awakened in his breast a wish to know the name of the lady who had looked at the goods, and he turned to Mr. Hull, the clerk who stood next to him, to make inquiry. Hull informed him that he knew little of her except as a customer; that he had never learned her name, as he did those of most of his customers, by sending goods to their houses, for she always came in her carriage, and brought her own servant. He added, that her affability had won the esteem of all the clerks; more than this he could not tell.

When the dinner hour arrived, Quirk sauntered down past Guly, looking at him with an impudent stare. He turned back, as he reached the door, and stopped at the counter.

"Anything you will have, Mr. Quirk?"

"No, I reckon not; when I do, though, I'll know where to come to find an honest chap to deal with," and he curled his disagreeable mouth into a sneer.

Guly was silent; not wishing to prolong the conversation with one for whom he felt such an aversion. Quirk, however, was not to be put off in this manner; and drawing out his tooth-pick, he began using it among his huge masticators, and continued:— [Pg 232]

"I s'pose you thought the boss was of the Puritan stamp, and would perhaps promote you for that nice little affair of this morning, eh? You found yourself mistaken, I reckon, when you had the *thirty-five* charged over, ha, ha!"

"I thought, sir, of acting honestly, only; and since you happened to overhear the conversation, let me tell you that I should have done the same thing the next moment, under like circumstances."

"Well, you're a precious ninny, that's all I've got to say about it."

"If so, perhaps you'll be willing to lounge on your own counter instead of mine, Mr. Quirk."

"No," he replied, at the same time changing his position, "I'm comfortable enough here; so long as the boss don't see me, I believe I will stay where I am."

Guly made no reply.

"Well, say," said Quirk, again wheeling round so as to face Guly, "what's the reason you can't be a little sociable with a feller, when he comes and tries to talk with you. Pshaw, your brother is worth two of you."

"I prefer devoting business hours to business," returned Guly.

"And paying for lost sales out of your own salary. Let me advise you, if you are going to stay in this place, to let the customers find their own blemishes, and take the responsibility."

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"I shall always act according to my own judgment in such cases, Mr. Quirk," replied Guly, taking his hat, and leaving the young gentleman to pour out his advice to an unoccupied counter. Arthur had gone to dinner before him; so Guly trudged on alone, and, on entering the restaurant, found Wilkins seated at the little table, which the three so frequently shared together, by himself.

"Where's Arthur?" inquired Guly, anxiously.

"He finished before me to-day, for a wonder," returned Wilkins, smiling, "and went out some time since; you probably passed each other on opposite sides of the way."

This last suggestion quite comforted Guly, whose apprehensions for his brother had, of late, become most painfully awakened, and he fell off into conversation with his companion, upon the various topics which chanced to present themselves to their minds.

Suddenly Wilkins looked up, and remarked:—

"I have an engagement for you to-night, Guly."

"For me! what is it, pray?"

"Guess."

"Oh, I never can. You must tell me, if you ever expect me to know."

"What would you say, if I told you 'twas a visit to Blanche?"

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"Can it be possible?"

Guly blushed very deeply, which Wilkins observed, and commented upon with mischievous delight.

"Did the invitation come from her own lips, Wilkins?"

"To be sure it did."

"And you accepted in my name?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you! I shall be delighted."

"At eight o'clock, then."

"Very well."

And so they parted, and Guly was left alone at the little table.

It was an hour when the restaurant was pretty well filled, and the numerous inmates busily discussed the news, foreign and political, and affairs private and public, in their various languages and different manners. Guly looked round from his solitary table, an amused spectator of the scene. But suddenly his attention was attracted by a sound of shuffling steps upon the floor, and turning, he beheld his friend the dwarf, making his way in between the tables, with a dexterity which his long canes would scarcely warrant.

Though surprised at the presence of one so poor in such a place, Guly advanced, and placed a chair for him at a table near his own, and helped him to mount upon it.

"Hih, hi! Monsieur; you are very good," puffed the little man, quite out of breath, without looking up at his kind assistant. "Give me a little bean soup, if you please, Monsieur. I am very poor, and very hungry to-day. Must spend one picayune for one cheap dinner, or else must have one cheap coffin made for me at the expense of the corporation! Hih, hi!"

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Guly smiled at this odd speech, and rang the little bell for the waiter. As he did so, the dwarf suddenly wheeled his head round on his slender neck, and tipped his one eye curiously up at the face beside him.

"'Tis you, Monsieur. Be gor, I thought it was one waiter. Hih, hi! I am very hungry, Monsieur."

"Here is the waiter. What will you have, my friend?"

"One cheap dinner—bean soup—I am so very poor. Ah, Monsieur, 'tis hard to be so poor."

Guly ordered some meat to be added to the old man's frugal repast, and then returned to his own table to finish his dinner. The dwarf seemed to dispatch his meal with a fine relish, though interrupting himself in the process of eating, every few minutes, by twisting his crooked body half-way round, and turning his one eye up at Guly, as if to make sure he was there.

The singular appearance of the dwarf, and the ready and gentle assistance rendered him by Guly, had attracted considerable attention, from those who yet lingered over their viands; and when Guly took his seat, a young exquisite, who occupied a table just at his left, and who had been obliged to use two of his fingers to part his glossy moustache, while he passed in his food with his

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other hand, now turned round, and regarded him with an impertinent stare.

"I say, Mistar, is that gentleman with crutches yondaw, a brothaw of yours?"

"By the laws of humanity he is, sir."

"Awr! I'm glad to find there's no closaw tie, so I can express my opinion of him. He is a scamp, sah!"

"Indeed! why so?"

"Because he is, sah!"

"You know him?"

"Perfectly well!"

"And he is a scamp?"

"If he's no relation of yours, yes, sah."

"Does he tipple?"

"Not zat I know, sah!"

"Steal?"

"No, sah!"

"Meddle with other people's affairs?"

"Yes, sah! zat is, every day he puts his disgwusting digits on my spotless cassimeres, and asks for money!"

"You of course grant his request?"

"Not I, sah! I feel always like touching the twip of me pwatent leather gaitaw just beneath the lowermost extreme of his spinal column, and elevating his dangling supporters a few feet in the air, before pwoPELLing him into the nearest guttaw."

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"A very unpleasant feeling, most certainly."

"Vewy true, sah!"

"Yes, sah, especially when you know your stwaps are too tight to admit of any such use of your unmentionable members," squeaked the dwarf, mockingly, who had sat unmoved within hearing distance of the whole conversation.

A roar of laughter followed this speech, through which the dandy sat frowning darkly. When it ceased, he sprang near the dwarf, shouting:

"You mean to insult me, do you, eh?"

"Hope you wouldn't notice such a scamp as me, sah!" squeaked the dwarf in answer.

"I will pwummel your cwoked legs, sah!"

"Wipe that off of your own, sah, first," cried the other, dexterously turning a fresh plate of bean soup over the dandy's "spwotless cassimeres."

Another roar of laughter followed this act, amid which the exquisite made his exit with his pocket handkerchief spread over his lap, swearing he would "go stwaight and sue for dwamages," that he was "scalded to death by the dem beggar, and he would have revenge for his ruined trousers, be gar!"

Guly, after assisting his helpless friend to his crutches and a firm standing, was about to leave; but the dwarf detained him by twitching the skirt of his coat, then exclaimed:

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"Hih, hih! monsieur, I lost my bean soup but I saved my head, hih! hih! bean, soup's good, but 'twas spilt in a glorious cause; paid for monsieur?"

This last question was put in such a comic manner, with that one eye tipped up towards him, that Guly could not repress a smile; but he cordially satisfied him on that point, feeling still able, in spite of his diminished salary, to pay for a beggar's dinner, which is more than many, with their well filled purses, can make themselves afford to do.

Freeing himself from the companionship of his singular friend, Guly hurried away to the store; with every light footfall, and each thrilling heart-throb, whispering to himself one word, which fell upon his thoughts in the midst of the crowd and din through which he hastened, like the tinkling music of a waterfall in the midst of a broad desert, "Blanche! Blanche!"

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

Pure thoughts are angel visitants! be such  
The frequent inmates of thy guileless breast;  
They hallow all things by their sacred touch,  
And ope the portals of the land of rest.

At eight o'clock precisely, Wilkins stepped down from his desk, gave orders to have the store closed, and told Guly he would be ready in one moment. The clerks, most of them, dropped the curtain of linen over the goods, and went out, not sleeping in the store and having no pass key. While Jeff was putting up the shutters, Guly went to Arthur and told him he was going out to see one of Wilkins' friends a little while, but would be back soon, and begged him to go to bed and try to sleep that haggard look from his face.

"Yes," Arthur said, he had no doubt but he needed rest and would try to gain it; and shaking hands they parted. Wilkins seemed waiting for the two or three clerks who yet remained, to go away before he left, but as he stood drawing on his gloves, Quirk came up and whispered something in his ear which Guly did not hear, but to which Wilkins answered aloud, saying: "I can't leave the key with you, but I'll lock you in."

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"And how long will you be gone?"

"Only an hour or two."

"All right, then."

Wilkins and Guly went out and locked the door, leaving the young men in there. They walked on, through the busy streets thronged with pleasure seekers, some on foot, some riding, all gaily dressed and full apparently of bright anticipations and buoyant life. Sometimes a lamp gleam would fall through the plate-glass windows of some princely structure, where light forms of beauty, attired in fashion's garb, were flitting through the mazy dance or listening to music's enrapturing strain. As Guly walked on, noting the panorama of life which passed by him, he fell into a fit of musing from which he was unable to rouse himself, until they turned into another street, and Wilkins remarked quietly that it was the one in which Blanche lived. Then his whole attention was awakened, and there was no more musing, no more lack of conversation till they paused to rap at the door of the little house where Blanche lived. She opened it herself, and held out a hand to each of the new comers.

"I am so happy to see you," said she earnestly, as she permitted them to enter. "Guly, this is grandpapa, you will soon be acquainted with him, for we have been talking about you all day, and I have been describing you to him, so that he might know how you looked, and could know just how you would always act when I was giving you my work for sale, and all that."

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The old gentleman was very venerable in appearance, and sat in a large stuffed chair with his grey locks floating over his shoulders, and his hands clasped upon a staff he held before him. His sightless orbs were turned in the direction whence came his good child's voice, and when she mentioned Guly's name he held out one trembling hand, and expressed, in a feeble, faltering tone, his pleasure at "seeing" them.

Guly took the extended hand, shook it cordially, and sat down near the old gentleman and entered into a brisk conversation with him, leaving Blanche to be entertained by, and to entertain, Wilkins.

"She called you Guly, this child of mine," said the old man, suddenly breaking a slight pause which had occurred in the conversation. "Blanche, my love, when will you ever learn to be polite?"

"Dear grandpapa," returned Blanche, approaching him and stroking down his snow-white locks with her soft hand, "don't call me impolite, only a little too thoughtless and informal, grandpapa."

"Thoughtless and informal then, my dear; but I could wish you not to address young gentlemen by their given names."

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"Well, grandpapa, I always say 'Mr.' to Monsieur Wilkins, because he is twice as tall as I, and looks always as if he expected to be mistered; but, grandpapa, just feel of Guly—he is nothing but a boy, only a little taller and a little older than I. Do let us be Blanche and Guly to each other."

There was no withstanding the simple and artless manner with which these words were spoken, and Blanche hung fondly over her grandfather's chair.

The old man smiled as he listened to her, and, turning to the side where Guly sat, he said, in an apologetic manner:

"Blanche's reasoning springs from her heart; she studies no etiquette save that which nature teaches."

"Which will carry such a spirit as hers through the world more safely than any other," said Wilkins, drawing his chair also to the side of his blind friend.

"Still," said Guly, blushing as he spoke, "it may make her heart so rare a gem that too many will covet it."

A shade of anxiety crossed the blind man's features as he heard the words, and he turned his dim eyes toward Guly as if he would give worlds to read the expression of face with which the



sentence had been spoken.

"Lately," said he, leaning forward more heavily on his staff, "I have such thoughts myself. I am a weak, powerless old man, already bending over the grave into which I must so soon drop. When I think of this poor, dear child, left unprotected and alone in this great city, I am very unhappy, very miserable." [Pg 243]

Guly saw a tear sparkle, and trickle down through the wrinkles of that aged face, and his own heart yearned sorrowfully.

"Blanche will never be without friends," said Wilkins, encouragingly. "At least she will never lack for one while I live."

"Or I," exclaimed Guly, earnestly.

The old man shook his head, and smiled sadly.

"Two young men, however worthy and noble they may be, are not exactly the ones to offer their protection to an orphaned and beautiful girl. Such things I don't doubt may be done uprightly and honestly; but the world, the suspicious world, is ever ready to cast the blight of shame and slander on such things."

Blanche suddenly left her grandfather's chair and hurried away to a distant corner of the room, from whence she brought a little stand containing a work-basket and the lamp. She placed it just in front of her grandpapa's chair, and between Guly and Wilkins. With a smile she seated herself at it, and began to embroider a strip of insertion; nimbly plying her needle among the slender vines and tendrils she was working.

"Are you there, darling?" said the old man, stretching out his unsteady hand and laying it on her head. [Pg 244]

"Yes, grandpapa, right here in my old place."

He withdrew his hand with an air of pleased satisfaction, and resumed the subject he had just dropped.

"Blanche needs a mother—some female friend to guard and protect her, when—when her old grandfather shall be gone. I am afraid I shall drop off suddenly one of these days; I have sudden turns of illness which are very severe. I was quite sick last night—ah, she told me of your kindness to her, Mr. Wilkins; God be praised—and I could not help feeling then that my thoughts turned more upon my poor desolate child here, than on that other world to which I might be hastening."

Blanche dropped her head lower and lower over her work, till her short glossy ringlets shaded her soft brown eyes.

"This world," continued he, with that love of pursuing the prominent subject of thought so common with aged persons, "has, of course, lost its fascination for me. I am blind, and very old; and am swiftly descending from the summit of life's mount, and must soon drop from its base into that vast eternity of which we know so little. Poor Blanche! I am of course a trouble, so helpless and blind, but she will miss me when she's left alone. Poor child, poor child!"

Blanche lifted up her head quickly, and showed her cheeks wet with streaming tears. She rose from her seat, took the staff from the old man's hands, and threw herself sobbing aloud upon his bosom. [Pg 245]

He folded his aged arms around her and drew her to his heart, while he bent his head, and his white hair, so silvery, floated forward and mingled with the raven blackness of hers. Thus they sat, a touching picture of youth and hoary age, of life's spring-time and the calm tranquillity of its withered autumn.

"Oh, grandpapa!" exclaimed Blanche at last, lifting up her face and looking tearfully into those dim eyes as though they could see all that she wished them. "Never, never talk any more about dying and leaving me here alone, unless you wish to break poor Blanche's heart. You are all that God has left me on this earth to love, and if He takes you, I want to go too. And you said you were a trouble! Don't ever, ever say that again, dear grandfather, if you love me dearly, as I know you do."

"But I wish to prepare you, darling, for the change that must surely come."

"Don't say so. You never could prepare me for such a dreadful thing, and please don't try to."

The old man drew a long shivering sigh, and leaned back in his chair. Blanche sat up, smoothed his thin locks, kissed his brow, and soothed him once more into a placid calm. She slid from his arms, then placed the staff in his hands, and he bent forward on it as if already forgetful of the scene just passed. [Pg 246]

Guly and Wilkins were deeply impressed by this simple occurrence, and the former had looked on, with difficulty keeping the answering drops from his large blue eyes. There had been something so natural in it all, yet so affecting and heart-touching. There had been no attempt to check the heart's first impulse, no struggle of affected prudery, but the free gushing forth of her warm affection, forgetful of everything save the strong love for her blind grandfather.

"Now, Guly," said Blanche, playfully, breaking the sad pause which had followed the recent excitement, "I am anxious to finish this piece of work this evening, and you must thread my needle for me. That will help me."

Guly expressed his willingness to obey, and drew his chair closer to the little table for the purpose, as he said, of receiving instructions. Blanche gave them, and he sat watching her taper fingers, and waiting impatiently to see the thread used up that he might proffer another.

The old man talked pleasantly, Guly loved to hear him talk; Wilkins conversed with them all in a general manner, yet watched, with a pleased expression of countenance, Blanche and Guly as they sat side by side at the little table, the blue eyes looking into the brown, and the locks of gold lending a tinge of additional brightness to the curls of jetty black.

They rose to leave at ten o'clock, and the old man took Guly's hand, expressing a hope that he would repeat his visit; the boy uttered what his heart at the moment felt, that it was the pleasantest evening of his life, and his memory of it would not fail to induce him soon to seek a like enjoyment.

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Guly walked home like one in a dream. A seed had fallen on his heart's rich soil, to spring up in time into fragrant bloom. In the holiest niche of his heart a new lamp was lighted, and it burned before the image of a Virgin!

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

"Never more  
Shall hope's bright chain be gathered from the dust,  
And, re-united, glitter as before,  
Strong and unsullied by corroding dust."

When they reached the store door, Wilkins rapped before entering, and Guly, remembering that Quirk was within, and not wishing to meet that young gentleman, told Wilkins he would go to his own room by the alley-way. He had the pass-key for the small door; so they shook hands and parted, just as the front door was being opened.

In a few moments Guly stood in the large old room, which was the only spot he could look upon as home.

All that surrounded him was darkness and gloom; for he had no lamp, and the night-light of heaven never entered there. But Guly was happy, and the bare floor had lost its hardness to him as he knelt to pour out the fervent prayer of gratitude gushing from his heart.

He had forgotten to listen for his brother's breathing, from the lowly bed in the corner; the throbbing of his own glad heart was all he heard, and for once in his life Guly was selfishly happy.

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But when he threw himself upon his pillow, he became conscious that he was alone; there was no gentle hand, half-roused from slumber, to creep about him with a brother's love, and there was no half-escaped sigh or murmured word of half-awakened welcome. Arthur's pillow was cold, his place deserted.

As soon as he became conscious of this fact, the glow of happiness and delight went out in his heart, like a suddenly smothered lamp. He had expected Arthur would return as soon as he left him, but he had not done so, and Guly grew restless and anxious in wondering where he could have gone, and in what way he might be occupied.

Never in all the hurry and excitement in which he had been thrown, never in all the trouble and apprehension which had so early burdened his young heart, had Guly forgotten his mother's parting injunctions, her tears, her sorrow, or her counsel. Their memory had burned in his bosom with a steady beacon blaze, and he had watched and guarded the flame even as did the ancients their sacred fires.

Now, as he lay pondering on his brother's danger, he felt that he could not sleep happily, conscious of a duty unperformed, and he determined to rise and go in search of him. As he crossed the floor to find his clothes, he struck his foot against some light object, which went half way across the room with the strong and sudden impetus he had given it. He remembered that the lamp they had used the night before was left upon the floor beside the bed, and had probably not been removed. Glad to gain a light, he groped about until he found it, struck a match, and the lamp's feeble blaze illuminated some portion of the surrounding gloom. He was partially dressed when he paused to listen, sure that he heard the murmur of excited voices coming from the store below.

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He threw a white flannel dressing gown about him with facings of pale blue silk, and cord and tassel of the same delicate hue, bearing evidence of its being a relic of better days. Scarce knowing what he did, the boy took the lamp in one hand and his Bible in the other, and passed forth from the room; the door, covered with its gay advertisements, swinging solemnly, shut behind him, as if it partook of the anxious sorrow of that youthful breast.

With firm step Guly went down the winding stairs. He descended slowly, and the voices he heard grew more distinct with every step. As he gained the last turn in the staircase, he stood in view of the whole main part of the store, and stopped, looking at the scene before him in sad astonishment.

Between the counters, about half way through the store, was a small deal table, containing a lamp, four hands of cards just dealt, and several wine glasses partially emptied of their contents. On one of the counters stood a number of bottles; some empty, some half filled, and one as yet unopened. Arthur was seated at the head of the table with a small pile of gold beside him, and his face flushed and excited. Quirk was opposite him, and two other clerks made up the party. Wilkins was standing behind Arthur, attempting with earnest tone and warm entreaties to draw him away; but with every sentence Arthur answered him insolently, and rudely shook the pleading hand from his shoulder.

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"Your conduct shall be reported, sir, to-morrow," at last said Wilkins, hoping to move Arthur by his pride.

"Report it then if you choose; don't you see I'm trying to win enough to pay that d——d debt of mine?"

"How much have you won already?"

"One hundred and eleven dollars."

"One hundred and eleven dollars! well, boys, you must be staking your salaries to-night, I should think; but, come, Arthur, if you have won that much, stop now; for you won't win much longer, and if you'll give up this kind of business, I'll make up the rest for you, and your debt shall be canceled. Come, I can't bear to see a young man of your abilities, and one who has a mother with a heart to break, beginning this practice. It's awful!"

At any other moment an appeal of this kind might have touched Arthur's heart; but he had drained his wine cup several times, and the exciting draughts had already exerted their powerful influence over his young frame to a degree which rendered him deaf to everything beyond the prospect of regaining that sum which he had so unluckily, as he declared, lost.

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"You are altogether too good, Mr. Wilkins, but I don't need any assistance when I am prospering as I now am."

"That's right, Pratt!" exclaimed Quirk, with an encouraging wink; "pick up your cards, and show 'em you ain't to be nosed around by anybody, and that you didn't come so many hundred miles from home tied fast by your mammy's long apron-string."

"Had I known this was your intention, Mr. Quirk, when you asked me for the key, you would never have got it I assure you," said Wilkins, coldly. "Isn't it enough for you to be bad and unprincipled, without dragging those who might do better, if let alone, with you into the pit?"

"'Taint my fault if he can't resist temptation," replied the other, doggedly. "Come, Pratt, it's your play."

"Arthur, don't throw another card!" exclaimed Wilkins, at the same time arresting the uplifted hand.

Arthur struggled to release it, but Wilkins held it firmly, and drew him back from the table as he sat in his chair, and held him fixedly there in his grasp.

"Arthur, I treat you as I would a younger brother; an eye experienced in such matters shows me the danger you are in; stop now, in mercy to yourself and all who love you."

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"Release me, Mr. Wilkins; you have no right to act in this manner to me, sir."

"Yes!" shouted Quirk, seizing an empty bottle with a dreadful imprecation, and levelling it at Wilkins' head, "release him this minute if you don't want this through your skull!"

At this instant one of the other clerks caught sight of Guly, who had stood where he stopped, as if spell-bound, through all this scene.

"Look there!" cried the young man, pointing toward the staircase, and dropping the cards he held.

They all turned their heads and looked toward Guly, who seemed, standing there in his white robe, with the lamp elevated just in front of his forehead, not unlike some spiritual visitant bearing a star on his brow.

The attention which had been called to him, seemed in a measure to rouse Guly, for he came on slowly down the stairs, but with his blue eyes open and fixed like one walking in his sleep.

Not one of the startled group before him moved a muscle or dropped an eye as he advanced, but gazed upon him like persons under the influence of magnetism.

He approached the table, put his lamp upon it, and laid his Bible down beside it. He turned his eyes upon Arthur, and stood with his hands clasped, looking at him as Wilkins still held him drawn back from the table in his chair.

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Still no eye was turned, no lip moved, not a word was uttered. There was something to awe the stoutest soul in the almost unearthly expression of the boy's face, as he gazed upon his brother with an unutterable hopelessness shining from his eyes. Never, in all his fears for Arthur's erring steps, had Guly thought of this. Never had the idea of gambling crossed his mind; and now, as he saw him engaged in it, his heart seemed to grow cold, and he stood looking at him as if he felt the future was but a wild abyss, into which he must inevitably fall, and near the brink of which he had too closely approached ever to escape.

All his hopes, his aspirations, and ambition for that brother fell on the instant from their throne, and, as they vanished, gave back but the one sad echo—"Lost! lost! lost!"

Arthur had looked up, and met the light of those sad eyes but for an instant, then dropped his head, and sat, with changing cheek, nervously fingering the cards which, at Quirk's suggestion, he had picked up from the table.

The silence which had fallen upon the party was abruptly broken by Quirk, who suddenly bent forward and read the title of the book which Guly had laid upon their card-table. [Pg 255]

"H—ll!" he muttered between his short teeth; "what the devil did you lay that right in the midst of our cards for? that's no place for it. Who ever heard of cards and Bible keeping company on the same board?"

"Had you never neglected the one, you would not now be engaged with the other," returned Guly, speaking in a soft but impressive voice; and turning his eyes for an instant from Arthur to Quirk, but immediately reverting them.

Arthur flung his cards upon the table, but without once lifting his eyes. He seemed to feel all that his brother looked, without meeting that full, sad gaze of hopeless sorrow.

"Come, now, Arthur," said Guly, at last, laying his small, girlish hand upon his brother's brow; "you are tired and excited. It is late, too—come with me to our own room."

Arthur was ashamed to show any heed of his brother's words before his present companions, and he drew his head away from the gentle touch of that kindly hand, and remarked that he would go when he chose—not before; that he was used to late hours, and he'd run the risk of all deleterious effects. [Pg 256]

"That's it—I like your pluck!" shouted Quirk, too excited by the wine he had drank to heed the presence of the head clerk. "Don't let's be scared out of our rubber by a baby-faced boy, and a big Bible—'hanged if we will."

"You shall not play another round beneath this roof to-night," said Wilkins, resolutely. "If you do not vacate this place within five minutes, I will turn every one of you out of doors by main force."

"I'd like to see you try that game once," replied Quirk, instantly, bending suddenly forward, as if to grasp the book upon the table.

Before he could touch it, Guly had caught it in his own hands.

"This was my mother's Bible. Never shall a defiling finger touch its sacred pages. Oh! Arthur, if there is any brotherly love left in your heart for me, go with me to-night. You well know there is no fear of reproof from me—I could not give it, if I would."

Arthur rose resolutely, swept the gold into his pocket, and took his brother's hand.

"Zounds, Pratt! you won't leave us so!"

"Your five minutes are up," said Wilkins, firmly, lifting his foot and turning the table, with its contents, over upon the floor.

"Ten thousand devils!" shouted Quirk, madly; and catching up the neck of a broken bottle, he hurled it fiercely at Wilkins, who was approaching him. [Pg 257]

It glanced—turned aside by the head-clerk's self-defending hand—and struck Guly upon the temple. With a faint moan he sank bleeding to the floor, clasping his mother's Bible to his breast. [Pg 258]

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## CHAPTER XXV.

"Rather will Ellen Douglas dwell  
A votress in Maronan's cell—  
Rather through realms beyond the sea,  
Seeking the world's cold charity,  
An outcast pilgrim will she rove—  
Than wed the man she cannot love."

SCOTT.

"Who rang the bell, Minny?" inquired Della one morning, as she sat looking over a richly-bound

volume of engravings, a recent gift from her father.

"General Delville, Miss."

"Has mamma gone into the drawing-room?"

"Not yet, Miss; she is preparing to do so."

"Well, Minny, do you go to her, and tell her that Della says, please not go in this morning, she wishes to see General Delville alone."

"Oh, Miss Della, she would never consent to your seeing him alone in the world. I'm certain she won't; and there is scarcely any use of asking her."

"Do as I tell you, Minny dear."

Minnie went out.

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Since the evening of the party, the General had been very assiduous in his attentions; waiting upon Mrs. Delancey and her daughter to concerts, operas, theatres, and every other place which he believed would be interesting and entertaining to them. His bouquets for Miss Della were always selected with the greatest care and taste, and had the fair recipient been possessed of sufficient patience to study out their language, she would have found the General by no means ignorant of that delicate manner of expressing thoughts which lose their chief beauty by being spoken.

Mrs. Delancey, with a watchfulness highly commendable, had never allowed Della and the General to remain a moment alone together; and she triumphantly declared, to her *very intimate and confidential* friends, that not a sentence of admiration or esteem had the General ever uttered, but what she had listened to, as well as Della; and that she should, of course, as much expect to be present when he made his declaration, as to have Della herself there.

Twice had Della summoned courage to declare, in the presence of both her parents, that if General Delville came with any idea of winning her love she wished his visits to cease; for marry him she never would; but both times had she met with such stormy reproofs from her father, and such loud appeals to her pride and dignity from her mother, that she had ceased to argue the matter, and by both parents her acceptance of his suit was considered a settled thing. A man with a title *militaire*, and, moreover, half a million at his command, was not to be found as a wooer every day; and what though his years were many, when he had a fortune to long outlive him, and station, which any woman might be proud to gain? Surely, Della would be worse than silly, to throw away such an opportunity.

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Mrs. Delancey was standing before the glass, arranging the folds of her elegant dress, with all the care of a Miss of eighteen, as Minny entered the room, and, standing at a respectful distance, delivered the message her young mistress had given her.

To her surprise, Mrs. Delancey merely raised her eyebrows slightly, as she heard her out, then turned round, with a smile upon her lips, and said:—

"Well, I suppose it would be better so. Matters have gone so far now, it is all as good as settled, and she, no doubt, is aware that he comes to-day to declare himself, and feels timid, poor thing, about giving her answer in the presence of a third person. It is but natural. Tell her, Minny, that her wishes are acceded to."

Minnie left the room with a smile, though it was concealed from Mrs. Delancey. She bounded like a fawn through the shadowy passages to Della's apartment, and repeated her mother's answer.

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"I told you so, Minny!"

"I never could have believed it, Miss!"

With a changing cheek, but firm, resolute step, Della descended to the drawing-room, and gracefully received her visitor, who looked no less surprised than pleased to see her enter alone.

General Delville was a splendid-looking man; and this, united with his wealth and station, could scarcely have failed to win to his heart any maiden whom he chose to address, less frank and upright than Della Delancey.

His fine features were lighted up with a beaming smile of pleasure, as he took her hand and led her to a seat, nor did he resign that hand without a gentle pressure of the white and perfumed fingers.

For an instant Della sat, with downcast eyes, in silence, while the General gazed upon her with the same smile upon his lips, but no words.

Suddenly Della lifted her eyes, and turned them full upon the face before her.

"General Delville?"

"Della."

"Pardon me, sir, for what I am about to say to you, and which I would have said long ago had I only had the opportunity; and—and—"

"Go on, Miss Della," said the General, though he moved uneasily in his chair.

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"General Delville, I, of course, am not unaware of your intentions with regard to myself, or the object of your visits at papa's house. I would not pain you for the world, sir; I esteem you, I *love* you so very much; but I want to tell you openly, as my heart dictates, that I have not for you the love that a wife should feel for her husband—only the love that a child should feel for a dear father; and if I married you, I could never feel for you anything more."

The General sat before her, looking all the astonishment he felt, but said not a word. Della went on, with flushed cheek and fluttering heart, but with voice calm and steady.

"Indeed, sir, I feel for you all the earnest esteem, all the warm, enduring affection, which a knowledge of your character cannot fail to inspire one with, especially one so very much younger than yourself as I. But as for that love which would make me truthfully perform the marriage vows, I do not experience it, and never can. I have never, since the first evening I met you, sir, intended in the least to encourage any particular attention on your part for myself. The encouragement, which I will admit has been by no means slight, you must acknowledge has been entirely on the part of my parents."

"And that is where a gentleman looks for encouragement, Miss Delancey."

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"Most unfortunately, too true, sir; but in this instance I cannot conform to such a code of ethics, and give you a heart beating always indifferently for you. I set the case before you as it is. I tell you the *truth*, which I have longed to do long since, but *could* not; and now, knowing this, can you wish to make me your bride? I am sure you cannot. Still, if you persist, here is my hand, given in obedience to my parents."

The hand was taken, and held fondly against the stout heart beside her; and for a moment neither spoke—the old man looking thoughtfully upon the floor—the young girl gazing anxiously into his expressive face.

"Deep as is my disappointment, Miss Della, I cannot but confess that you have acted nobly. You have even won my heart closer in the last half hour than ever before. You have done what I would never have expected you would do; and, though I am the sufferer, I honor—I admire you for it. True, I am an old man; I could never have *seemed* other than a father to you, however much the husband I might have *felt*. I came to-day to lay my heart and fortune at your feet: a heart which, though old, would have been true to you, and loved you dearly. It is, of course, needless to tell you how great is my disappointment. I ask no sacrifice of you, however. May you always be happy! God bless you!"

Della burst into tears.

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"General Delville, I knew I could not be mistaken in your noble nature."

"Pardon an old man's curiosity, my child," said he, dropping at once into the relationship Della had chosen for them; "but may I ask if a younger suitor influences you in this matter?"

Della blushed very deeply, but answered, frankly, through her tears, in the affirmative.

"You are sure you have chosen one worthy of such a heart as yours?"

"I think so, most truly."

"And his circumstances and station befit your own?"

"In point of wealth and station he is undoubtedly beneath me; but in nature, in heart, I am certain he is all I could wish."

"And, knowing this, how could your father sanction my suit?"

"He knew nothing of these circumstances, sir. I have, from necessity, kept it a secret from him. May I trust you to do the same?"

"You may, indeed. I would not sanction duplicity between father and child; but neither would I have you sacrifice your happiness to a father's pride. In early youth, had she, who won my first affections, been as true to me, through such a test, as you have been to him you love through this, I would, probably, have never occupied the position of an old and disappointed suitor before you here."

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"I would gladly reveal all to my parents, but that I know and dread the consequences. And when they learn the course I have this day pursued with you, the storm will perhaps be no less fierce."

"Fear nothing, Della; from this hour I am your sincere and devoted champion, in all causes wherein I believe you to be *right*. The confidence you have placed in me shall never be betrayed. Your father I will gradually turn aside from the ideas he has cherished with regard to you and myself. It is all better, no doubt, as it is; this, I must admit, however lonely my heart may throb in saying it. I had hoped to be happy in holding you to that heart, as one of its own rightful treasures. I will now strive to make myself happy in seeing her so I could not win. Whenever you want a friend, my child—one faithful and sincere, and uninfluenced by selfish motives—you will ever find one in the old man who has dared to love you, and whom you have this day rejected."

Della placed both hands in General Delville's, and looked up earnestly and trustfully into his

noble face.

"Believe me, I always will."

"And I may continue to be a welcome visitor here?"

"Always, always."

"Enough, Della. Farewell."

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"Adieu, *mon ami!*"

The General's tall figure passed into the lofty hall, and Della heard the door close behind him. She hurried to a window, and watched him as he descended the steps and entered his carriage, then, with a feeling of reverential affection for that proud spirit and noble heart which an hour before she had scarcely expected to feel, she passed out of the parlor on her way to her own room. Traces of tears were still upon her cheeks, and her whole face still bore evidence of recent agitation.

As she was about to ascend the stairs, Mrs. Delancey's maid met her, with the message that her mother desired an interview.

"Say to my mother, that I beg to be excused for a few moments, but will be with her presently," said Della, proceeding up the stairs.

The girl obeyed, but returned immediately, and over-taking Della on the stairs, said:—

"Mistress says you must come instantly, Miss; that she wishes to see you before you go to your room."

Dispelling, as far as possible, all traces of agitation, Della returned to her mother's apartment. The moment Mrs. Delancey's eyes fell upon her child's features, she held out her hand, with a bland smile, exclaiming:—

"Ah, Dort, I see how it is, dear; couldn't get through with a proposal without crying a little, eh? Rather undignified, I must say, but perfectly natural for unexperienced girls, I suppose. Allow me to congratulate you."

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Della pressed the hand her mother gave, and made an effort to speak; but choked, faltered, and failed entirely, bursting into a violent fit of weeping instead.

"Really, my child, you surprise—you shock me; if you can't behave any better now, what will you ever do at the wedding? Really, I am ashamed of you! At your age I had received seven offers, and never shed a tear!"

"Perhaps you didn't accept them, Madam; and so, sever the ties which bound you to father and mother, and home," said Minnie, who had entered just in time to hear Mrs. Delancey's last remark.

"That's true enough," returned the lady, as if she had not thought of the fact before. "Della, you can go to your room till you are more composed; I will tell your father what has happened, so your timidity will be spared that."

"Oh, don't tell him anything, mamma; don't tell him this," sobbed Della.

"Nonsense, Dort; worse and worse. Go to your room, and don't make your appearance again until you can come with a face more composed, and features not all swollen and distorted by weeping."

Della obeyed, and her mother saw her no more that night.

"Oh, Minny!" exclaimed the young girl, as the privacy of her own apartment was gained, and she threw herself, still sobbing, on the quadron's bosom; "didn't you know before I went down that I never would accept him, that I never could marry him, never?"

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"Yes, Miss, I knew it."

"Yet you implied to mamma, Minn, that you believed I had accepted him, and you know she thinks I tell you everything. Oh, Minny, you musn't tell falsehoods for my sake!"

"I told no falsehood, Miss; I only asked your mamma a simple question, that you might get free, as I knew you wished to be."

"But I know she thought you meant that."

"It is wrong for people, to jump so hastily at conclusions."

"But, Minny, you know you intended mamma should jump at that."

"Well, Miss Della, don't chide me now about it; if it got you off without any more questions you are very glad, are you not?"

"Of course, if it wasn't falsehood."

"It certainly was not, Miss Della; now dry your eyes, and I will show you something."

"A letter, Minn, from—from *him*?"

Minnny smiled, and nodded her head.

"Bathe my eyes, then, and I won't shed another tear."

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Minnny obeyed; and Della, with trembling fingers, tore open the letter, and perused it.

"Is it good, Miss?"

"Sweet Minny, read it yourself."

The quadroon took it, and, as she stood behind her mistress, the tremor which seized her frame, when she looked upon that handwriting, was unseen and unthought of by any but herself.

"Delightful, Miss Della."

"Yes; now, Minny, put it with the rest."

"You won't have it beneath your pillow then, for the first night?"

"No, Minn; put it away. I am going to dream of General Delville, to-night, if I can—the best and noblest, and kindest man, excepting somebody you know, that ever I knew."

"Indeed, Miss! I'm so glad he proved so."

"Oh, yes, Minn, I can never tell you how noble and good he is; but, Minn, these letters—Bernard's letters—you are very sure you kept them all safe, perfectly secure?"

"As the apple of my eye, Miss."

"I have felt anxious about them sometimes of late, and have thought of offering to take care of them myself; but there's Madam Gerot in these rooms every week; I could hide nothing from her lynx eyes. I think I might do without a governess now—don't you, after having had a proposal from a General?"

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"Your mamma thinks she perfects your manners, Miss."

"All nonsense! I never have any grace or manner when she is in sight. Minny, the truth is, I am prettier and more graceful when I am right here with you, than I would be with all the French dancing-masters and ornamental governesses in the world."

"Bless your dear heart!"

"Thank you, Minn; nobody ever blessed me save you and General Delville; he blessed me to-day in such a beautiful way, it went straight to my heart. Oh, if it is so sweet to be blessed by the rich, what must it be, Minny, to be blessed by the poor?"

Minnny was silent.

"If ever I get out of fashionable society, Minn, I shall never court it again. It is a heartless sphere! I would sooner be a stone than human, with no humanity beyond flesh and blood, and that cast in a fashionable mould."

"Your mamma is a fashionable woman, Miss, and seems very happy."

"It is only seeming, Minn. She has more misery over an ill-fitting dress, an unshapely shoe, or an awkward glove, than you and I have in an age. I was born out of my sphere, I know I was; I ought to have been poor."

"You may be, one of these days, Miss."

"How so, Minn? What do you mean?"

"Disinherited."

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"Oh, no! that will never be, I am certain."

"But you'd not be unhappy if it should happen?"

"Only for Bernard."

"I am very happy to hear this."

"Dear Minnie, you have so many foolish fears!"

"It is better to think of these things."

"True enough. Good night, Minn!"

"Good night. You are going to sleep early, Miss?"

"So as to have bright eyes in the morning, dear."

Lonely, without her mistress, Minnie also prepared for sleep; and that night Bernard's letter was placed beneath *her* pillow, and her dreams were of him.

Della, as she had hoped, dreamed of General Delville. All night long was his noble face before



her, wearing that radiant expression which had illuminated it when he bade God bless her. Never afterwards, in all her waking hours, whether in joy or gloom, light or darkness, did Della cease to remember him as she dreamed of him there with the halo of that blessing circling him and her.

Lightly as he had seemed to give her up, it had cost the General a more severe struggle than Della had imagined. He had truly *loved* her, old as he was, and had not loved lightly; but he could not take to his heart the heartless wife which she had frankly admitted she must be if he married her; and Della had, unwittingly, skillfully touched a tender chord, when she made the appeal to his feelings which she did. He had felt the force of her reasoning, and had been delighted with her frankness and her confidence; though it pained him to relinquish her, he was too much a soldier to display his wounds; and, though he parted from her nominally a *friend*, he was never more her lover than when he that afternoon called her his child and bade her adieu.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

Many and sharp the numerous ills  
Inwoven with our frame!  
More pointed still we make ourselves  
Regret, remorse, and shame.  
And man, whose heaven-erected face  
The smiles of love adorn,  
Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn.

BURNS.

"Wretch!" cried Wilkins, striking at Quirk with his brawny fist, as he rose from the prostrate form of Guly—"Wretch, you have killed him!" and, seizing the offender by the collar, with the united force of foot and hand he hurled him into the street. The two other young men, who had drunk less freely of the wine, and were less excited, passed out also, expressing to Wilkins their regret at the unfortunate occurrence. Locking and barring the door, the head clerk hurried back to Guly's side, and lifted him gently in his arms. With the tender care of a mother, he bore him to his own bed and smoothed the golden curls from the wounded temple, as he laid him softly on the pillow. The old gush of love had swept back to Arthur's heart when he saw his brother fall at his side, and with throbbing pulse he implored Wilkins to fly for a physician leaving him to watch by Guly's pillow.

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Wilkins acceded to his request, and, going out by the alley door, locked it after him, and dashed down the street in search of his own physician. The sound of his heavy footsteps, as they fell upon the pavement, rang far and near through the silent streets; and, as he sped on, their echo fell upon his ear fearfully, and sent a thrill of something like terror through his strong frame. He even slackened his pace, and strove to lighten his tread that the desolate sound might not thus sweep constantly after him; but his anxiety with regard to Guly was so intense that he found it impossible to go at a slower gait, and he went on, running strongly, his huge chest heaving with the unwonted exertion, and the big drops of perspiration standing out like rain-drops on his brow. Suddenly there came a low hum of voices to his ear, not unlike the murmur of a distant sea. Louder and louder, it came upon the midnight air, till, answering to the echo of his flying steps, came the distant cry of "Murder! stop him! stop him! Murder!" And the prolonged, terrific cry sent a panic through every limb, as for an instant the head clerk paused to listen.

As by instinct, he comprehended all. He felt as fully aware as though he had been plainly told so, that the echo of his hurried pace had been caught by the quick ear of the night guardians, and he was pursued as a midnight assassin. Thinking that the safest course would be to hurry straight to the physician's office, where he was well known and where the statement he might make would be corroborated, he again struck into a run, and with all his strength endeavored to elude the pursuers, whose voices every moment fell more clearly on his ear.

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He felt in his great heart all the terrible consequences which might accrue to Guly if he should be captured, for there would necessarily be more or less delay in his again obtaining freedom.

But, swiftly as he fled, he felt he was no match for the swift-footed pursuers behind him, and the cry of murder, and the sound of clubs upon the banquette, and the sharp, quick watchman's rattle, fell on his ear more startlingly clear every moment. Suddenly he thought to dart down the first dark street, and at the next block double on his pursuers. But his design had been anticipated, and as he dashed at a headlong pace round the corner, he found himself face to face with a posse of policemen, and a crowd of half-dressed coffee-house loafers, who are always abroad upon the first hint of an excitement.

With a shout of triumph, Wilkins' arms were pinioned at his side; and despite all his prayers and entreaties, he was hurried away to the guard-house. He begged to be allowed to stop at Doctor C.'s office, and deliver him the message he had brought, assuring them that, would they but give him a few minutes' time, he could fully assure them of his innocence; but all in vain. An atrocious murder had been committed somewhere up town, and they had been chasing all night, they said, to find the assassin, who had escaped. They declared themselves "fagged out," and swore they

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must "chuck" somebody, and if he wasn't the right man he could prove it in the morning, and that was all they had to say; and, in bitterness of heart and anxiety of mind, Wilkins heard the heavy door shut with a short clang, and knew he was a prisoner! Warily the night sped away; and, tortured with anxiety for the pale young being whom he had left senseless on his pillow, Wilkins walked the narrow precincts of his cell moody and disconsolate. For with all the evil of this man's strange nature, there were some pure and sparkling gems of good, which cast a radiance, bright and purifying, over the dark traits of his character. This love for Guly was one of these. Springing up, as it did, from among the rank weeds of sin and recklessness in his breast, it proved that he could appreciate the lovely, and knew how to cherish it. Then, his guardian care of Blanche, the brodeuse—where a thousand men would have but thought of evil, his sole care was to ward it from her. And now, as he walked back and forth across the heavily spiked floor, another ray of glorious and intense light shot from his great heart heavenward. It was a prayer! breathed there in the midst of the perplexities and troubles which surrounded him, earnestly, hopefully breathed for Guly; and if ever a prayer ascended to the "Great White Throne," accepted for its faith and sincerity, that one did, sent from the burning lips of Bernard Wilkins that night.

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Morning came, and he was taken before the Recorder, and though it required but little trouble to prove his innocence, it took *time*, and it was with a breast lacerated by a thousand fears that he found himself again at liberty, and turned his steps towards the store.

As he had left the front door key inside, Jeff had as usual been able to open the store and put things in order. The clerks were many of them in their places, but he scarcely noticed any one; passing up between them, with long and rapid strides, he struck his foot against the door of his room, and the next instant stood at Guly's side. He lay as he had left him, on the bed, still wrapped in his white robe, pale and very beautiful. Wilkins bent breathlessly over him, and the blue eyes at that moment opened, and smiled a welcome upon him. Clasping his hands together with an upward look of thankfulness, Wilkins fell upon his knees beside the bed and buried his face in the covers, as if he would fain conceal the too vivid pleasure expressed in his features.

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A hand was laid upon his shoulder. He started, looked up, and met the gaze of Arthur.

"Ah, yes, Arthur, I had forgotten you. How did you manage? What could you do?"

"Finding you did not return, I suspected something had occurred, and dispatched Jeff after the nearest physician. He pronounced Guly's wound not dangerous, but recommended quiet for a day or so. You see he is doing nicely; he wasn't hurt much after all. As Quirk says, he is such a weakly affair, that it takes nothing at all to knock the senses out of him."

"Then you have had a conference with Quirk, this morning, have you?" returned Wilkins, coldly. "Well, your very humane judgment is worthy of both of you; you can now go to your counter, sir, if you like, or seek rest if you are fatigued, as you choose."

Arthur took his place in the store. Aided by Quirk's slurs and inuendoes, as soon as he saw Guly recovering he had experienced another revulsion of feeling, and really cherished a sentiment of anger, when he remembered that he had allowed himself to be so "bullied," as Quirk expressed it, by a stripling so weak and "curdy" as Gulian. He convinced Arthur, with his reckless reasoning, that in gambling for a little "innocent amusement," there in the store, they were but doing what all young men with any idea of fashionable pleasure did, and that Wilkins had no right to exert over them the authority which he did. That, as for Guly's wound, it was Wilkins' fault he had received it, and, altogether, they ought to have fought it out before yielding so easily. But though he had succeeded in leading Arthur to think that Guly was meddlesome and intrusive, he could not succeed in rousing his ire towards Wilkins; for Arthur was not so blind as to be unable to see that Wilkins was his truest friend. Still, there was a restless and undefined uneasiness in his breast, a fancy that his dignity had been insulted, yet so vague was the impression left on his mind by the wily Quirk, that he could scarcely decide from whom he had suffered it, Wilkins or Guly; but with that unnatural perversity which sometimes enthral the human heart, he was more than half inclined to think it was his brother, and cherished an indignant feeling against him, which even the memory of his pallid face as he lay before him the night before, with the blood slowly oozing from his wounded temple down the blue-veined cheek, could not dissipate; and whenever, during that long day, he went into Wilkins' darkened room to look upon the young form lying there, it was not in sorrow and love, but silence and coldness.

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When Mr. Delancey came to the store that day, which was at an hour later than usual, Wilkins joined him at his high desk, and held with him a long conference. The merchant had shown many signs of impatience during its pending, and no slight evidences of anger. As Wilkins turned away, Mr. Delancey sat looking down through the store for some time, leaning stiffly back in his chair meanwhile. The moment he saw Quirk disengaged, he called his name in his sharp, peculiar tone of voice, at the same time beckoning to him with his forefinger. Quirk flung down the piece of goods he was about folding, and a scarce perceptible pallor spread over his coarse cheeks, as, darting a malicious glance at Wilkins, he approached the high desk.

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"So, sir, you took the liberty to gamble in my store last night, eh?"

"I wasn't the only one."

"Hold your tongue, sir. You dare not tell me you didn't propose it?"

"Mallory, Adams and Arthur Pratt joined me."

"You knew the store's rules better than they. Do you know that I think any one that gambles will steal?"

"Then your store is full of thieves."

"The more need, then, of making an example for their benefit. Take your place, sir; you have a fortnight's warning to find another situation, and quit."

With cheeks glowing with anger and fierce resentment, Quirk went back to his place, knowing there was no use in arguing the matter with such a man as Delancey; who had, in fact, acted entirely upon Wilkins' suggestion; whereas the others would no doubt have shared the same fate, had he acted upon his own. The head clerk had laid the whole matter before him exactly as it was, quietly throwing in his own advice and ideas on the subject, and there were reasons why Mr. Delancey didn't choose to differ very materially from what his head clerk said. [Pg 281]

After he had dismissed Quirk, the merchant every now and then turned his eye upon Wilkins' room door, as if he fain would enter there could he possibly do so without being seen. Unconsciously, as it were, Mr. Delancey had that morning missed the bright young brow and gentle eyes, which in all his moods never had failed to show him the respect of an obeisance and a greeting regularly upon his entrance. There was an uprightness and nobleness too, characterizing Guly's every deed which the merchant had not failed to observe, and which had created a respect and esteem for the boy even in that obdurate heart.

Mr. Delancey stepped down from his high desk, and began to traverse the space between it and the long windows. But every turn brought him nearer and nearer to the little bed-room door, and at last, certain that he was unobserved, he laid his hand upon the knob and slipped in.

If ever the merchant displayed his awkwardness, it was in a sick room; the knowledge of which fact, perhaps, made him so rare a frequenter of such places.

As he stopped at Guly's bedside, with his long fingers pressed down among the pillows, the boy opened his eyes, and looked up in his face with a smile, expecting to see Wilkins or Arthur. He was greatly surprised at seeing his employer, but immediately extended his hand and said: [Pg 282]

"Is it possible 'tis you, Mr. Delancey? This is an unexpected pleasure."

Mr. Delancey took the proffered hand in his, held it loosely for a moment in his bony fingers, as if unaccustomed to holding friendly hands, then let it drop back again upon the bed-clothes.

"Why is my presence so unexpected? Don't you suppose I ever look in on sick clerks?"

"I certainly hope so, sir; I scarcely expected it in my case; but I am very happy to be disappointed—sit down sir?"

The merchant seated himself, and said:

"So you got in a row last night."

"In *trouble*, sir; most unfortunately. I hope that it is the last case of the kind."

"Yes, bad to have your place empty—want all my men at their posts. Get about as soon as you can. Be up to-morrow, I 'spose?"

"Yes, sir, God willing."

"God willing! Do you always put that in?" said Mr. Delancey, half rising from his chair, then reseating himself. [Pg 283]

"Yes, sir, always."

The merchant sat for a moment, with his cold eye fixed on his earnest face.

"Invariably you say that, eh?"

"Invariably, sir."

"Humph! I don't!" returned the other, rising abruptly from the chair, and, without another word, he slipped out of the little door as cautiously as he had entered, and again took his seat at his desk.

The day wore on with an occasional visit from Arthur, a frequent one from Wilkins, and numerous inquiries sent by all the clerks, who could not help but feel an interest in the young sufferer.

By the increased darkness of the room, Guly knew the day must be most gone, and he lay looking upon the little table where one night he had seen Wilkins writing, with the quadron standing behind his chair—that night which he had remembered so distinctly and pondered on so much.

As he lay musing upon that event, his attention was attracted by a singular noise outside his door, and the next moment it was thrown open, and to Guly's utter astonishment the dwarf swung himself in upon his long crutches, with Wilkins, looking like a giant, walking smilingly behind him.

"Here's a friend that's true to you, Guly; he misses you, you see, as well as the rest of us." [Pg 284]

"Hih! hih! Monsieur," chuckled the little man, reaching up and catching hold of Guly's fingers; "I

have seen you nowhere to-day; I think you very sick or very dead. I get no picayune to-day, no bean soup. Hih! hih! Monsieur, I miss you very much."

"You are kind, to come and see me, my poor friend. It seems very natural to see your face. You are welcome."

"Me welcome?" squeaked the dwarf, climbing up with much difficulty into the chair Mr. Delancey had so recently left; "me welcome, Monsieur! Hih! that's mor'n has been said to me these many years—hih! poor deformed little devil that I am!"

Guly heard a sound, a strange sound, something between a schoolboy snivel and a sob, and looking up, to his amazement saw a bright tear rolling down his visitor's wrinkled cheek, and his one eye, seeming to lie out farther on his face than ever, was glistening with more.

"You have never told me your name," said Guly, hoping to divert his attention.

"No,'cause I never thort you cared to know it," returned the other, wiping his eye on the cuff of his coat. "The boys call me King Richard, because, as they say, he was stoop-shouldered like me, Monsieur. They daren't exactly call me humped for fear of my crutches, hih! hih! You can call me Richard, or Dick, or what you choose."

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"You musn't talk too much to Monsieur," said Wilkins, kindly; "he is too ill to hear much conversation—hurts his head."

"Hih! no, I won't hurt him. A picayune, Monsieur: I've had no bean soup, to-day. Pauvre Richard!"

Wilkins dropped a piece of silver in the claw-like hand, and went back into the store.

The dwarf sat rubbing the dime on his sleeve, brightening it, and looking curiously at it with his one eye, as if to assure himself it was good—then disposed of it somewhere about his person.

"Are you hungry, Richard?" asked the boy, eyeing him pityingly.

"Oui, Monsieur, hungry and poor and friendless. Oh, Lord! but I've got a dime to buy bread now, hih! hih! hih!"

"I am your friend, Richard; never go hungry when you are destitute. I am not rich, but I always hope to be able to give you a piece of bread, and you musn't call yourself friendless ever again."

The dwarf hitched himself round on his chair, and fixed his great raw-looking eye inquisitively on the gentle face looking upon him.

"Friend to *me*, Monsieur, such a horrid little ape as me? Hih! hih! can't think that."

"Don't call yourself such names, Richard. The hand that made me, made you; and He has commanded us to love one another," said the boy, sweetly.

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"And you *can* love me, you? Hih! no, no, no, I wasn't born to be loved, only to be kicked round the world like a football while I live, and when I die to be kicked into a pauper's grave. Hard lot! deformed, friendless, wretched, poor. Nothing to love, no one to love me, hih! wonder what I was born for. Monsieur, what hurt you?"

Guly smiled at the sudden transition in the dwarf's manner, and replied briefly that he had been hurt with broken glass.

"Hih! that's bad. I must get down and go away—make you talk too much—'hurt your head.' Always hurt people's heads, I do—that part where their eyes are. Adieu, Monsieur."

The dwarf, after some labor, reached the floor, and succeeded in tucking a crutch under either arm.

"Hope you'll get well, Monsieur."

"Be round to-morrow I hope, Richard; thank you."

"Hope so. Adieu."

"Adieu."

He swung away, and reached the door, but hobbled back to the bed again, and raising his red, skinny fingers, took Guly's hand in his.

"You meant what you said, Monsieur, about loving one another?"

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"Yes. Truly so, Richard."

"And I may think of you as loving even *me*?"

"As loving you, Richard. As loving you for one of the Great God's cherished works, sent here expressly to call forth our love, and awaken the dormant sympathies of our nature."

"May that Great God, bless you, Monsieur. Hih! hih! Adieu."

Once more he gained the door, and this time it closed behind him, shutting him out. And Guly fell asleep, with the earnest blessing of the poor deformed one brightening his dreams, and the holy words, "Love ye one another," ringing sweetly through his heart.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

"Nor heaven nor earth hath been at peace  
To-night."

SHAKSPEARE.

The Friday night, which had been set aside by Clinton for his meeting with Arthur, arrived. It came in "clouds, and storm, and darkness," with darting lightning and crashing thunder, and all the wild fierceness which ever characterizes a thunder-storm in that climate.

Arthur had been nervous and ill at ease all day; a fact which all noticed, but which was attributed to anxiety on Guly's account, who, contrary to expectation, was still unable to be about.

Evening came, the store was closed, and all the clerks were out, save Quirk, Arthur, and Wilkins, who still lingered within, talking of Guly, and commenting on the unusual wildness of the storm. Through the day, Quirk had managed to slip a scrap of writing-paper into Arthur's hand, which had been duly read, and destroyed, and both now waited an opportunity to act upon what it contained.

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Quirk quietly lighted a cigar, and, seating himself, turned good-naturedly to Wilkins, remarking:

"I suppose you know, old boy, that I got my discharge from these premises t'other day."

"Indeed!" returned the head-clerk, coldly, striking a match to light a cigar for himself.

"Yes, cleared out, within a fortnight, bag and baggage; all on account of that deuced little spree we had here the other night. By-the-by, Mr. Wilkins, I believe *you* have had a finger in this pie. How could you treat a fellow so?"

"I told you I would report you."

"Well, 'twasn't hardly fair, I vum. I didn't do more than the rest, but I suffer all alone. However, I don't bear anybody any ill will, and hope when we part it will be on good terms."

"I hope so, I'm sure."

"I've a bottle of prime old Port left of the other night; what say you to taking a drink this stormy time, to our future good friendship?"

"I've no objections—most certainly."

Quirk went to the other end of the store, and took a bottle and some glasses from under the counter. He filled three of the glasses, and handed one to each of his friends, and kept the other for himself.

"Here's oblivion to the past, and brightness for the future."

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Wilkins smiled, nodded, and the glasses were drained to the bottom.

At this moment Quirk caught sight of Jeff, who had just been in to see Guly, but who now stood with his great eyes fixed upon the group before him, with a mixture of wonder and sadness in his glance.

"Ah, Jeff! oughtn't to forget you to-night. Have some?"

"Don't care, massa."

Quirk filled another glass to the brim.

"Now, Jeff, you must give us a toast, or you can't have the wine."

"Guy, massa, who ever heard of a nigga's toasting white folks," replied Jeff, showing his whole range of ivories.

"Must give us something."

"Well, den, massa, if I must, I must. Here's hopin' you'll never be less de brack man's fren dan now you am."

The negro's toast was drunk with a hearty good-will, Quirk only pausing, thoughtfully, to ask if he spoke in general terms of the colored race, or referred to himself singly; to which Jeff merely said "Yes," leaving the matter as obscure as before.

When his cigar was finished, Quirk buttoned his coat to the throat, and, taking an umbrella, shook hands with Arthur and Wilkins, and proceeded toward the door.

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"You might stay, and share Arthur's bed to-night," said Wilkins, calling after him. "It's a dreadful storm to go out in, and he is alone, you know—Guly being in my bed."

"Thank you," returned the other, "not to-night."

"I wish you would," joined in Arthur; "that's a gloomy old room to be alone in, in such a noisy night as this."

"Hope you ain't afraid of spirits," laughed Quirk. "I would really like to stay, but I have an engagement to meet a friend at the St. Louis bar-room to-night, and I ought to have been there half an hour ago. Good-night."

He opened the door, and passed out, while a gust of wind and rain swept in through the opening.

Arthur shuddered. "Really," said he, speaking to Wilkins, "I believe I am nervous to-night; I feel as fidgetty as an old woman; yet I have seen the time when I could glory in such a storm as this, and climb to the summit of old Cro'nest, on the Hudson, in its midst."

"You have been dissipating a little of late, you know," returned the other, patting his shoulder; "that makes a difference. Then, you have, no doubt, been anxious about your brother, and that makes a difference. Perhaps Jeff had better take his bed to your room to-night, and lie there. He will be better than no company, with the lightning and thunder on such a spree about one's ears. What say you?"

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"But Jeff is needed here."

"No, he isn't. He only lies behind that door in the capacity of a big watch-dog," returned the other, laughing, "to bark if he hears any one breaking in, and he hasn't had cause to do that since I've been here. Jeff, take your mattress to Master Pratt's room, and sleep there to-night."

Jeff obeyed, glad himself to be near somebody during this fierce battle of the elements; and Arthur told him to go on up stairs with the light, and he would be with him presently.

Leaving Wilkins smoking in the store, Arthur stole softly into Guly's sick chamber. A night-lamp was burning on the table, casting its mellow light faintly through the apartment, and displaying the sufferer's pale features, as he lay asleep, with his bright hair floating back upon his pillow.

Arthur knelt by the bedside, and took one of his brother's burning hands in his, and bowed his head upon it. He uttered no word, heaved no sigh, but knelt motionless and silent—so silent that his heavy heart-throbs were audible. When he raised his head, tears were on his cheeks, and, as he bent to press his lips to Guly's, those tears fell down upon that fair, pale brow, and glittered there like gems.

Dashing away these traces of what he deemed his weakness, Arthur passed out of the room, and shaking hands with Wilkins, as he bade him good-night, mounted the winding stairs, and entered his own chamber.

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"Massa Pratt," said Jeff, turning on his mattress, as Arthur entered the room, "you don't think as how your brudder's gwine to die, do you?"

"Die! Heavens, Jeff, no! What put that in your head?"

"Don't know, sah! don' know nuffin' 'bout it."

Arthur slowly undressed, and placing his clothes near the bedside, lay down upon his pillow.

"Jeff, do you ever expect to get to sleep in such a tumult as this?"

"Guy, massa, guess I does. Neber was so sleepy afore in all my life. 'Spect it's dat wine dat makes it; I don't often git sich drinks as dat. Massa Quirk mighty good just on de ebe of lebin de business. Yah! yah!"

In a few minutes Jeff was asleep; and his loud breathing was audible, even above the howling of the storm. Arthur lay still for half an hour, restless, and with ear strained to catch the faintest sound coming up from the store below. But all was still, and he rose up, and dressed himself, throwing over his other garments a cloak, which he wrapped closely about him, as if preparing to breast the weather. He laid his hand on the small door, leading down the steep staircase into the court, and was about to pass forth, when, with a sudden impulse, he dropped the cloak from his shoulders, and opened the door leading down to the store instead. Arthur could not go out upon his mysterious errand, without casting one more look upon his brother's face. Perhaps he felt it might possibly give him strength to resist temptation, or might urge him to forego some premeditated evil; whatever it was that prompted him to seek his side, he obeyed it, and in a moment stood in the door of Wilkins' chamber. The light of the night-lamp revealed the form of the head clerk lying stretched upon his bed, sound asleep, and breathing heavily; one of his strong arms encircled Guly, and his broad breast pillowed the boy's head.

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Arthur looked at them earnestly, fearless of their waking, for he had seen (what none of the rest observed) Quirk sprinkle into Wilkins' wine, as also into Jeff's, a few grains of a drug, intended to make their slumbers deep; and Guly, he knew, slept an invalid's sleep, heavy from weakness and exhaustion. After gazing at them for awhile, Arthur stepped to the table, and extinguished the lamp, then drew the door close after him, and groped his way back up stairs. Again he wrapped the cloak about him, drew his cap over his brows, and went down into the court. He paused once more, as he opened the alley-door with his pass-key, and turned his eyes back toward the spot he was leaving. The darkness was impenetrable, but he gazed earnestly back as if all were distinctly visible, then closed the door behind him, and went shudderingly forth into the tempest. He had crossed that threshold for the last time bearing in his breast a crimeless-soul, and he felt it

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instinctively.

Gaining the street, he hurried on till he had reached the saloon where he had seen Quirk and Clinton the night after the lost bank deposit. He hastily inquired of Quibbles if either of his friends were there, and on being informed that Quirk had just come in, he desired to be shown to his presence, and found him in the same room they had occupied before, smoking and drinking there by himself.

"Come at last, eh, Pratt? All snug?"

"All asleep—Jeff in my room, as you suggested."

"Good! Now for Clint."

"But what was the use of all these preliminaries at the store? I scarcely understand."

"Oh, you're a little springy as yet; after to-night you'll understand more about these things. Clinton will explain everything when we get there. Now, if you're ready, come along."

They went out together, Arthur first swallowing several glasses of wine, for the purpose, as he said, of keeping his spirits up.

The walk to Clinton's house was a long one, and on such a fierce night as this, particularly disagreeable; swollen gutters, slipping pavements, and deluged streets, rendering it next to impossible to keep one's footing.

Arriving, at last, at the door of a small but neat domicile, Quirk rapped, and they were admitted by a small black girl, who showed them into a pleasant little apartment, lighted cheerfully, prettily furnished, and tastefully arranged. A table stood in the centre of the apartment, and Clinton was sitting by it when they entered, reading to a young and pretty woman, who was busily engaged with her needle, and rocking a cradle, containing an infant son, with her foot.

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She rose gracefully as Clinton introduced her as his wife, and received his friends with ease and dignity. Arthur felt not a little astonished to find Clinton a husband and a father, and told him as much. He blushed slightly, and replied that every one knew these facts that knew him well, and laughingly advised Arthur if he wished to be happy to become one too.

Mrs. Clinton then rose, and going to the sideboard, set out wine for the guests, and Arthur observed that it was served on a silver salver and in cut crystal—articles scarcely corresponding with the small house, and very pretty, but plain furniture.

"Is the back room lighted?" said Clinton to his wife.

"No, but it shall be, if you wish it."

"I do. My friends have a little business to transact with me."

Arthur noticed that when Clinton said this, his wife looked at him very penetratingly, as if she would read his thoughts, but turned away re-assured by the bright smile he gave her, and lighted the room.

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"Now," said Clinton, when they were alone, "let's at once to business. I had intended this night only for planning; but we must plan and work both, to-night, for we may not have such another storm in a month. You've good pluck, eh, Pratt?"

"Same as ever."

"Good. You got my note and fixed the wine, Quirk?"

"Just so."

"And you are sure you're ready, Pratt, to help to carry out the plan I've laid for you?"

"Ready for anything short of murder."

"All right, then, there's no murder in the case, only a nice little game of lock-picking and so on. No backing out now, and beforehand we must all take this oath: that if any one of us is nabbed, and should by any chance suffer the penalty of the law, he shall not implicate any of the others."

"That's fair," said Quirk; "all stand the same chance."

The oath was administered, and each one laid his hand upon the Holy Book, saying: "I swear," "I swear," "I swear."

"Now," said Clinton, "what I propose is this: that we just walk into your boss's store this night, and walk out of it with goods enough to make us rich men. We can do it easy as guns."

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Arthur turned pale and remained silent.

"What's the matter, boy," said Clinton, laughing, "you ain't going to play chickenheart, are you?"

"No," said Arthur, ashamed to confess his dislike to the plan, "but why can't you take some other store?"

"Because we havn't the men drugged in any other store, and, in case of detection, we're safer

there than any where else."

"How so? I should think the chances in that case would be equal anywhere?"

"Oh, no. I'm somewhat related to the proprietor of your store, and when he found 'twas me, he'd hush the matter up—and let it go," said Clinton, quietly.

"Related to Mr. Delancey! Pray, how nearly?" asked Arthur in astonishment.

"Oh, quite near. But no matter about that now, maybe you'll find it all out one of these days. Another reason for choosing that particular store is, we can get in with less trouble. Look there."

Clinton, as he spoke, flung down upon the table a heavy brass key, which, to his amazement, Arthur saw was the one he had lost on his Carrollton ride.

"How in the world came you by this?"

Clinton laughed—"If you lost it, I must have found it; but no time is to be lost, and if we're all agreed let's go to work."

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"All agreed," said Quirk; but Arthur was silent; sitting with his head bent down, as if closely examining the key, but in fact to hide the emotion he knew was visible in his face.

"Well, then," said Clinton, rising and unlocking an armoire which stood in one corner of the room, "here are some bags for us, which I have had prepared expressly. Each of us will take two; and with what else we can carry about our persons, they will be enough. Here, Pratt, are yours. What the devil ails you, man, to look so down?"

"Nothing ails me," replied Arthur, rising and taking the bags, with an effort to look interested and cheerful.

"Well," continued Clinton, "now, my plan is this: all you have got to do is to unlock the door and go in; for Quirk tells me that early this morning he managed to fill the bolt socket in the floor, so that the bolts wouldn't sink; and that he is certain Jeff was too fuddled with the wine he gave him to note the difference. If this was so, you can go in without the slightest difficulty, and as you two know all about the store, which I don't, while you are gathering the goods, I will saw off one of the window shutters, and cut out a pane of glass, so that it will seem the entrance was effected by that means. Here are the implements, you see," said he, holding up a saw and file.

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"Aye," said Quirk, "but you'll need a diamond to cut the glass."

"I'll use this," said he, showing the ring on his finger.

"Just as it is?"

"Yes, as good so as any way. Now, the first thing you do after getting in, is to pull out that filling from the bolt sockets if you care to save yourselves, then pitch into the goods. Get the lightest and most valuable—silks, embroideries, rich laces, everything of that kind, but avoid the linens, cloths, and all that, as too heavy, and besides might be detected by the stamp. Lock and bolt the door after you when you go in, and you, Pratt, pocket the key; for no doubt it will be asked for to-morrow. I'll have a place ready for you to get out. And now let's be off—here are dark lanterns for you."

"But the watchman," suggested Arthur.

"Oh, never fear a watchman such a night as this; he's snugly asleep somewhere, no doubt—and if he should come too near, this would 'his quietus make,'" said Clinton, displaying a glittering dagger.

Arthur shuddered visibly.

"You promised no murder, Mr. Clinton."

"And I'll endeavor to keep that promise, Mr. Pratt," laughed Clinton. "Now let's be going."

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They went out without again seeing Clinton's wife.

The storm swept on unabated, and Quirk and Clinton, arm-in-arm, started on ahead, while Arthur, reluctant, and remorseful, but ashamed to betray his feelings, followed in their footsteps, the suffering victim of his own and another's pride.

The store was reached. The noise of the tempest rendered much caution unnecessary, for thunder, wind and rain were so loudly uniting their forces that almost any noise would but have seemed the natural effect of their fury. But it was with extreme caution that Arthur applied the key to the lock, opened the door and permitted Quirk to enter. The latter instantly stepped to the window, and assisted Clinton in taking down a shutter, and the last named gentleman, with file and saw, soon gave it the appearance of having been taken down by such instruments alone from the outside. He then proceeded to cut out one of the large panes of glass, while Quirk and Arthur, having opened the bolt sockets and fastened the door with lock and bolt, proceeded to collect the goods.

Suddenly Arthur stopped, and turning to Quirk, whispered faintly: "I can't go on. Oh, this is awful, awful! Think of my poor brother, sick, maybe dying, in that room yonder, and I engaged



thus! Oh! I never, never can go on!"

"Furies!" muttered Quirk, between his teeth, "this is a pretty time for such thoughts! The brat in yonder is doing well enough, I'll be bound; but if you give him time to come out here and see you, he would die for certain. You may just as well yell out and give us all up to the police as to stop now—a nice body you are to take *revenge*."

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That one last word acted as a spur, and Arthur again resumed the packing of the bags, and Quirk coming up to him, said, softly:—

"Now you're a man again—ain't ashamed of you now. Here's a mask for you, tie it on. I don't fear detection, but it won't do any harm to wear it. I've got one for myself."

Arthur obeyed mechanically, and tied the mask over his features and went on with his work. Boxes were rifled, drawers were emptied and shelves left vacant. The bags were filled. Everything light and valuable that could be stowed away in them had been, and Quirk and Arthur passed them up into the window for Clinton to set into the street. He lifted them all out, and wrapped them in oil cloth to prevent the goods from being damaged by the rain. He placed them in a pile beneath the window arch, so that they might be easily lifted away even by two strong pair of arms, and left them there, certain that the raging storm would prevent all chance of discovery. Quirk had crept out also, through the open pane, after having placed the goods in the window, and now seated himself upon the pile and wiped his brow, like one wearied with a long fatiguing task.

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Arthur had wrapped his cloak around him preparing to leave, when Clinton again made his appearance at the window and vaulted into the store.

"I want to see if you have made a clean sweep," said he, taking Arthur's lantern from his hand, and passing lightly up through the store with a practised tread and running his eye eagerly over the shelves. "Velvets," said he, suddenly pausing to read the label of a large box. "Why the devil didn't you get them?" and forthwith he drew it down and turned its rich contents out into an immense bandanna handkerchief which he drew from his breast.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake don't stop for them!" whispered Arthur, nervously, "let's be gone!"

"Zounds, man! here's a little fortune in itself," returned the other, carefully tying them up. "I'd be a fool to leave these."

Neither saw, so intent were they on what they were doing, the door of Wilkins' room swing slowly open, and a white-robed figure, bearing a night-lamp, glide ghost-like toward them. So feeble was the light it held, it scarcely served to reveal the way, and one trembling foot struck against a store stool, making sufficient noise to attract the attention of the robbers. They both turned suddenly, the light of their lantern fell that way, and they stood face to face with Guly.

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In an instant Clinton's hand was on his dagger; it rose glittering high in air, and aimed at Guly's heart, descended with a fearful plunge toward that pure young breast.

"Murderer!" cried a voice behind him, and a counter blow from a well directed hand, sent the instrument of death clattering upon the floor.

At the sound of that voice, though it had come from beneath a mask, Guly uttered a cry of anguish a thousand times more heart-rending than would have been a death cry, and sank senseless upon the floor, the lamp going out in its fall.

Trembling with horror, Arthur felt himself pushed forward by Clinton's strong hand in wild haste to the window. Self-preservation was strong within him, he bolted through, Clinton followed, and they once more stood in the street.

"We'll take care of the bags," whispered Clinton, hurriedly, to Arthur; "you fly up that alley, get you to bed, and take care of yourself, you'll only hinder us if you go along—pull off your boots."

Loaded with their booty, Clinton and Quirk passed away like shadows in the stormy darkness, and bewildered, yet aware of the stern necessity for obeying Clinton's advice, Arthur drew off his boots and darted like light up the alley, noiselessly unlocked the small door, fastened it, and once more breathed in his own room. Quick as thought he rinsed the mud from his boots in some water he knew where to find, turned the India rubber cloak wrong side out and hung it on the peg whence he had taken it, undressed, all in that to him fearful darkness, and once more sought his pillow, without causing a break in the loud snoring of Jeff who still slumbered on his mattress, unconscious of the trouble soon to fall on his devoted head.

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Clasping his hands upon his wildly beating heart, Arthur lay still to listen for any sound to indicate that life had returned to Guly, or that Wilkins had awakened. For the first time, he bethought him of his mask, and raising his hand to his face found it had fallen off, probably, he concluded, in his hurried flight through the window.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

It were hard to tell, perhaps, what broke the head clerk's heavy slumber. It may have been Guly's wild cry, when he sank quivering to the floor, which reached his ear, even above the tempest-din. It may have been that instinct, which, sleeping or waking, teaches the heart to miss what it loves, or it may have been the natural effect of the drug, which had spent itself, that aroused him. He opened his eyes, turned heavily, and instantly became aware that the golden head no longer nestled on his bosom.

Alarmed, he sprang to his feet in an instant, wide awake. He reached for the lamp, but found it gone; and, with nothing but a lighted match in his hand, he started out to look for Guly. The match went out before he was half way down to the store, but he went on, groping in the thick darkness, till suddenly his foot struck Guly's body; and with a moan of agony, he stooped and lifted him in his arms, and bore him hastily back to his bed, where he laid him down, in wild suspense, not knowing whether he was alive or dead.

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After several minutes he succeeded in finding a store-lamp; but the moment he lighted it the wind gushed through the open pane and blew it out, leaving him again in total darkness.

Cursing the luck, he turned to obtain another match, when another gust of wind rushed in, and swept across his face; and, like a lightning flash, the truth darted through his brain. Taking the lamp to his own room, he lighted it there, and finding, to his joy, that Guly still lived, he immediately applied the restoratives he deemed necessary; and soon saw the chest heave, the eyelids quiver, and the whole form once more wearing the glow and motion of life.

"Oh, Wilkins, such a dreadful dream! Horror! horror!"

"There, Guly, compose yourself. Don't tell me about it till you are better."

Guly obeyed, and lay quite still, trying to recall his wandering senses; and soon the truth rushed back upon his mind, in all its stern reality, and he felt it was no dream.

"Have you been in the store, Wilkins?"

"Only in the dark—to bring you back."

"Things are in wild confusion there. Oh, could I have only wakened you, it might have been different."

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"Did you try, then, and fail?"

"Oh, yes; I could not thoroughly waken you, all I could do; you seemed to be in a sort of stupor. But I was certain that I heard a voice, something too human in its sound to be the fury of the storm. It was dark here, and the door was shut."

"The deuce it was! I left the lamp burning, and the door wide open; the wind must have done that work."

"It was as I tell you; and I went out, having lighted the lamp, and saw them in the very act, Wilkins, of finishing their robbery. Had I not been so weak and ill I would have cried aloud to you; but I came upon them so suddenly—so unexpectedly to myself, in the faint light, that I was surprised, for the moment, into silence, and then one turned, and raised his dirk to stab me; but the other, who had on his face a hideous mask, averted the blow."

"And you fainted?"

"I remember no more," said Guly, shuddering, as he rejected the too familiar tones, which, in that dread moment, had fallen on his ear.

"I fear," said Wilkins, kindly, "that this excitement has been too much for you. If you will remain here, and try to get some rest, I will look after the affairs in the store, and will call up Arthur and Jeff to assist me."

At the mention of Arthur's name, Guly looked anxious, but expressed his willingness to accede to this proposition. So, taking the lamp, the head clerk turned his steps toward the gloomy room at the stair-head, first taking a casual view of the confusion manifest in the store.

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It was not without some slight suspicions, and many misgivings, that Wilkins went in search of Arthur; but as he pushed open the door, and looked into the room, an expression of immense relief passed over his features, and with a freer step he approached his bedside.

Arthur lay there, apparently in a profound slumber. One arm was thrown listlessly above his head, his dark curls, disheveled and tangled, were stroked back from his brow, and his cheeks, though hotly flushed, looked as if bearing the bright glow of some pleasant dream.

Wilkins laid a hand upon his arm, and awakened him. The young man started up in bed, impatiently asking the cause of his being thus disturbed. Wilkins told him in as few words as possible, and turned to awaken Jeff, while Arthur hastily proceeded to dress himself. To his surprise the head clerk found Jeff already awake, and trembling like an aspen leaf, as he sat up on his mattress, looking in dismay at Wilkins.

"What's the matter with you, Jeff?"

"Debbil, massa! Didn't I har you say de store broke open?"

"You did; and I want you to be up, and stirring quickly."

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"Well, if dis doesn't beat de witches! Nuffin dis kin' eber happen afore. All jest 'cause dis nigger lef his post. See'f ole Massa don't say dat."

Wilkins bade him talk less, and dress quick; and in a few minutes the three descended the stairs together.

The fury of the storm was well-nigh spent; and the flashes of lightning, and loud peals of thunder, came at longer intervals. Faint streaks of light in the horizon, also told of scattering clouds, and approaching dawn. Closing the open pane as well as he could, so that he could carry his lamp without danger of its being extinguished, Wilkins, with Jeff and Arthur, proceeded to examine the "amount of damage done."

Suddenly Wilkins paused, and pointing out a number of clearly-defined tracks upon the floor, distinctly marked, in yet moist mud, he bade them be careful in preserving them as they might possibly give some faint clue to the robber, whoever he was. Jeff's quick eye caught at that moment what Wilkins failed to see—he observed that Arthur eagerly inspected the foot-prints, and cast a furtive glance from them to his own feet, as if to note if there were any similitude; and he saw, too, as the youth bent beneath the rays of the lamp, that his black curls, in one or two places, sparkled with heavy rain-drops. Jeff's ready mouth was open to speak; when the thought of Guly flitted, like a restraining angel, before him, and he remained silent; but, with his quick mind, convinced of Arthur's knowledge of the affair.

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It was decided, that as soon as it was day, Jeff should be dispatched for Mr. Delancey; and, waiting for the dawn to break, they gathered round Guly's bed, to discuss the events of the night, and propose measures for the future.

When Mr. Delancey arrived he said but little, going about to see what goods had been taken— minutely examining the spot where the apparent entrance had been made, and silently drawing his own conclusions.

When the foot-print upon the floor was pointed out to him, he started, and turned slightly pale; inspecting it at the same time closely. There were marks of other feet, but they were mixed and confused, but this had gone higher in the store than the rest; there were tracks going and returning. The foot was small, elegantly-shaped, and, from appearance, with an instep so high that water might flow freely under without soiling the sole. After examining it for awhile, Mr. Delancey was observed to set his own foot on it, as if to note if there were any similitude. He turned away with a puzzled look, but in a few minutes called Jeff to him.

"How came you away from your post last night, eh?"

Jeff explained.

"Well, how came this handkerchief of yours, and this jack-knife, that I gave you the other day, lying near the broken pane, in the bow-window, this morning, eh! you black rascal? tell me that!"

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Jeff trembled in every joint, and caught hold of a chair for support.

"Guy, Massa, dem tings was in my pocket last night, jis 'fore I went to bed; I remember usin' 'em 'fore Mr. Quirk went out; but I'se sure I know nuffin more 'bout 'em."

"Don't you lie to me, sir! If you've had a hand in this business, I'll have your black neck twisted off, I will. Get out of my sight!"

The expression of poor Jeff's face was pitiful to behold. He turned away, with his trembling hands clasped before him, and his great eyes looking upward, as if imploring mercy.

Mr. Delancey then went into Guly's room, and listened to his recital of what had occurred, so far as he knew, during the night.

"And you are sure you have seen this young man, who drew his dirk on you, before?"

"Positive of it, sir. I caught but a glimpse of him last night, but it was sufficient to show me who it was."

"If I send for an officer, you will describe him?"

"To the best of my ability, sir."

"Be up to-day, I s'pose, won't you?" added the merchant, putting his head into the room after he had gone out.

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"Shall try to do so, sir."

"Sure you know nothing of that other scamp?"

"As I told you, sir, he was masked closely, and—"

The door closed without giving him time to finish the sentence; a fact, which Guly was not sorry for.

Mr. Delancey ordered the store to be kept closed until things could be put in proper order; gave Wilkins orders to purchase and replace, as far as possible, the stolen goods, then stepped into his carriage, and drove home to breakfast.

The merchant's commands were always promptly obeyed. The officer came to converse with Guly—the broken shutter and window-pane were mended or replaced—new goods were purchased, and put in place of the old ones, and by afternoon no one would have suspected that a robbery had been committed at No. — Chartres-street.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

"It requires swift foot."

TIMON OF ATHENS.

"Fly now, for your life fly," whispered Quirk, eagerly, to Clinton, as, rid of Arthur, they pursued their way through the thick darkness and pelting storm. "If the cry of that white-faced stripling has roused Wilkins, we're as good as lost, unless we outstrip him; for I'd about as soon have a dozen blood-hounds at my heels as him."

They sped on in silence—only now and then stopping to change hands with their heavy load—until they once more stood at the door of Clinton's house. Here, placing their booty upon the ground, Clinton lifted up a trap-door, concealed just under the steps leading up to the front entrance. With Quirk's assistance, he placed the bags of goods, one by one, in a sort of cellar, rather large than deep, thus made on account of the thinness of the soil, and closely stoned and cemented, in order to be perfectly dry. Closing the door cautiously, once more, Clinton locked it, placed over it some broken bricks, loose earth, and tufts of grass, so as effectually to conceal it, then crept out, and rubbing the dust from his clothes, prepared to enter. Quirk went in with him, and they seated themselves in the little back-room, which they had left two short hours before.

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"A capital haul for one night," said Clinton, triumphantly, flinging off his great-coat, and drawing his chair to the grate, where a cheerful fire was burning, rendered necessary by the dampness.

"It isn't the first thing of the kind you were ever engaged in, Clin?"

"You know better," returned the other, with an easy confidence, but at the same time a grave look crossing his features.

"Believe me, I don't want to pry into private matters, but I couldn't help wondering to-night, as we came along, if this pretty little wife of yours knew the secret of your outgoings and your incomings."

"No, thank Heaven!" replied Clinton, with more earnestness than one would have deemed him capable of. "No, she hasn't a suspicion of such things."

"Glad of it," said Quirk, "she's happier; but I say, old boy, havn't you sometimes regretted the faithfulness to a poor girl which has deprived you of your inheritance, and forced you upon such deeds as to-night for a living?"

"No! My faithfulness to Marion has made a better man of me in some respects than otherwise I ever could have been, though it may have made me worse in others. I have in her a noble and excellent wife, with all the sterling good qualities, which, had I married a fashionable woman, I could never have found. As for my inheritance, I would care little had I but some honest trade by which to live—but that my father thought too plebeian to be introduced in the education of *his fashionable son*—however, if I can pick his clerk's pocket of a few more bank deposits, with my part of our spoils to-night, I'll do. I'm not always going to be so bad. If my life is spared till this business is settled, I shall spend the rest of my days in Havana. Even with the memory of my crimes in my heart, I believe I can be happy with such a treasure in my bosom as Marion. My father's pride has been my curse—my sins be upon his head."

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"And if you're found out in this business, what do you think will be done?"

"Oh, I shall be bought up, without doubt. The old man's spirit could never brook to have it said he had a child in prison committed for burglary."

"Well, 'tis as well to be cautious; for I fear that young Pratt knew you, and he'll tell all he saw, I'll be bound. Reckon though if he knew he had a brother in the scrape he'd be tongue-tied. I have tried to turn suspicion on Jeff, the negro. I picked his pocket of a knife and a handkerchief, and threw them down there somewhere. I 'spose the boss would almost be tempted to string him up if he thought him guilty; however, a nigger more or less is nothing—but when it comes to such valuable members of society as you and I, caution is necessary." Here Quirk laughed coarsely.

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"I'll wear whiskers awhile; that'll be disguise enough for me," said Clinton. "All that worries me is Arthur Pratt's proceeding—hope he's been good pluck."

"Never fear him; he's a little too conscientious yet awhile to be much of a b'hoy, but he'd be ashamed to show he couldn't do as well as the best of us. If that nigger didn't wake up when he

went in we're safe enough in that quarter."

"Have as little to say to him as possible, to-morrow, and remember to be duly surprised at the news of the burglary."

"Trust me for that; I shall take proper care of our interests, I assure you."

"As for the disposal of the goods, that, I suppose, comes entirely upon my shoulders. I think I will dispose of this lot to Talbot; he is the best paymaster, and the first dark night I will get them away from here. After that, call for your dividends. If you are by any odd chance arrested before that, remember your oath—don't implicate anybody. Honor among thieves, you know."

"Aye, aye," returned Quirk, drinking deeply of some wine which stood upon the table. "You'll live long if you wait for me to hang you. Good night." [Pg 318]

"Good night."

They shook hands and parted, and Quirk hurried away to his lodgings, in order to be able to say that he had occupied his own room, etc., etc., in case of trouble. As he strode away, a strange little figure enveloped in a long coat and a tattered old shawl, the better to protect it from the weather, appeared from the shadow of an adjoining building, and swung himself along between his crutches, muttering to himself: "Hih! hih! get the reward for these thieves—watch the papers I will—know all about 'em—get the reward, hih! hih! hih! hih!" and the darkness swallowed him up as it had done him who had gone before. [Pg 319]

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## CHAPTER XXX.

But, Othello, speak—  
Did you by indirect and forced courses,  
Subdue and poison this young maid's affection?  
Or came it by request, and such fair question  
As soul to soul affordeth!

SHAKSPEARE.

Mr. Delancey sat in his drawing-room conversing with General Delville; whom he was yet allowed to believe he might one day look upon as his son-in-law. The night was dark, and a penetrating, drizzling rain was falling, which rendered the cheerful scene in that vast apartment all the more bright and pleasant.

Suddenly there came a startling ring at the door bell, the sound of which sent the blood in a hot flush to Della's temples, as she sat there quietly between her mother and the General, with her thoughts wandering where they chose, though she seemed to be listening to the conversation.

A servant entered, saying that a gentleman desired to see Mr. Delancey.

"Tell him I am engaged." [Pg 320]

"I did so, sir; but he insisted upon seeing you."

"Perhaps some one bringing you news concerning the robbery," suggested Madame D.

"Ah, perhaps so. Show him into the library and tell him I'll be with him in a moment."

Excusing himself to his guest, the merchant sought the library. A tall man, wrapped in a heavy cloak, his hat still on and drawn over his brows, was walking impatiently back and forth across the floor. Mr. Delancey turned his cold eyes upon him earnestly for a moment and withdrew them nervously.

"Mr. Wilkins, I believe?"

"The same, sir."

"And what brings you to my house to-night?"

"That which has never brought me here before, sir, and never will again—business of a strictly private nature."

Mr. Delancey looked somewhat disturbed, but drew a chair beside a large writing-desk, and motioning his visitor to be seated, placed himself in front of him.

"Nothing wrong about the last load of goods? No trouble with the boats, is there, Wilkins?"

"Nothing of the kind, sir; my business, as I told you, is of a strictly *private* nature."

"Proceed, I am ready to listen."

"And will you, sir, listen to me calmly; and make no sudden outbreaks or disturbance? I hate scenes, even with women, but with men, Heaven defend me!" [Pg 321]

"I know of nothing you could say, sir, that would call forth any such ebullitions as you speak of; I am not a man of unnecessary words, as you well know."

"What I have to say can be told in a few words. I would, perhaps, do better to leave it unsaid; but I wish to repair, with what honor I can, a course, which in itself has not, perhaps, been strictly honorable. Do you know, sir, that I love your daughter?"

Mr. Delancey stared at the head clerk for a moment, like a man suddenly struck dumb; then every trace of color vanished from his face.

"My daughter, sir! You surely don't mean Della!"

"Have you, then, another daughter? I mean none other than Miss Della; and I this night come to ask your consent to our union. We have loved long and sincerely, and—"

"How dare you utter such words as these to me? You dare to tell me, that a child of mine has stooped to notice her father's clerk?"

"Aye! not only has one stooped to *love* a clerk, but has not the other wedded a clerk's daughter? Mr. Delancey, I come to you as man to man; put away the difference of your wealth, and I am as high as yourself; as much a man, as high in station, and more honorable than yourself. Thus I dare to seek your daughter's hand; and crave her father's blessing."

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"Have a care, sir, of what you say—*more honorable?* you dare to tell me that?"

"You know it to be the truth."

The merchant turned slightly pale.

"Mr. Wilkins, you put such a proposition as this you have suggested, merely for—merely to try me; you surely do not, cannot mean it?"

"I mean it all, sir. I am not given to trifling on such matters, and I have come to you like an honest man to ask your child's hand, and gain consent or refusal."

"And Della loves you?"

"If I may believe her words, she does; and I have her sanction to tell this to you."

Mr. Delancey started to his feet.

"And how have you dared, sir, to steal into my child's heart, and rob me of her affections? how have you dared to come like a thief in the night, and steal that heart away? I had never a suspicion of this—never thought of it. Brute that you are, thus to abuse my confidence!"

"Beware of what you say, sir. I have abused no confidence. Had you ever made me a guest at your house, ever treated me as if I had been human, like yourself, this might never have been. At least I would have wooed like an honest man, and your influence with your child might have nipped it in the bud. You must put up with the consequences of your own folly."

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"Where have you ever met my daughter?"

"Never in this house, as you well know. Abroad, riding, walking, in spite of duennas and guardians, I have wooed, and won her to myself."

"She must then have deceived you. I am certain she is the betrothed of General Delville, who this moment converses with her in the parlor."

"You, sir, may be the one deceived. Della would not leave you without giving you a knowledge of her love. She bade me come to you, to ask her of you openly, and to tell you all."

"Then, sir, once for all, let me tell you, you talk in vain; never will my pride permit my beautiful child—she whom I have educated and trained to grace the home of the first in our land—to become the humble bride of a hireling clerk. Out upon you, for daring to ask it!"

"And where would be the pride you boast of, should I choose to bruit to the world those tales that I could tell, of long years of practiced deception and guilt on your part—of wealth acquired by fraudulent means—of midnight hours of watchfulness, which have brought you ship-loads of contraband goods—of days and weeks spent in devising means to escape the vigilance of our Government officers, of—"

Wilkins stopped suddenly, for Mr. Delancey fell back in his chair, groaning aloud. The head clerk held a glass of water to his lips, and he slowly recovered, and looked up in his visitor's face with a beseeching glance in his cold gray eyes.

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"I am in your power, but spare me! spare me! Have mercy on an old man, who is weak and erring, but whose withered heart clings to his only daughter!"

"You give me your consent?"

"Ask anything but that."

"And you prefer to have your name go forth to the world branded with shame and infamy, rather than give your daughter to an honest man, who will strive to make her a good husband, and whom she already loves?"

Mr. Delancey moaned, and covered his face with his hands.

"Rather would you that men point at you with the finger of scorn—that former friends despise you—that the world look down upon you, and speak your name with scoffing, rather this, than see your child happy with the man of her choice?"

"Yes!" cried the merchant, springing to his feet, "if that man be you, a thousand times, yes! Go; do your worst; cast forth my name like waste-paper on the winds, scourge it, brand, blacken it; do what you will. Though you curse me to the confines of purgatory, my daughter never shall be yours!"

"This is your final decision?"

"My last—leave my house, sir, and never do you dare to darken its doors again."

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"You may regret, sir, what you have said to-night," said Wilkins, putting on his hat and cloak.

"I shall always abide by it. Begone, sir! Why do you tarry?"

The folds of the heavy cloak fluttered a moment in the door-way, then passed through it, and disappeared down the long stairs. Through those vast halls, with frowning brow and heavy tread, Bernard Wilkins strode, and the massive door closed after him for the first and last time, and he went forth into the silent streets.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

"I do beseech you, send for the lady,  
And let her speak."

OTHELLO.

"Send the girl, Minny, to me," said Mr. Delancey to Della, as she was about leaving the breakfast-table, to go to her own room, the morning after Wilkins' visit to her father.

Mr. Delancey, as was usual with him, had said not a word with regard to his interview with Wilkins, but he had thought of it deeply, and was now prepared to act.

Della flew to her room.

"Minny, dear Minny, papa wants you. He sent me for you, and I am certain something terrible is about to happen, his eyes look so strangely. I know Bernard must have come last night, as he said he would, and that is what has made papa seem so silent and angry. He wants to ask you about everything. Oh, Minny, tell him what you choose, but don't give up my precious letters—don't!"

Della sank sobbing upon a chair, and Minny, pale as a ghost, glided away, and entered the apartment where Mr. Delancey awaited her.

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"So, girl, you have chosen to play the go-between for your mistress and a worthless fellow?"

Minny was silent.

"You who must know all, tell me what you know of this matter."

"Nothing, sir, dishonorable to my master or his daughter."

"No prevarication, minion. Whatever you know of, as having passed between Miss Della, and—and—this man, I wish you to state plainly here."

"I can tell you no more, sir, than you already know."

"By what means has this acquaintanceship been carried on? I know there has been no opportunity for much personal intercourse. Have you letters?"

"If I have, sir, they are the property of my young mistress, and as such, I will deliver them to no one without her consent."

"Fool! do you forget that you are my slave?"

"As such, my first duty is to the mistress you have bade me serve."

"Are the letters in your possession?"

"They are, sir; placed there for safe keeping."

"Bring me them instantly!" said Mr. Delancey, stamping his foot heavily upon the floor.

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"No," said the girl, calmly folding her hands on her bosom; "whatever questions my master has to ask, I am ready to answer; but I can do no more."

"What do you mean?" cried the merchant, rising, and laying his hands upon her shoulders. "Go and do my bidding instantly. What did you confess you had them for, if you didn't expect me to

get them? Any other of my negroes would have lied."

Mিনny's face flushed crimson.

"Your other negroes, sir, might act differently, under many circumstances, to what I would do—but," she continued, more calmly, "Miss Della taught me never to tell a falsehood, and these lips have never lied."

The merchant looked keenly at Minny for a moment, then said:—

"Do you know that if you disobey me I will use the lash? You are but a slave, if you have a paler skin. Do you hear? Either tell me where these papers can be found, or bring them to me yourself, or I will lash you till your back runs pools of blood."

"And I will bear it, sir, though you should make it run rivers. My mistress's confidence is more sacred to me than any drop of blood that circles round my heart, and I will shed it all sooner than betray her."

Mr. Delancey paused a moment, with a glance of something like admiration lighting up his cold eyes; perhaps he saw something of his own indomitable spirit in the girl's firm demeanor, and, perhaps, the thought that nature gave her a right to the possession of that spirit never entered his mind. With his anger every moment growing more intense, the merchant again laid his hand upon her arm.

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"No more parleying, girl—bring me the letters."

"Never, sir."

"Dare you speak thus to me? I *will* have them."

"Not while it is in my power to prevent you, sir."

"Fool! Minny, slave, out of my way!"

Mিনny moved not a muscle.

"Do as I command you, or, by Heaven, I'll make you. Was ever such disobedience shown a master?"

Mিনny stood firm, but silent, her back against the door. Mr. Delancey laid his hand upon the bell-rope, and pulled it violently.

"Voltaire," said he, to the servant who answered it, "bring me the heavy whip, with the braided lash."

It was not often that Mr. Delancey punished a slave, but when he did he was very severe. In this case, pride, anger, and a feeling something like revenge, for what he deemed Minny's obstinacy, spurred him on. The refusal of the letters had made him determined to possess them, and nothing could now have turned him from his course. Reader, he was a father; and his daughter was his idol!

The servant brought the whip, laid it on the table, glanced pityingly at Minny, and went out with a shudder.

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Mr. Delancey seized Minny by the arm, and pushed her on before him, until he reached an upper balcony, near the sleeping apartments of the domestics.

"Now, girl, down with you."

"No, sir; if you lash me, let me stand and bear it like a human being, not like a dog, with my face to the dust."

"Down with you, or I will knock you down! You shall take it, as would any other slave."

Mিনny threw back her curls, and knelt before her master.

"On your face, girl, *down!*"

He raised his foot, and pushed her forward on her face. She lay there, with her heavy curls falling round her like a mantle, entirely concealing the tearless, livid face.

Delancey raised his arm, and the heavy lash descended, whirring through the air, telling how fierce the hand that dealt the blow.

The tender flesh could almost be seen to quiver through the thin, light dress; but Minny moved not, uttered no moan, nor raised her head.

"How now, girl, does your spirit hold out? Will you give up the letters?"

"Never!"

Again the lash came down, and this time, across one fair, polished shoulder, gleaming out from among the curls, in her low-necked dress, was marked a braided cut, from which the blood oozed in small round drops, staining also the waist of the dress, where the lash had fallen.

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"How now?"



There came no answer: Minny lay still and quiet. Again the enraged master raised the whip, and this time the strokes were a trifle lighter, but more frequent, with no power for questioning.

Della sat in her room waiting for Minny's return. Suddenly a strange sound struck upon her ear. She started, bent forward, and listened eagerly. It came again and again. She sprang to her feet, and darted like lightning down the stairs. She ran hither and thither, scarce knowing whence to trace the sound, when suddenly she met one of the servants.

"Voltaire, in Heaven's name, where are papa and Minny?"

"On the back gallery, Miss," returned the man.

With the speed of thought, Della sped through the long passages, up the stairs, and out upon the balcony. She gained the spot just as the strong arm was upraised to give another blow.

"Papa! papa! for the love of mercy, stop!"

At that sound Minny slightly raised her head, but dropped it again, and the blow came down.

Della sprang wildly forward.

"Papa! papa! what has turned you into such a demon!"

With an almost superhuman strength, she caught the whip, as it was again descending, in her own jeweled and delicate hands, wrested it from her father's grasp, and flung it over the railing into the court below.

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Dropping upon her knees, she lifted the quadroon's head upon her lap. The eyes were closed, and the pallid face wore the appearance of death.

Minny had fainted.

Springing to a water-pipe, Della filled a basin, and drawing the girl tenderly upon her breast, rocked her gently, back and forth, as she bathed the blue-veined temples with the cooling fluid.

Still pale with anger, Mr. Delancey stood looking on.

"Poor child, poor Minny!" sobbed Della, as the tears rained down her cheeks; "all this you have suffered for me—poor thing, poor thing!"

Suddenly lifting her eyes, Della confronted her father.

"Not another night!" she exclaimed bitterly, "shall Minny stay beneath your roof. She is your own flesh and blood, papa; you know she is. You might as well have whipped me as to whip her. Oh! papa, that you should use your own child thus!"

Mr. Delancey started forward.

"Who has dared to tell you such a tale as this!—who has presumed to whisper such a falsehood in your ear?"

"It is no falsehood, papa; it is truth, all truth—would it were not! It requires no talking to see it. Has she not your look, your spirit, much of your pride? But none of your cruelty. No, no, poor Minny, you have indeed been a sister to me. Look, papa, at this poor bleeding back, see how this dress is dyed with blood; blood which you cursed her with, blood which you have drawn forth again with the lash! *The lash*—think of it; and she your own daughter!"

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Untouched by his child's words, Delancey turned away, every vein swelling with the wrath which he could not conceal.

"I'll teach you both to carry on your private dealings with dastardly clerks. Back to your room, and leave this heap of bloody flesh and rags for the negroes to care for."

"Shame on you, papa. No! I shall not leave her for a moment. With regard to this poor child, your authority is as naught to me."

"That remains to be seen," returned Mr. Delancey, in his cold, deep tones; and, stepping to the stairhead, he called Voltaire to his presence.

At this moment Minny drew a long, shivering sigh, looked up, and met her mistress's tearful gaze with a smile.

"They are safe, Miss—all safe; he could not get them," she whispered, faintly.

"Hush, Minny, darling. Oh, you have suffered so terribly for my sake! This is dreadful, dreadful!"

"Anything for you, Miss Della, anything."

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Della's only answer was a closer pressure of that young form to her heart.

"Now," said Mr. Delancey, approaching them, with Voltaire walking behind them: "now, Minny, up with you, and get yourself out of my sight; and, mark me! you may get your back ready for another scourging unless you give me those papers before to-morrow."

"Papa, you *know* Minny isn't able to walk. Let Voltaire carry her."

"Well, up with her, then. Take her to some of the negroes' rooms, and let her lie there till she repents of her obstinacy."

"Voltaire," said Della, stepping forward, "take her to *my* room, and put her upon my bed. Go!"

The negro obeyed, and Mr. Delancey offered no opposition. There was a look in his daughter's eye which he had never seen there before, an imperative manner which enforced command, and he allowed the man to pass him, bearing the bleeding and exhausted Minny in his arms.

"Now, Della," said he, turning to his child, "follow her. Until I can get this vile piece of romance out of your head, you shall remain a prisoner in your own room. Shame on you for your want of pride!"

"Thank Heaven, papa, that I have no more."

They parted—father and daughter there—both turning their heads, as they passed, to look back upon each other; then went from sight, silently and coldly.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

"All the world's a stage."

"Oh, Massa Gulian," said Jeff, one day, following Guly, who had entirely recovered from his illness, to his room, "what shall I ever do, Massa Gulian, I'se so berry mis'ble?"

"And what has occurred, my poor fellow, to make you so unhappy?"

"Why, it's 'bout dis robb'ry, young massa. Don' you see dat old Master s'picious me? Tudder day, he said he bleeb'd I know'd suthin' 'bout it, 'cause he found dat knife of mine dar in de winder; and the Lord knows I'se innocent as a lamb, ob eben tinkin' such a ting."

"Mr. Wilkins, I think, convinced him of your innocence, Jeff. He told him every fact, concerning you, that he could think of, to prove you guiltless."

"Yes, but—but I heerd Master mutter to hissself dat he couldn't clar me in his own mind till somebody else was cotched, and proved guilty; and nobody has been cotched, and I'se berry wretched, 'deed, sah, I is."

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Jeff looked all he expressed, and Guly pitied him in his heart.

"Be of good cheer, and trust in God; all will yet be well. It were impossible for any one to think you guilty, Jeff, of this."

"Seems to me dat de Lord has deserted me 'tirely. What makes my heart ache most, is Massa's manner; you see he allus used to be berry kind to me; fact is, he neber whipped me in the world, and he used to trust me with so many of his private affairs, and wus allus so kind of confidential like, long o' me, and sometimes sent me wid money to de bank, and all dat. Don't do it now; scowl on his face de minit he cum near me, and look so like a tunder cloud, I 'spects to be struck wid lightnin' ebery minit. If he'd tie me up, and whip me, and den be hissself agin, I wouldn't care; but de Lord knows I lub my Massa dearly, and can't bar' to hab him turn de cold shoulder to me, and show he hab no more confidence in his nigger, 'tall."

Guly tried to say something encouraging; but, though Jeff listened respectfully, it was very sadly; and several times he wiped the tears from his cheeks, while his young master was speaking.

"Massa Guly," said he, taking a small parcel from his pocket, "here's suthin' I found in de winder, de morning after de robb'ry, when dey was cleaning up. I 'spect it b'longs to de tiefs, but I don't want you to open it till some one's cotched, and then if it finds an owner, well and good; but if it don't, I want you to keep it to 'member me. It's a purty thing, an' it's mine if it don't get an owner, 'cause I found it; and, as I said, I want you to hab it."

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"You are not going away, are you, Jeff?"

"Yes, young massa, berry fur."

"Why, how so?" said Guly, in surprise, "I had heard nothing of it."

"Well, please not to say nothin' 'bout it, massa; 'twouldn't do no good, an' I don't want it talked of. Ole Massa's plantation's a good way up de river, an' he sends all his bad niggers dar. Mebbe I won't see you 'gin, Massa Gulian, so good bye."

Gulian gave him his hand, and the negro took it in both of his, and bending over it, burst into a loud fit of weeping.

"Oh, Massa Guly, if I'se ever hurt your feelin', or done anyting berry wrong, I hopes you will forgive me. De Lord bress you, Massa Guly; you'se been de light ob mine eyes, an' de joy ob my soul, eber sin' you fuss cum here. De Lord bress you, foreber an' eber."

With a despairing, broken-hearted gesture, Jeff dropped the hand, and hurried from the room; and, at that moment Wilkins, who still retained his place as head clerk, called Guly a moment to

his side.

"Guly," said he, laying his hands upon his shoulders, "do you remember the time you promised me, if ever I needed a friend, you would be that one?"

"Yes, Wilkins; and will fulfill my promise any moment!"

"Will you be at the Old Cathedral, with Blanche, at midnight?"

"Blanche! midnight! the Old Cathedral? I don't understand your meaning."

"I want you to meet me at that hour, with Blanche, at the Cathedral."

"Would she go?"

"Oh, yes; I have it all arranged with her; Old Elise will stay with her grandfather till she returns. You will be there?"

"Since you wish it—yes, without fail. You will explain matters when we meet there?"

"They will explain themselves. Don't forget."

The day wore on, and everything went on in its usual manner, until just before Mr. Delancey's dinner hour, when, to the surprise of all, the loud report of a pistol was heard, coming from the little court, just at the back part of the store. As its echo died away, all those clerks not at the moment engaged, rushed to the long windows, and sprang through into the court, to learn what the matter was. Guly was the first on the spot, and to his horror and amazement, found Jeff lying on the ground, weltering in his blood, but still showing signs of life.

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"Jeff!" he exclaimed, bending over him, "what have you done!"

"Oh—Massa—Guly"—gasped the negro, turning his dimming eyes to the boy's face, "you'se come with your blue eyes to light me to Heaven. Couldn't lib longer, and hab de master dat I lubbed tink me a robber. I'se tried allus to be a good nigger, an' hope's I'll go to de good place."

"God grant it."

"Young Massa, is dis death?"

"'Tis coming, Jeff."

"Let me pray; I only knows one prayer, an' it's so short."

"Say it."

"Now I lay me'—oh, I'se goin' fast, young massa."

"Go on."

"Down to sleep'—Massa Guly dis long sleep."

Guly took his hand.

"I pray de Lord my—soul—to keep; an'—should—I die'—Oh, dis is de wrong prayer—Bressed Lord, forgive my sins, and take me to dat Heaven where de white folks go, dat I may see Massa Guly, wid his white wings on. Good-bye, young massa. Last at my side in death, I'll be fust at yours in Heaven."

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With a convulsive effort, the dying man turned upon his side, the limbs grew rigid, the death-rattle shook an instant in his throat, and poor Jeff was dead.

Guly left the negro's side, to acquaint Mr. Delancey, who had remained sitting stiffly in his chair, of the facts. The merchant listened unmoved, but ordered the body to be sent to his house, and a longer or better ordered funeral never passed through the streets of New-Orleans, than that which next day bore poor Jeff to his last resting-place. Whether or not that Master felt he had wronged a true and faithful slave, could not be told; but all he could do to show he honored his memory, was done; and as much expense and pomp were displayed in those last rites, as ever were lavished over a white man's bones.<sup>[A]</sup>

[A] A fact.

"Everything ready now, Minny?" said Della, glancing tearfully around her sumptuous apartments.

"Everything is prepared, Miss. Shall we go?"

"Sure you are able to walk to the carriage, Minny?"

"Oh, yes, Miss; certain of it."

Once more Della turned to look upon those objects, which use and long association had endeared to her. There were her books, her birds, her flowers, the bed, where she had dreamed so many happy dreams, and the cushioned chair, where she had so often sat listless and happy. With a sigh, which she could not repress, she waved them a fond adieu, and, taking Minny's arm, crept out upon the balcony, down the stairs, and through the secret garden-door. Here was an outlet Mr. Delancey had never thought of; and while the guard, he had placed at her door, stood vigilant and wakeful, the bird flew through the window.

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Once in the street, at night, and in darkness, Della grew timid, and clutched convulsively her attendant's arm; but they went on steadily, until arriving at an adjacent corner, a third person joined them, and helped them into the carriage, which stood waiting near by.

"Oh, Bernard!" cried Della, laying her trembling hand upon his arm, as he sat beside her in the carriage, with Minny, and they were being whirled through the almost deserted streets, "no hand can ever come between us again. I am yours at last."

"Nothing shall ever part us more," returned Bernard, drawing her fondly towards him. "You have given up much for me, but the aim of my life shall be to make you happy."

"I have lost nothing, Bernard, compared to the love I have gained. Only never let that swerve or falter, and I shall be the happiest wife that ever God looked down upon and blessed."

The carriage stopped at the door of the cathedral, and the party entered the church, where a priest was already in waiting. Blanche and Guly made their appearance from a side aisle, and Wilkins introduced them to Della, telling her he had engaged them, as dear friends of his, to officiate in the approaching ceremony. Della expressed her pleasure, and half-crying, half-smiling, kissed Blanche affectionately, telling her she hoped, since she was one of Wilkins' friends, that she would henceforth be a sister to her, and that they would all be very happy. Then Wilkins drew that fluttering hand in his, and led Della to the altar. Guly and Blanche stepped to their places, and the ceremony began.

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Leaning against a pillar, a little in the shadow, behind the marriage-group, stood Minny, the quadroon; with face blanched to an almost unearthly pallor, she listened to the vows which fell from Bernard's lips. With chilled heart, again came back the memory of the hour when those same lips, in this very spot, had thus sworn to love and cherish her. But what of this? her heart had been *legally* broken, and she had no right to complain!

The ceremony ended, Bernard and his bride, and Minny, started for the lake shore, where, though late in the season, they intended to remain awhile, previous to returning to take up their residence again in the city. They set Blanche down at her own door, and Guly, who was waiting for the adieu to be over, stepped forward, and pressing Wilkins' hand, exclaimed:—

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"Matters have indeed explained themselves, my friend; I little thought of this. May you be as happy as you deserve to be!"

"Thank you, Guly; I shall, no doubt, be much happier than I deserve to be." Then bending forward, he added, in a lower tone, "If the old gentleman is stormy to-morrow, at the loss of his daughter, remember you know nothing about the affair; you'll lose your place, I'm afraid, if you do."

"You surely don't mean 'tis Mr. Delancey's child?"

"Aye, the same."

"Can it be possible! It will, no doubt, be a bitter blow to him; but I believe you worthy of any man's daughter, Wilkins. God bless you."

Wilkins smiled at Guly's warmth, and, waving his hand, the carriage rolled out of sight; and Della, trustful and happy, laid her head upon the broad breast which had vowed to cherish her, and wept her tears, and smiled her smiles—a bride.

Guly, after seeing Blanche safely to her home, turned away, and hurried to his room, thinking over the strange events of the day, and wondering what the morrow would bring.

In wedding Della, Wilkins had accomplished two things; he gratified the love he really felt for her, and, at the same time, in so terribly wounding Mr. Delancey's pride, he had amply revenged himself for the long years spent in his service in that humility of manner which the merchant ever seemed to exact from his clerks, as though they were but slaves of a whiter hue.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Oh! that such a son should stand before a father's face."

BYRON.

It was early in the morning, the day after Della's elopement, and Mr. Delancey, who had just risen, was walking back and forth upon the verandah, sipping his cup of strong coffee, nor dreaming of the shadow which had fallen on his hearth-stone. He was interrupted by a servant, who came to inform him that a messenger had just been sent, to say that one of the men, suspected of committing the robbery, had been arrested, and if he chose to see him, his case would come on the first one; and he might go early to the Recorder's Office of the Second Municipality.

Mr. Delancey decided to go; and without waiting for breakfast, which was always served late, he

ordered his carriage, and drove directly to the spot.

When he entered the court-room, Guly was just giving in his testimony, and the crowd, that had congregated round, prevented the merchant from catching a glimpse of the prisoner. Guly gave his evidence in a clear, concise manner, recognizing the prisoner as the man he had seen in the store on the night of the burglary.

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"I have here," he added, drawing a small parcel from his pocket, "something which was found by my employer's negro, in cleaning up the bow-window, the morning after the theft. He supposed it belonged to the burglars, and gave it me previous to his death, begging me to keep it, unless some one were arrested, whose property it might prove to be. I have not opened it, or looked upon it, and do not know even what it is."

He passed it to the judge, who, untying the paper, drew forth a small box, such as is usually used to contain articles of jewelry. Lifting the lid, he held up to view a superb diamond ring, the curious setting of which Guly recognized at once, as being the same as on a diamond ring, of like appearance, he had seen the prisoner wear. While examining it, some words engraved on the inside, caught the judge's eye, and turning it to the light, he read, in full, clear tones, the name of "*Clinton Delancey*."

At that moment there was a sudden opening in the crowd, and Mr. Delancey tottered forward, with features ashy pale, and the strong eyes softened almost to tears.

"My son, my son!"

A gleam of triumph shot into Clinton's gaze, as stretching forth his hand, he exclaimed:—

"Aye, father, behold your son! It was not here I thought next to see you when we parted last; but it is one of those retributive meetings, which come sometimes, God-appointed. What you see me, you have made me. By your own false pride I was forced to beg or steal. In taking from you, I felt I took but my just due. This shame be upon your own head!"

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A dead silence fell upon all, and a glance of sympathy for Mr. Delancey ran round the court and the crowd of spectators; but, after a strong effort, the merchant drew himself to his full height, and, in a moment, all his coldness and flintiness of manner had returned to him. Turning to the Court, he said, firmly:—

"Let the law pursue its course," and passed from the room, striking his cane heavily down with each step, as Guly had often heard him do before.

The prisoner dropped his eyes, with a look of keen disappointment, and, at this moment, the strange figure of the dwarf forced itself in through the crowd, and, balancing himself on his crutches, stopped full in front of the judge.

"Hih! hih! Monsieur," he panted, turning his one eye up at the grave face of the officer, "I got something to say; please, sir, may I be heard?"

"Testimony with regard to this matter?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I hang round the courts, I find out what this man has done; I understand then something I saw him do. I may tell?"

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The Court assented; and he went on to state where he had seen Clinton deposit the goods, on the night of the burglary, adding, that another man was with him, whom he did not know, but whose name the other had mentioned, and he remembered it was Quirk—*Charley* Quirk, he guessed, because sometimes Mr. Clinton addressed him as Charley, sometimes as Quirk, and he continued: "You go there, Mr. Court, you find ze goods where I tell you; hih! hih! you dig um up, an' give dis poor little wretch someting for his information."

The dwarf was dismissed, but waited to hear the end of the trial; and had the satisfaction of seeing Clinton, against whom the testimony was so strong, sentenced to five years' imprisonment; and the veritable Charley Quirk brought in under arrest, on the strength of his evidence. He then turned to go away, but catching sight of Guly, he advanced toward him, nodding his head, winking his great eye, and chuckling joyfully to himself.

"Hih, Monsieur; not seen you since that day you so sick in bed. Tink of you one great deal—miss you great deal—need your picayune a great deal—love me yet, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Richard," said the boy, kindly, laying his hand on his great ill-shaped head, as they went out together. "Have you suffered for want of my humble charity, in this great city, poor fellow?"

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"No, Monsieur; I have lived on the dime the tall man gave me, in your room the other day. Hih, hih! but I've suffered for want of your face, Monsieur. Rare thing for poor Richard to look in any one's face, and remember he has said he loved such a dismal little thing as me; hih! rare thing that, yes."

Guly sighed as he listened to these touching, mournful words, and slipping some money into the dwarf's hand, bade him good-bye, telling him he would see him soon again, and hurried on to the store.

He missed Wilkins' kind face, as he passed his desk, and felt sad, when he remembered he might never see him there any more. Mr. Delancey was not in the store either, and there was evidence

of the want of a presiding mind in the appearance of the whole store; clerks talking together in knots, while some of the customers were being neglected; goods still covered with the linen curtains, and counters undusted and unattended.

As Guly took his place, Arthur crossed over, and inquired, in a steady tone, but with an excited manner, how the trial had gone.

Guly informed him, at the same time telling him the fact of Clinton's proving to be Mr. Delancey's son.

Arthur started violently, and turned away to conceal the emotion which he could not repress, as he remembered he had unconsciously assisted a son to rob his own father! The thought brought so much remorse with it, that, seizing his hat, he started away to the nearest saloon, to procure something to drown the unpleasant memory. Guly looked after him with a deep sigh, feeling that what influence he might once have possessed over him, was gone for ever,—wrested from him by the overpowering hands of an honest pride, unjustly dealt with, and the attendant circumstances of evil society.

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The memory of the voice, which came from beneath the mask on that fearful night, had never passed from the boy's heart; and though he studiously concealed his fears, he could but tremble at the conviction, that Arthur might, at any moment, share the fate of the unfortunate young man he had just seen convicted.

But, though Quirk and Clinton both were found guilty, they faithfully kept their oath, and threw no suspicion upon Arthur. Poor Jeff, who had felt convinced of his guilt, had allowed his secret to die with him, for Guly's sake; Wilkins had rejected any such idea he may have entertained, the moment he saw Arthur that night in bed, and Guly alone was left to his cruel doubts, with the memory of that familiar voice haunting him, always haunting him.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Is there no constancy in earthly things?  
No happiness in us but what must alter?  
No life without the heavy load of fortune?  
What miseries we are, and to ourselves!  
Even then, when full content sits by us,  
What daily sores and sorrows!"

BEAUMONT & FLETCHER.

Mr. Delancey hurried from the court-room to his own house. He said nothing about what had occurred, to his wife, but, stern and silent, took his seat in the breakfast-room, waiting for the morning meal to be served.

"Go to Miss Della's room," said he, to a servant, who entered, "and tell her I wish her to fill her place at table this morning."

The servant returned in a moment, telling his master that he had knocked loudly, but received no answer, and he could hear no one stirring in the room.

"And has Ruth been by the door constantly, as I bade her?"

"She has, sir; but says she has heard no sound in the room since the usual hour for retiring last night."

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"She can't be asleep at this hour," said Mrs. Delancey, looking up from the morning paper.

A sudden thought seemed to strike the merchant, and starting to his feet, he hurried away to his daughter's apartment; he knocked, but all was still; he tried the door, but it was locked.

"Go," said he, to a servant standing near, "and bring me the brass key lying on my dressing-table; it fits this lock."

The key was brought, and Mr. Delancey entered the room, closing the door behind him. All was silence and loneliness around him. He called his daughter's name, there was no responsive voice; he rushed to her sleeping-apartment, but the luxurious couch, unrumpled and unpressed, told it had known no occupant during the night. The balcony, the garden, belonging to her rooms, all were searched, but in vain; and the agonized father threw himself upon the chair Della had so often occupied, with all the terrible truth rushing across his heart. He buried his pallid face in his hands, and *wept*; aye, *wept* hot, burning tears, from those steady eyes that had never wept for another's woe, and rarely for his own. There was no note, no word, or line, left to tell him of her flight, but he knew all without; and bitter, bitter was the crushing weight upon his mighty pride.

He sent word to Mrs. Delancey, that she would breakfast without him; and two hours passed before he again stood in the presence of his anxious wife. None might know what fearful storms, what blighting whirlwinds, what earthquakes of passion, had passed over that strong heart in those two short hours. However fierce had been the struggle, it had been conquered, not by

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prayer and pleading at that Throne whence all mercy flows, but by the unbending power of that strong, indomitable will.

When he broke the news to Mrs. Delancey, the voice was calm and quiet, and no signs of emotion were visible. But with his wife it was different. She shrieked, and screamed, and tore her hair, and wept with a wild violence; Mr. Delancey looked upon her anguish with those same cold eyes; and when she went off in a fit of violent hysterics, he ordered her attendants to convey her to her own room, and then drove off to the store, as though nothing had happened. But what a hidden fire was scorching up the heart within! Shame and sorrow, remorse and wounded pride, all struggling and battling there, with their volcanic fires striving to burst forth, but smothered and kept down by the strength of the proud heart they lacerated.

Arrived at the store, he seemed to take no notice of Wilkins' absence, but went straight to his own high desk, and sat there with his eyes looking out of the door before him. Those who knew the result of the morning trial pitied him deeply, wondering at the calmness he displayed; but Guly, who knew how much more he had suffered by the flight of his only daughter, and sole remaining child, felt for him a deep and earnest sympathy which he longed to, but dared not, express.

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Suddenly the merchant rose in his seat.

"Gulian Pratt, if disengaged I would like to see you here."

Guly bowed and advanced toward him; but it was with a heart bounding forebodingly, for he remembered he had been chiefly instrumental in getting his son convicted, and he fancied that the merchant was about to discharge him. He saw that Mr. Delancey looked ten years older than when he had seen him in the morning, and with a gush of sympathy in his warm heart, he gained the merchant's side and extended his hand.

Mr. Delancey took it, and for the first time pressed it kindly.

"Pardon me, sir, for touching upon a painful subject, but allow me to express the sincere sympathy I feel for you."

The merchant bowed, and for an instant both were silent, Mr. Delancey sitting with his eyes looking down.

"I sent for you," said he at last, speaking very quietly, and in a measured tone, "to ask you if you think yourself capable of filling the—the vacant place yonder?"

"The head clerk's."

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"The same."

"I certainly think not, sir," replied Guly, blushing; "even though I were capable—which I think I am not—it might give rise to dissatisfaction among the other clerks."

"As for the dissatisfaction, that is my business. Did you ever study book-keeping?"

"I have, sir."

"Know something about it?"

"Something, sir."

"Then take your place at the desk yonder, and consider the situation and the salary yours."

Guly was utterly astonished. It was something so far from his expectations—a promotion he had only aspired to in the future; and to receive such unexpected good fortune was something for which he felt deeply grateful, and he told the merchant so.

But, as Guly was moving away, a sudden thought crossed his mind, and with a glance of sorrow, not for himself, but for the bereaved father, he said:

"Mr. Delancey, I fear if you knew all you would not feel disposed to do this for me. There are some circumstances I would feel happier to have you know, and then if you still feel thus inclined, I shall take the situation, feeling that I have acted honestly with you."

"Whatever you wish to say, speak; I am ready to listen."

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"Last night I was *there*," said the boy, hesitatingly, scarcely knowing how to tell it; "I saw them married—in the old Cathedral—Mr. Wilkins and—"

"Enough!" said the merchant; starting violently; then with an effort regaining his calmness, "don't speak that name in my presence, ever. How came you, young man, to be present at a ceremony you knew was without my sanction or knowledge, and utterly against my will?"

"I knew nothing of the circumstances, sir, before hand; not even aware I was to witness a marriage ceremony till after I reached the Cathedral. But I like Mr. Wilkins—have been a warm friend of his since I've been here, and when I found he was to be married, I officiated with pleasure."

"Knowing it was my—knowing who the lady was?"

"No, sir, not till afterwards—just as they were about to leave; but when I found out the truth, I did congratulate my friend most heartily, for I deem him worthy of any lady in the land, and rejoiced to see him happy."

"And they seemed happy. Oh, curses on them!"

"Nay, do not curse them. Your daughter's view of happiness was but different from your own, and she has seen fit to follow it out. She shed many tears, no doubt, for her father; but she smiled also many times upon her husband, and I know must have felt much sorrow mingled with her joy. Had she but gone with her father's blessing, how unalloyed would her happiness have been."

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"He took her for her fortune; curse him, I say! Not a cent of mine shall he ever touch. When poverty falls upon her head, she'll think of what she's lost by her disobedience."

"A father's curse is a fearful thing," said Guly with a shudder.

Mr. Delancey suddenly drew himself up as if just aware that he had been betrayed into saying a great deal more than he ever intended to, and at the same time cast a look of mute wonder upon Guly, who stood with his eyes fixed upon his face. It was rarely that any one dared to approach the merchant, (at least any of his subordinates,) as, cold and stern, he sat at his high desk during business hours, and none ever thought of differing from his opinions, or advancing any of their own. Guly's courage astonished him.

"Go to your place, young man."

"My old place, I suppose, sir."

"Didn't I tell you to take the head clerk's? what I say I mean. Do your best, and I shall be satisfied. I have no more daughters to lose," he muttered as he looked after Guly's retreating figure, "and nothing to fear."

With a blush, Guly took his place at Wilkins' desk, to the no small surprise of the clerks, but the first moment that the store was clear of customers, Mr. Delancey rose up, and formally stated that henceforth Gulian Pratt would occupy the situation of head clerk, and he hoped that all would look up to and respect him as such, and having delivered this speech in his peculiar formal manner, the merchant left, and drove home to dinner.

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Guly's promotion gave general satisfaction, and as he sat there with his young face and golden curls bent over the great books, not an eye sought his, but had a warm glance of congratulation in it, and many pressed forward to express in words their gratification at the new arrangement. Now that Quirk was gone, not one in the establishment but loved and respected Guly; and, though there were many there older, who might perhaps more fitly have filled the important vacancy, all felt that it was held by one whose firm principles and noble heart would prompt him rightly to perform the onerous duties resting upon him. Guly, henceforth, occupied Wilkins' room with Arthur. Mr. Hull took Guly's old place, and a new clerk filled his own, and soon everything was again smoothly jogging on at No. — Chartres Street.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

"'Tis but the just reward of merit that  
I give."

OLD PLAY.

It was New Year's eve, and the brilliantly-lighted shops were thronged with purchasers of the innumerable articles exposed to tempt the purses of those able to buy. Any one who has been in New Orleans during the winter season, knows what a scene the thronged streets present on this night of nights.

Guly stood in the store-door, looking out upon the crowd of passers-by, when suddenly a liveried servant approached him from the mass, looked at him a moment intently, then thrust a small box in his hands, and disappeared. Surprised at the occurrence, Guly turned away, and waiting until the store was clear of customers, opened it. It contained an expensive gold watch, richly wrought and elaborately finished. Puzzled to know what it could mean, Guly was about to restore it to the box, when a small folded paper in the bottom caught his eye. It was directed to himself, and on unfolding it, Guly found but these simple words:

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"To him who never sacrifices principle to profit."

Guly immediately remembered that the lady to whom he had pointed out the blemishes in her purchase, and thereby lost a sale, had never been in the store since; but that she remembered the occurrence distinctly and gratefully was evident. The boy had noticed the servant's livery and now recognized it, and hoped that this might afford him some clue to the name of his kind friend.

As soon as the store was closed he put his present in his pocket, and started forth to show it to Blanche. Arthur was so rarely in the store any more at evening, that he could not talk it over with



him, and with light steps he hurried to the presence of the pretty brodeuse. She had become the light of the boy's existence, and he could dream of nothing else. He was young to love, but his heart was older than his years, and it gave out its affection with the strength of manhood.

"Oh! grandpapa, if you could only see Guly's gift, his New Year's gift!" said Blanche, enthusiastically, after examining it herself.

The old man smiled, and taking it in his hand, held it for awhile and returned it, saying it was very beautiful.

"And have you no clue to the giver?" said Blanche.

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"Only what I told you."

"What did you say was the servant's livery?"

Guly described it.

"I remember a lady," said Blanche, musingly, "whose servants used to wear such livery as that. She was a dear friend of mamma's when we were rich, and they used to be just like sisters. Her name was Belmont—Mrs. Belmont."

"And what became of her?" asked Guly.

"Oh, she went to France just before all our troubles came upon us, and I suppose she is there still. She wrote once or twice to mamma, but she was too ill to answer the letters, and so it all dropped."

Guly put up his watch, and sat conversing with Blanche until the clock struck ten, when he took his leave, telling Blanche, as he pressed her little hand at parting, that it was the most delightful New Year's eve he had ever spent.

Blanche replied that she could say the same, and added that she supposed he knew Della and Bernard had returned.

Guly informed her he did not.

"Oh, yes," she said, "returned yesterday, and have taken a house in Esplanade Street, and are very happy I think. Della visited me, yesterday."

Guly expressed his pleasure at the good news, and left her, and returned home to dream of the mysterious donor of his New Year's gift and Blanche the brodeuse.

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The winter glided pleasantly away; summer passed, and winter came again. Fortunately for the brothers, the first summer of their stay in the Pestilential City was free from epidemics of any kind, and they escaped all sickness, with the exception of a slight acclimating fever. All that Guly had to weigh upon his heart was Arthur's dissipation, which gradually grew worse and worse, and he dreaded lest one day he should have the pain of seeing Mr. Delancey discharge him.

Guly had retained the new situation which had been given him, and discharged its duties with honor to himself and to his employer. There was not a clerk in the store but what looked up to him with respect and affection, and since he had become head clerk there had never been a bottle of wine uncorked or a game of cards played under that roof. Mr. Delancey himself, with all his natural coldness and harshness of manner, could not conceal the high esteem in which he held him.

Guly frequently spent his evenings at Wilkins' house, and sometimes Arthur accompanied him; but he could not conceal from himself that those evenings that Arthur went with him were not the pleasantest, there being always a restraint in his presence, which was not felt when he was not there. Wilkins had always rejoiced at Guly's good fortune in obtaining his vacant situation, and loved to sit by him and talk over the past or chat about Blanche and the happy future.

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The evening after the brothers had been visiting at Wilkins', Arthur passed his arm through Guly's, and said:

"I have quite lost my heart, Guly, with a pair of the brightest black eyes that ever shone; she's a pretty little witch, but I am afraid some one has stepped in before me, for I can't contrive to make myself agreeable, and every time I call she grows more and more distant. She lives but a little way from here; what say you to making a call with me? perhaps you could assist me immeasurably. What say you, will you go?"

It was not often now that Arthur make a confidant of Guly, and the younger brother was surprised to find him in such a mood to-night. He had, on his part, with a caution he could scarcely define, always studiously concealed from Arthur his visits to Blanche, and had not sought his confidence lest he might see fit to ask for his own in return; and he answered almost coldly:

"No, Arthur, not to-night. It is already late, and I hope you wouldn't think of calling upon any young lady at such an hour as this."

"Well, what can I do to pass the time between this and bed-time?"

"It is bed-time now, Arthur; but I'll tell you what to do. Mr. Hull has gone out to the opera to-

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night, and if we go back to the store we can be there by ourselves. Let's go and do what we have not done in a long, long time—sit down together like the two brothers we once were, and talk over old scenes, old friends, and old times; will you do so?"

After a moment's hesitation, Arthur signified his consent, and they went into the store together. Guly raked up the dying coals in the stove, threw on some fresh anthracite, and they sat down side by side.

"Oh!" exclaimed Guly, laying his hand upon his brother's, "Arthur doesn't this make your heart bound? There is such a glow of home about it, such an air of other days."

Arthur sighed deeply.

"There is, indeed, Guly; this is a socialness which we have not shared before for months, and never may again."

"Why do you speak so despondingly, Arthur? The brightness or blackness of the future lies with ourselves, I am inclined to think; and since we can be so happy in each others society, why should we do ought to prevent our constantly having this enjoyment?"

"*You* never will, Guly; it is me, all me—I have gone too far to return. I cannot tear myself away from the bonds which are dragging me down to destruction; evil companions, strong drink, and exciting play. Excitement is now necessary to my existence. I cannot live without it. This is why we have no more of this kind of enjoyment. To-night I relish it because I'm in the humor; but as a general thing it is unbearable—too tame and prosy."

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"Oh!" exclaimed Guly, "I have so often felt that the day we left the Hudson home was a fatal one for us. I had rather have staid there and toiled in the most humble manner, than to have ever heard such words as these pass your lips, and in my heart be forced to feel their truth."

"It is useless to repine, Guly. Perhaps 'tis all for the best. Sometimes when I have looked upon your calm and tranquil face, and noted the high principles which have governed your every action, I have felt as if I would give worlds to be possessed of the same; but again I have thought, perhaps you could not have been thus sustained had it not been for my fearful example, such a terrible, terrible lesson in itself of an undisciplined and erring heart."

Guly was silent. If this thought could afford his brother any consolation for the downward course he had been pursuing, it was not in his heart to deprive him of it, however much he might feel the reasoning to be false.

"I can never go back again," continued Arthur, "to what I once was. If this were possible, I might, perhaps, endeavor to reform; but I am so deeply steeped in sin, that its memory will be haunting me always, always; and it is useless for me to strive to do aught but drown life and memory in the same cup."

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"Wrong reasoning, my brother, wrong reasoning," said Guly, impressively, laying his hand on Arthur's arm; but he could say no more, his heart was too full; and, lifting his head, he sat looking into the coals, struggling to keep down his rising emotions.

Reaching out his hand, Arthur clasped Guly's in his and held it closely. Thus they sat side by side once again, heart to heart, and hand in hand. The bright fire-glow played and flickered on their thoughtful faces as they called up old memories and thought of old scenes; while the coals faded and died out—fit emblems of the dreams they were dreaming.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Oh! how this tyrant doubt torments my breast!  
My thoughts, like birds, who, frightened from their nest,  
Around the place where all was hushed before,  
Flutter, and hardly nestle any more."

OTWAY.

From this night, Arthur's course was more swiftly downward than ever it had been before. It seemed as if the last redeeming moment of his life was passed, and that some strong arm was hurrying him fiercely forward into the blackened pit of which he had dreamed one night long ago, when slumbering sweetly at his brother's side, his cheek upon his hand!

Every succeeding night plunged him deeper beneath the waves of that sea of dissipation upon which he had thrown himself. Theatres, dissolute balls, the gambling saloon and billiard table, each with their attendant quantity of exciting drinks, were his constant places of resort; and though Guly pleaded, and prayed him to renounce them forever, and come back to his old ways, 'twas in vain.

The Demon of Remorse was gnawing at his heart-strings for the crime he had committed, and pride, that fatal pride, was stinging him into silence and misery, withholding him from confessing, even to his Maker, his sorrow and repentance. He had given his right hand to the Evil

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One, and his left there was none to take.

Every morning, as Mr. Delancey's keen eyes searched that haggard and bloated face, Guly expected to hear him dismissed; but as yet that trial came not, and Guly felt that it was for his sake the merchant spared his brother, and the kindness sank deep into his young heart, never to be forgotten.

One night after the store was closed, Arthur sauntered up to Guly, and, laying his hand upon his arm, said:

"You remember the little black-eyed Creole I told you of one night some time ago?"

"The one you fancied had got your heart?" said Guly, kindly; "yes, I remember."

"Three nights ago, I proposed to her, offered her heart and hand, and told her, what was truth, that I loved her dearly, and, do you believe, she refused me flatly."

"She proved herself more prudent than you, Arthur. You should have known better than to ask a young girl to be your wife, when you have nothing, and will keep nothing, to support her.

"I'll risk the support," returned Arthur, with a short laugh, "if she had consented we could have managed to live, I fancy; and had we failed, we'd have called on our relations." Here Arthur cast a meaning, but half-mirthful glance at Guly, who, seeing that even then he was half intoxicated, shrunk away, not wishing to prolong the conversation.

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"Do you know what I am going to do?" continued Arthur, again looking up.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, Arthur."

"You may think so. Since I can't get her by fair means, I'm bound to get her by foul; that's what I'm going to do."

"For pity's sake, my brother, if the girl is good and innocent do not wrong her; there are enough ready to gratify your idle whims, without robbing the pure and happy of their peace. Where does she live?"

"Perhaps you think I'll tell you that, and have you play the defender? Ah, I've got my senses yet."

"How did you get acquainted, and where?"

"*How?* By my own natural conversational powers, which called out hers. *Where?* In the street, in the first place, where I was so fortunate as to meet her just as she had dropped one of a number of parcels of herb medicine she was carrying. I had the pleasure of picking it up for her, and of relieving her of some of her load. Thus I found out where she lived, and then took it upon myself to call again; but she hasn't seemed to like me from the first—hang her pretty eyes; but I'll be revenged for her refusal—see if I'm not."

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"Let me beg of you to give up this cruel idea, Arthur. Shame upon you for harboring it for a single moment."

"Pooh!" said Arthur, scoffingly, "it's no use talking, I shall embrace the first opportunity."

Guly turned away heart-sick; he felt it was useless arguing the matter, and knew that had not Arthur been half intoxicated at the time, he would never have given him so much of his confidence; for he rarely now took an opportunity to say anything to him unless it was when extra draughts of wine had taken all restraint from his tongue.

It being the busy season of the year, Guly had of late been so confined to business that it had been impossible for him to slip away and visit Blanche as he had done formerly. Occasionally, he had written her a note and sent it by his friend the dwarf, making such errands the occasion of a round remuneration to the miserable cripple.

He would always hobble his way back after performing the errand, although the walk was long, to say to Guly: "Hih, hih, Monsieur, but she's a beauty, one of her pretty smiles is as good as a picayune to me; bless her heart; I think, Monsieur, she make you very happy one of these days when you both get old enough for the priest to pronounce you man and wife; hih, hih, that I do."

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These were honest words; the dwarf meant every syllable of them; and the reward he received in Guly's bright smile, and sometimes an additional bit of silver, had nothing to do with calling them out, however joyfully such tokens were received.

The second evening after Guly's conversation with Arthur, the former stood in the store door waiting anxiously for the customers to leave that he might "close up" and visit Blanche. Arthur had already gone out, and he felt a nervous and anxious dread for which he could not account, and which made him all the more eager to be free. As he stood thus, he felt some one seize the hand which was hanging at his side, and looking down, beheld Richard the dwarf.

"Hih! hih! Monsieur, very long walk, very much tired. She looks more beautiful than ever to-night, though she sheds very much tears. She say to me to-day, when I went by: 'Come to me to-night, Richard, grandpapa is very ill; I may have a message to send by you.' So to-night I went; I tapped at the door with my longest crutch, she come out, cry very much, and tell me give you this."

Guly took the little note the dwarf handed up to him, and hastened up to the light to read it.

It merely stated that her grandpapa was very, *very* ill, and begged him to get word to Mr. Wilkins and sister Della, who were her only friends, beside himself, and old Eliza who gave her medicine for her poor sick grandpapa.

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After he had read the characteristic and simple little note, Guly slipped a piece of money into Richard's hand, thanking him warmly for the service he had done him, and the little man swung himself away, talking pleasantly to himself as he went.

It was late before it was possible to shut the store, but the moment he could do so, Guly did; and then with a sinking heart took his way to Wilkins' house. Della and Wilkins were sitting by the grate when he entered, while Minny sat on a low stool just in front of her mistress, with one fair round arm thrown caressingly over Della's lap. It seemed too bright a picture to be disturbed, and Guly, who had entered unannounced, stood looking at it a moment before he did so.

The moment he told his errand, Della begged Wilkins to go and do all he could, to take Minny with him, and to give Blanche her dear love, and tell her she would have gone herself had she not felt too much indisposed.

Minny tied on her hat, threw a light shawl about her shoulders, and started away with Wilkins and Guly at a rapid pace. The moon was shining brightly, and as they walked briskly on, their shadows fell long and slender, marching on before them. They had approached within a few blocks of the house, when Guly's attention was attracted by the appearance of some dark object on the opposite side of the way, going slowly along in the shadow of the buildings, and evidently seeking concealment.

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With his curiosity awakened, he pointed it out to Wilkins, and bidding Minny seek the shelter of an adjacent doorway, they crossed the narrow street to discover if possible what it was. As they approached, the object moved more quickly, but they soon drew near enough to see it was a female form, borne in the arms of a stout negro, and Arthur. As they passed an opening between two houses, the moonlight streamed down full upon the upturned face of the girl they were carrying, exposing her features clearly to Wilkins and his companion.

"Blanche! my own Blanche!"

Uttering these words, Guly sprang wildly forward. Arthur, finding he could not escape, turned short round and met him face to face.

The brothers grappled; all of Guly's meekness and forbearance was merged in the base insult which had been offered her he loved, and he seemed for the time gifted with almost superhuman strength. The struggle was brief; and Arthur was flung heavily upon the pavement. In an instant Blanche, whom Wilkins had released from the negro's grasp, was weeping on his bosom. With an effort, Arthur managed to pick himself up, and slunk away into the shadows, leaving Blanche with her defenders.

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From that night the bonds of sympathy were broken between the brothers; and each trod his chosen path almost unheeded by the other.

"Tell me, Blanche," said Guly, as, rejoining Minny, they proceeded to her grandfather's house, "how this happened. What took you away from the sick-bed to be exposed to the craft of bad men?"

"Oh, I was so anxious and so unhappy," said Blanche, weeping bitterly, "I feared grandpapa would die before any of you came. I left Lilah, the little girl you sent me, Mr. Wilkins, to watch by grandpapa while I ran down the piazza steps to see if you were coming. The moment I reached the last step, that horrid negro threw his arm about me. I struggled and tried to scream, but the other forced a gag in my mouth, and carried me off. I gave myself up to die, but God sent you, dear Guly, to save me, and you, Mr. Wilkins, for the second time. This same bad man has hung about here for a week or more; but I have always tried to elude him, because I believed him wicked, though he pretended to love me and all that."

Guly shuddered as he felt it must have been Blanche of whom Arthur had spoken a few evenings before; but he said nothing, and stood once more in the little room where many times they had been so happy together. The old man's easy chair was empty now, and from an inner room came low faint moans of suffering.

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Blanche hurried to the bedside, and stood bending over her grandfather, weeping bitterly. It was evident his hours were numbered, and they all gathered round, silent and tearful, to see the old man die. Blanche stood on one side of the bed, with Minny by her side, and Guly and Wilkins directly opposite. Slowly the breath came through those aged lips, slow and faint. In his effort to get air, the dying man threw out his arms upon the coverlet. His hands met those of Blanche and Guly, as they rested on the bedside. It might have been accident, but the trembling fingers clasped them tightly, and with a last effort folded them together above him. There came a shiver, a faint moan, and the grandsire was dead, with his chilling fingers still folding those two young hands together.

There seemed to be no bounds to Blanche's grief, and it was with the greatest difficulty she could be persuaded to leave for a moment the corpse of her grandfather. When she was at last induced to do so, Wilkins sent for an undertaker and had the body fitly prepared for its last resting-place.

Finding that Blanche would not think of taking a moments rest, or of remaining away from the corpse, Wilkins, and Guly, and Minny remained with her in that lonely and desolate room, where the shadow of death hung so darkly, until the morning sun streamed in through the little windows, robbing the chamber of some of its darkness and gloom.

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It was not thought advisable to keep the body long, and the next afternoon the funeral took place. Guly attended it, as did Wilkins' family, and a few of Blanche's Creole neighbors.

When the last sad rites were over, Guly attended Blanche back to her lonely home. Wilkins kindly offered her a home in his house, an offer which Della warmly seconded; but Blanche had sufficient tact to see that Wilkins was poor, and had no little difficulty to support his own family comfortably, and she gratefully declined his invitation, stating there was much that required her attention for the present at home, but that she would soon visit them.

When she returned to the old spot, endeared to her by so many fond associations, her grief again burst forth, and Guly drawing a chair to her side strove to soothe and comfort her.

He could not leave her there without telling how deeply and truly he loved her, how faithfully his love would always endure, and how earnestly he desired that love should be returned.

Placing both her hands in his, Blanche told him in her own frank, innocent way, how dearly she loved him in return, and how fondly she had thought of him since the first day they ever met, and that she would never love any one else, never, never.

"And one of these days when I am a man, and have a nice little home to offer you, you will be my own dear little wife. Blanche, you promise?"

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"I promise, Guly, I could never be happy as the dear little wife of any one else, and when you say, 'Blanche, I want you now,' then Blanche is yours."

Guly pressed her to his heart and they plighted troth. This was but boy and girl love, but it was a love which decayed not, neither did it fade, but flourished and grew, even with the hand of sorrow and trial crushing out its young life.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Will fortune never come with both hands full,  
But write her fair words still in fairest letters?  
She either gives a stomach and no food—  
Such are the poor in wealth; or else a feast,  
And takes away the stomach—such are the rich,  
That have abundance, and enjoy it not."

SHAKSPEARE.

Della sat rocking by the fire, looking pale and ill, and Bernard was fondly hanging over her chair. Minny sat a little way apart, holding upon her lap the first-born babe—a boy—"the darling of their een."

Never was a happier father, never a prouder and more delighted mother.

"Bernard," said Della, looking up in her husband's face, "I have a plan to propose."

"What is it, dearest?"

"Will you grant it?"

"Perhaps."

"Well, I think that now little Bernard is old enough to do a little while without me, and what I have to propose is, that you send me in the country, to visit our friends, and to regain my health, which you know is sadly impaired, while Minny stays home, and takes care of you, and plays mother to baby; what say you?"

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"And leave me a widower?"

"Just a little while."

"And why not take the boy and Minny with you?"

"Oh, that would never do. Must leave my cares behind, when I go for my health, you know."

"Poor child! it seems strange to hear you talking of cares, you who were born to so much wealth and luxury."

"Hush, hush! you musn't talk so. Happy cares mine are, and you know it, though not just the ones to take with me on a visit. Now confess, that you never knew a happier little wife than yours, or a more joyous little household than ours."

"True, in spite of our poverty."

"Yes, in spite of everything. Love is our wealth, and we are so happy in the possession of it."

"Yet you want to run away from us all!"

"Yes, since you will have it so; do you consent?"

"Submissively."

It was so arranged, then, that Della should leave on one of the evening up-river boats, and the rest of the day was spent in the hurry and bustle of preparation.

Though Minny had felt really unhappy at the idea of being left alone with Bernard, toward whom she stood in such a peculiar relation, she studiously concealed her feelings from Della, not wishing to mar the bright anticipations in which she was indulging; and, smothering her own forebodings, hoped for the best.

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The parting hour arrived, and with many charges, and tears, and warnings, Della clung to her husband and her baby, regretting, even at the last moment, that she had made up her mind to part with them.

"Dear Bernard, I leave Minny in your charge; take precious care of her for my sake. A great charge I leave with you, dearest—my boy and dear Minny. You must be mother and sister till I come back."

"I will, love; truly is my charge a sacred one."

"Good-bye, my treasures."

"Good-bye."

She passed out to the carriage.

"Send Minny to me once again, Bernard."

Minny came.

Della threw her arms around her, and pressed her to her heart.

"I never parted from you before, dear Minny, and I can scarcely give you up. Were it not that health demanded it, and a narrow purse forbade our both going, this would have never been. There! don't cry, Minny; when we meet, it will be never to part again."

Was there prophecy in those parting words?

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As the carriage rolled away, Minny stood holding the heavy black curls from her brow, gazing earnestly after it as long as she could see Della's white handkerchief waving her adieu; then, bursting into a flood of tears, she took the babe from its father's arms, and entered the house.

Bernard was a good husband to Della, and loved her as dearly as it was possible for him to love. But his marriage with her had not bettered his fortunes, and he was a poor man. This sometimes induced him to indulge in his old habits, in spite of Della's remonstrances, and tearful assurances that they were rich enough, and surely very happy, if he wouldn't follow these bad practices. He occasionally played high, in the hope of mending his purse, and then drank deep, to drown his disappointment. Several times since their marriage, he had gone home in such a state as this; but, every time, Della's unfeigned distress had called forth an earnest promise of amendment, which at the time he had faithfully meant to fulfill. But now Della was gone, and her restraining influence gone with her. She had been absent but a few days, when one night Bernard stayed out very late; and Minny, tired of waiting up for him, arranged the latch-key so that he might enter, and taking the baby in her arms, retired with him to her own room. She had but just laid the child upon his pillow when she heard his father's step upon the stairs. She knew instantly, by its unsteadiness, that he was intoxicated. She did not disrobe, but, sitting down beside the bed, listened with painful anxiety to hear him go quietly to rest in his own room. She sat almost breathless, while a thrilling and undefinable dread crept through her whole frame. The steps went slowly on, she heard them pass into Della's chamber, linger there a moment, and then, oh, horror! they were directed straight toward her door. They came on, in their wavering unsteadiness, and, with a sudden impulse, Minny sprang to the bed, thinking to catch up his sleeping son, and meet him in the hall; but ere she could carry out her design Bernard had reached the door, entered, and closed it behind him. His blood-shot eyes, his flushed face, and trembling hand, as he held the lamp before him, all bore evidence of the excitement under which he labored.

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"So, so, pretty one, how do you progress in playing mother, eh?"

"Very well," replied Minny, with forced calmness. "Did you come to look after him?"

"Look after him? no, I didn't; I knew he was doing well enough; I came to look after you."

"Is there anything you want, which I can get you," said Minny, approaching the door, and laying her hand on the knob.

"No, my beauty," returned the other, placing his back against the door, and turning the key in the

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lock, while he placed his lamp on the table beside him, "there's nothing I want which you can *get* me, but there's something I want which you can *give* me, and that's a kiss. Come here."

He seated himself, and motioned for her to come and sit upon his knee.

Minnie grew deathly pale, and laid her hand upon her heart, to still its tumultuous throbbing. There was no way of escape; the window was too high from the ground, and the door was locked, and her persecutor had the key.

Striving to conceal her agitation, she said, as quietly as she could:—

"I cannot give you that, Bernard; such manifestations on your part, you should remember, belong to your wife and child."

"And isn't the mother of my boy my wife? and did you not just confess you were his mother?"

"In the absence of his rightful mother, I have striven to fill her place; and if you choose to look upon me in such a light, show me the respect which is my due. Leave my room, sir!"

"By Jove, girl, you are saucy; come here, and sit upon my knee. You're a little wrathful just now, but all the prettier for that. Come."

Minnie rose up, with her face ashy pale, and stood in her calm womanly dignity before him.

"Are you not ashamed to show a defenceless woman such an outrage, in your own house? I have seen the time when Bernard Wilkins would have scorned so cowardly an act as this." [Pg 384]

"That was when he had drank less wine, and lost less gold; come, there is no use in parleying, come here by me."

He started forward, and grasping her rudely by the wrist, drew her toward him.

Minnie struggled wildly, but his hold was firm.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, as with a violent effort she wrenched her wrist from his grasp, "for Heaven's sake, Bernard, remember what is due to your absent wife, what belongs to yourself, what in duty bound you owe to me. Think of your innocent babe, and be a man once more. I beg you leave me to myself."

"Nonsense, girl; haven't I a right here? Didn't I marry you once, and doesn't that make my presence here proper and right? Have you forgotten that?"

"No, never! but *you* forgot it. *You* made the bonds, which united us, illegal, and took to your heart another bride. You have forgotten this, too, it would seem, or you would not thus insult me. I am no more to you now than if those days had never been."

"Zounds! my pretty one, we think differently on that score," said Wilkins, throwing his arms about her slender waist. [Pg 385]

"Let go your hold this instant!" cried Minnie, "or I will shriek for help, and expose you to the neighborhood."

"Shriek as loud as you choose," returned the now determined man; "who, do you suppose, will hear? Scream, and let me see how well you can do it up."

Still struggling in his grasp, Minnie flung herself upon her knees before him, and clasped her hands upon her breast.

"Oh, Bernard, have mercy!"

"Yield, then."

"Never!"

"By Heaven, then, I will make you."

Tightening his clasp about her with one arm, with the other he drew a pistol from his side-pocket, and presented it at her forehead.

"How now?"

"Oh, Bernard, is this the sacred charge that Della left you?"

"Do you give up?"

"No, no! with my latest breath, no!"

"Then I shall fire."

"Fire, then! here is my heart, fire! I would sooner die a thousand deaths, than have my mistress think I was so base a thing as you would make me. You never shall dishonor her while Minnie has power to prevent it."

Surely a demon had crept into Bernard's heart, as he stood an instant, with fascinated eye, gazing on the young girl, as she knelt in all her fearful beauty before him. He seemed to have lost entirely all control over himself, and with excited mien listened to the echo of those last words. It [Pg 386]

was but a second's pause, yet it embraced an eternity; the fatal trigger was drawn, by an impulse he could not withstand, and Minny fell backward on the floor, with her long curls falling round her like a pall.

The ball had entered just beneath her chin, glanced, and lodged in her right side. It was a most ghastly wound, and as the blood poured from it, over the snow-white dress, and trickled slowly along the floor, Bernard stood gazing upon it like one petrified. His eyes opened wide with horror, his limbs grew rigid, his very hair seemed to rise up, in the intense agony of the moment. The pistol dropped from his extended hand, and he fell upon his knees beside his victim, completely sobered, and awakened to the full magnitude of the crime he had committed.

"Oh, Minny, Minny! I have been the curse of your life-time; a shadow, mingling with all your sunlight; fearful, fearful is the retribution cast from your dying spirit upon mine. Forgive me, oh, forgive me!"

Suddenly, with the last remnant of strength gathered to speak once more, her small hands were raised convulsively, and placed in Bernard's, while her dark eyes, softened, and even more beautiful in their death-hour than ever before, sought his face.

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"God forgive you, Bernard, as I this moment forgive you *all, all*. To your wife, Bernard, your Della, henceforth be faithful; be true to her, love her, cherish her, guard her as your life. Do this, and the shadow of this hour will rest ever on your heart holily."

"I promise; as God hears me, I promise."

There was a faint pressure from the hand he held, the lips moved, but gave out no sound, and Bernard sat alone in the chamber of death, clasping in his own the cold hands of the murdered Minny!

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Adversity, sage, useful guest,  
Severe instructor, but the best;  
It is from thee alone, we know  
Justly to value things below."

SOMERVILLE.

Roused at last from the stupor in which he fallen, Wilkins rose from the floor, and taking his infant son in his arms, went out and told the neighbors what had occurred. Leaving his child with a friend living near by, he next went in search of a coroner, and returned with him to the house. All this Bernard did calmly, quietly, almost like one in a dream, with no thought for his own safety, no idea of danger to himself. The coroner was a gentleman well known to Bernard, acquainted with both the good and bad traits of his nature. In looking upon the corpse he readily understood the whole matter, and pitied the unfortunate murderer, even more than the beautiful victim.

A jury was summoned, and the verdict returned was: "Died by the *accidental* discharge of a pistol, in the hands of Bernard Wilkins."

The sincere and unaffected sorrow which Bernard evinced, served to corroborate this statement, and if any *guessed*, none *knew*, the real truth.

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Della was sent for, and came hastily. Though almost overwhelmed at the terrible death of her favorite, she spoke no word of reproach, uttered no sentence of reproof, to that husband, who, it was plainly evident, suffered immeasurably. Della's own hands prepared Minny's body for the tomb. She robed her in one of her own dresses—an India mull, of spotless white, and folded the tiny hands below the exquisite bust, clasping a few pale flowers. The fatal ball had left the face uninjured, and the wound beneath her chin was skillfully concealed. The eyes were closed perfectly and naturally. The lips, yet red and full, slightly parted over the pearly teeth, as if with a smile, and the long black curls floated gracefully down the fair neck and bosom. To have looked upon her, one would have deemed her sleeping. As long as it was possible, Della kept the body unentombed. The news of the fearful death had spread over a goodly portion of the city, and hundreds came to look upon the corpse, and turned away with wet cheeks, declaring it the loveliest sight they had ever looked upon.

The day of burial arrived at last, and, bending over the coffin, Della, with raining tears, pressed her lips for the last time upon the brow of that being, who had been faithful to her, even to death. The long concourse moved slowly away. Guly walked at Wilkins' side. As the boy glanced upon that pale face once more, before the tomb closed upon it for ever, the memory of the first time he ever saw her, came back upon his mind—the time when, with the wild glitter in her eye, he had seen her strike Wilkins that fearful blow, and rush shudderingly past him into the darkness.

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On returning from the cemetery, Wilkins found General Delville's carriage at the door, and its owner within, conversing with his wife. She had not gone out to the burial on account of her child, who was not well. The General seemed overjoyed to find Della the happy wife and mother,



which, under such sad circumstances, she appeared. He told them how eagerly he had searched the city over, in the hopes of finding them, since their marriage, but had signally failed, until the papers, in recording the fearful event which had just passed, had given him some clue to their whereabouts, which he had immediately followed up.

"I am now," said he, "on the eve of starting for Europe. America has no tie of kindred for me; I've not a relative living in all this broad land, and I shall launch myself upon the waves of the Atlantic to-morrow, no doubt for the last time, before sinking into the vast ocean of eternity, whose waves are ever loudly beating on the shores of time. I hope to end my days on classic ground; and to have my grave swept by those breezes which have fanned the brows of the great masters, whose works I have loved. Thus, I shall die happy. Sometimes," said he, taking Della's hand, and smiling upon her the same smile which had so lightened her heart months before, "sometimes give a thought to the old man, whose bones will drop to dust in foreign lands, but who, to the latest hour of his existence, will cherish his love and fond remembrance of you."

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With one more earnest pressure of the hand, he bade them farewell; and with sad hearts, Della and her husband waved back his last adieu, and saw him pass from their sight, for the last time, for ever. Upon turning to re-enter the house, a folded paper, lying on the table where the General's hat had stood, attracted Della's attention. She found it directed to herself, and upon opening it found it contained a check for one hundred thousand dollars, upon one of the city banks, left for her as a parting gift from him, who, though he could not be her husband, had proved himself her friend.

"Oh, Bernard!" exclaimed Della, as she realized the fortune which had so unexpectedly fallen to her lot; "let us at once leave this place. We have no friends here. My parents, who have disowned me, I haven't even the claim of love upon; and there are no ties, save Minny's grave, and the friendship of a few constant hearts, to bind us here. These, sooner or later, must be broken at last, and I would rather seek some home, wherein to spend the residue of our days, free from the sad associations which cluster here."

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To this proposition Bernard consented; and immediate preparations were made to depart for the Isle of Cuba, that gem of the Antilles, whose sparkling lustre has won the admiration of the world.

Before their departure, Della caused a marble tomb to be erected over Minny's remains. The design was simple and elegant, and the marble as pure as the cold young heart it covered. It bore the simple inscription:—

"MY SISTER."

Della proposed to Bernard, now that they were so abundantly able, to offer a home to the friendless Blanche, and let her be as a sister to them. Accompanied by Guly, who was still Wilkins' warmest friend, they went to the little house, to offer this proposition to the beautiful brodeuse. To the utter astonishment of all, and to Guly's chagrin and despair, they found the house deserted, the door closed, and the familiar card, "*To Let*," swinging from the upper balcony. Blanche was gone, none knew whither.

Della and Bernard waited several days, in the hope of hearing something of their young friend; but thwarted in their generous desire, they at last left the city, bidding an affectionate farewell to Guly, who stood upon the levee, watching the departing vessel, bearing away those true and tried friends, till lost to his aching sight.

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They bought a delightful country residence, near the city of Havana, and established themselves there, in the heart of a pleasant neighborhood, and were soon surrounded by warm and faithful friends. Bernard Wilkins became an altered man. His habits of dissipation were broken for ever; and he remained a faithful husband and happy father. Thus, performing his promises to the dying Minny, her departing words were fulfilled; and the shadow of her last hour rested on his heart ever holily—holily!

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

"And there we shall have our feasts of tears,  
And many a cup in silence pour;  
Our guests, the shades of former years,  
Our toasts, to lips that bloom no more."

TOM MOORE.

Weeks passed away, and Guly, in spite of all his earnest endeavors, heard nothing more of Blanche. A strange mystery seemed, as it were, suddenly to have swallowed her up, and left no trace. Summer came again, and brought with it one of those fearful epidemics so frequent in that ill-fated city. Cholera was spreading itself broad-cast among rich and poor, the humble and the high alike. Hundreds were weekly being swept into their yawning tombs, and it seemed as if the city most surely must be devastated. Nurses could not be procured to care for the sick; and the dead-carts went gloomily through the silent streets, groaning beneath their fearful load of death,

all the day long, while the grave-yards yawned constantly, as though their hunger never could be appeased.

Several of Mr. Delancey's clerks had died, and others had fled the pestilence, but Arthur and Guly still remained; the one, in order to gain enough to carry on his career of dissipation, the other, from a high sense of duty, which, though in the midst of danger, kept him faithful to his post. Mr. Delancey had been more lenient with Arthur than with any other clerk of like character he had ever had. Although he could not but note in his countenance the course he was pursuing, he forbore to dismiss him, and the brothers still lived, side by side, beneath the same roof.

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Though his receipts were spent in debauchery, Arthur managed, as a general thing, to fill his place through the day faithfully; and since the sudden demise of clerks in the establishment, it had become absolutely necessary.

But one morning, Guly noticed that Arthur looked pale, and suffering, though resolutely remaining on duty. Alarmed lest he should be taken with the prevalent disease, to which his habits rendered him peculiarly liable, Guly questioned him, and finding that he was really unwell, turned to his employer, and said:—

"Mr. Delancey, Arthur is too ill to remain longer in his place; he must give up until he can get better. He has remained here too long this morning already, with the symptoms of cholera about him."

"Well, he's a fool for that," muttered the merchant, in reply, with much of his old manner; "I should suppose he was old enough to know that he must give up when he's sick. I'd whip a negro of mine that worked round, and didn't tell when he was sick. Let him lie down here in your room."

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It was the old room which Wilkins used to occupy; and Arthur, every moment growing worse, hastened thither, and threw himself upon the bed. Guly immediately sent for a physician, and put aside all his business, to attend upon his sick brother. Slowly the hours went by. Everything that could be done was done, and, in fearful anxiety, Guly hung over the form of that brother—now, in this dark moment, forgiving him all his sins and unkindness, and loving him, oh! how tenderly!

The sun went down, and Guly had no brother! In fearful agony he had yielded up his strong spirit, and now lay pale and still in the fond arms which encircled him. The dead-cart stood waiting at the door, and with tears, which he did not struggle to repress, Guly saw the corpse robed in the habiliments of death, and placed within the coffin. Those were times which permitted of but little delay, and bodies were often beneath the turf before they were fairly cold, and even while Guly bent to take a last adieu of the still form before him, the cartman, a burly negro, was loudly vociferating for "the body," declaring it would be dark before ever he could get his "load dumped." The coffin was placed upon the top of a number of others, and Guly, too overcome by the grief and anxiety he had experienced, to be able to follow it to the cemetery, stood in the door-way, watching the dismal cart, as it rattled along, bearing to its last resting-place, all that remained of the once proud and happy Arthur.

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The negro sat upon his pile of corpses, and jogged along over the uneven streets, whistling as he went! It was late when he reached the graveyard, and the stars were beginning to peep out in the sky. It so happened that his was the only cart at that time depositing in the cemetery, and, accustomed as he was to such things, the man's hand trembled nervously as he moved about among the tall monuments, and at last stopped in an open space to deposit his load. He ceased whistling as he drew the bolt from his cart box and slid the contents out upon the ground. As they struck, there came a crash; a sound which fell fearfully upon the ear in that silent place, and the cartman righted the box hurriedly, and hastened round to see what was the matter. While peering into the dusky light, he felt a cold hand grasp him about the waist, and suddenly turning his head, saw that the last coffin he had taken, from being placed high, had split in its fall and burst open; and, oh, horror! its occupant was *creeping forth* with its ghastly face peering up into his! With a mad yell the negro bounded to his cart. He leaped wildly in, but the cold hand clung close, and the sheeted figure sustained itself behind him. With shrieks of terror, which echoed fearfully in and out among the tombs, the man plied the lash to his affrighted horse, and they dashed away through the dim streets at a mad pace, the negro, with eyes starting from their sockets, and mouth wide open from fear, ever and anon turning his head, but always meeting that ghastly face close to his, and seeing the grave-clothes floating backward in the wind! Then the whip fell more heavily on the poor horse, and the screams of mortal fear rang out more startlingly clear; but the fearful scourge had rendered the streets almost deserted, and the ghastly form still clung to the affrighted negro, sometimes sinking as if from exhaustion, upon its knees, sometimes again drawing itself upon its feet; but holding ever on with the pale shroud floating backward in the wind.<sup>[B]</sup>

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[B] A well authenticated fact.

Suddenly, in turning a corner at a slightly relaxed speed, the cartman felt the hold upon his waist loosed, and turning, he found that his frightful passenger had vanished, when or how he knew not, but then and there he drew up his horse, and vowed never to take another cholera subject to the grave-yard, and so run the risk of having the ghost ride home with him; and he kept his vow.

Guly lay upon the bed in the gloomy room up stairs, himself suddenly smitten with the fearful disease. He was alone, his only attendant having gone out to procure medicine. His thoughts were dwelling upon the sad events of the day, when suddenly the door opening into the alley was swept back with a hasty hand, and the pale figure of Arthur, robed in a dampened shroud, sank

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down at Guly's bedside. The boy started wildly up in bed, with a natural pang of terror darting through his heart. But the next instant, the panting voice of Arthur, faint, but in its old accustomed tones, fell upon his ear, and Guly listened in mute wonder.

"Oh, Guly, oh, my brother, behold me thus strangely cast back from the grave which was yawning to receive me. I thank God I was spared the fearful doom of being buried alive! The coffin burst, the shock, the sudden rush of air restored me, and I found myself awakened from a fearful trance, sent back to life and earth. The lesson has been fearful. But my close approach to death may yet prove my salvation. Give me my clothes to robe myself while I talk to you."

Guly pointed silently to the clothes which hung upon a chair, where they had been placed never to be worn more. He also extended a bottle of cordial to Arthur, bidding him drink and be strengthened.

"Now, Guly," said the elder brother, as, once more robed, he bent above him, "Let me remain as one dead to you, I am going far from you; but I am a changed being; fear not for me, I shall commence a new life, and when I return, I shall not cause you to blush for me. Guly, farewell!"

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Guly threw himself into the extended arms, completely overcome with his emotions.

"Oh! Arthur, I can scarcely realize this strange and sudden restoration; but now that God has given you back to me, do not leave me, do not desert me, stay with me; let us learn to be happy in our old love and our old ways."

"Nay, Guly, it may not be, I might but fall again. Let my former self—what I have been to you for the past few months—be remembered only as the dead; think of me but in the light of our early days, and in that light I will once more come back to you."

"And, Arthur, you will remember me with love and kindness, letting all the bitterness of the past drop into oblivion?"

"I will, I will—and you?"

"With love, always, with love, dear Arthur, shall this heart remember, shall this spirit enshrine you."

"God bless you! God keep you till we meet!"

There came one long, tender, tearful embrace, and once again the brothers parted; Arthur's footsteps falling gently on his ear, as he stole out through the arched alley way below. Thus they met, and thus they parted, in the same gloomy old room where they had experienced so much joy and so much sorrow at their first outset on life's troubled ocean.

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## CHAPTER XL.

"I may not love thee;  
For thou art far as yon star, above me."

Guly's attack had not been a severe one, and he was once more performing his usual duties.

One day as he sat writing, the dwarf with a chuckle made his way to his side, and stood there on his crooked legs panting heavily.

"Hih, hih, Monsieur, God spare you yet? God spares the good. Long time, Monsieur, since I saw you."

"Long time, indeed, Richard; I scarcely knew what had become of you; I am glad to see you among the living."

"Mean that, Monsieur?"

"Every word of it."

"Miss me, Monsieur?"

"Truly I have."

"Good!"

"And now where have you kept yourself so long, Richard?"

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"In one little hovel down town; I no put my nose out de door, fear dey chuck me into ze ground. Bury folks dis summer sometimes all warm and limber. I want to live till I'm dead, so I keep down. Life's as sweet to me as others, though I am misshapen, and lame, and poor, and miserable to look upon. Hih, hih, Monsieur, yes, life is sweet."

"And how come you to be out to-day?"

"I strolled out for one walk, hih, hih, one walk for the health of my crutches and myself; and as I passed along, some one give me this note for you, hih, hih, Monsieur. Goodbye! I must be going,

or the undertaker will have me stuck two feet in the ground before I get back. Goodbye. Take care of yourself, hih!"

"Goodbye, Richard."

"Monsieur, you remember what you told me one day, long time ago?"

"What about, Richard?"

"About loving one another. Hih, hih, you forget?"

"No, Richard, never forgotten."

"Mean it yet?"

"Yes, in my heart I do."

"Hih, that's good—adieu!"

Turning up his one eye at Guly to give a parting glance the dwarf swung himself away, and the clatter of his crutches on the pavement came back with a mournful echo to the boy's ear.

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Guly proceeded to read the note which had been handed him. It was simply an invitation for him to come to a certain number in an up-town street, and though neatly written, bore neither date nor signature.

Concluding it was merely a notice asking his attendance on some person sick, he having frequently performed such offices during the summer, at the hour designated Guly turned his steps toward the stated spot. It was a large house he found, standing somewhat back from the street, and presuming that it might be one of those wealthy homes which the devastating scourge had rendered desolate, leaving perhaps, one lonely sufferer, he advanced up the steps and gave the bell a gentle ring; a servant opened the door and ushered him into the drawing-room. Two ladies rose to greet him. One he recognized as the donor of his New Year's gift, and the other, could it be—his own brown-eyed Blanche? Guly felt a wild thrill of joy sweep through his heart, as Blanche, grown, it was true, more womanly than when he saw her last, came forward with her white hand extended to greet him. Oh, how annihilated did all the past, in that one wild moment, become! and as he bent his lips to that loved hand, and his brown hair swept forward over his pale temples, shutting out the bright scene around him, he seemed, for the instant, once more sitting at the little table in the humble cottage of the brodeuse, listening to the trembling voice of the blind grandfather, and threading needles for Blanche.

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"This," said the young girl, in her sweet musical voice, as Guly raised his head, "is our mutual friend, Mrs. Belmont; your acquaintanceship, I believe, however, dates from long ago."

Guly expressed his pleasure at the opportunity afforded of at last acknowledging his New Year's gift; and in a few moments they were seated together a happy trio, with the ease and cheerfulness of old friends talking over the events of the past. Mrs. Belmont explained, that she had met Blanche one day in the cemetery, kneeling by her grandfather's grave, just as she was on the eve of starting away on a long journey. That, struck by her resemblance to her mother, she had addressed her, and soon gleaned her whole history; that then she had adopted her to her childless heart as her own, and hurried her away with her, not having time to allow her to communicate the change to any of her friends; hence the long and hitherto unexplained mystery and silence which had so distressed and harassed Guly. They had returned but a few evenings before, and to-day, Blanche, happening to catch sight of her old acquaintance the dwarf, in the street, had seized that opportunity of communicating to him their arrival, and treating him, she hoped, to a joyful surprise.

It was late before Guly parted from his kind friends, and when he did, it was with a sigh of regret for his own fate, though he could not help rejoicing in his generous heart at Blanche's good fortune. As the pretty and innocent brodeuse, he had hoped to win and wear her as his own; but as the adopted daughter of one of the wealthiest ladies in the Crescent City, accomplished, rich, polished, and refined, this Blanche he dared not, could not hope to win. It was a height to which he, a poor salaried clerk, could never aspire.

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With a heavy heart he wended his way through the star-lit streets, dreaming of the days of the blind grandsire, and the little work-table at which he used to thread needles for Blanche, and wondering if those times ever would return.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

"Hast thou loved in the good man's path to tread,  
And bend o'er the sufferer's lowly bed?  
Hast thou sought on the buoyant wings of prayer  
A peace which the faithless may not share?  
Do thy hopes all tend to the spirit land,  
And the love of a bright unspotted band?  
re these thy treasures?"—

It was twilight, and Mr. Delancey was sitting at his high desk, with his eyes looking thoughtfully out from under his pale brow. Changes had come upon him, and it was evident that though the strong will was there, the fire of that stern pride that once glowed there was crushed out, and burned now only in a few smouldering embers. Cholera had taken his wife from his side, and he inhabited the great house on Apollo-street, a desolate and childless old man.

"Gulian," said he, as the boy approached him with a bow, "how is it that you always can succeed in preserving your amiability and politeness under all circumstances? I cannot understand."

"Simply, sir," replied Guly, with a smile, "by remembering the one great law which God has given us to write upon our hearts, 'Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you.'" [Pg 408]

"Humph!"

Guly stood in silence, looking up into the hard, pale face beside him.

"I have been thinking of you to-day, Gulian, something for your advancement. You have served me faithfully, and I wish to do something for you."

"You have already done for me much, very much."

"And you have never presumed upon it. I would do more. Do you think you could love me?"

"Love you, Mr. Delancey?"

"Even so; I am loveless and childless in my old age; be to me a son, I will strive to be to you a father."

The merchant opened his arms, and Guly for the first time felt himself held to that proud heart with a cordial grasp of affection.

"Be to me a son," continued Mr. Delancey, "and all my wealth, all that I possess, shall be yours. I am old, and want some one to love me; some one to miss me when I am gone. Do you consent?"

Guly thought of Blanche, and his heart bounded; but the next moment his own noble self came back, and he answered promptly: "I will gladly be to you, Mr. Delancey, the son you desire. I will love you, cherish you; do as a child should do toward a parent. But your wealth I cannot take. Let me see that distributed between those children who were disinherited by your wounded pride, and I shall be happy and contented in performing those duties which belong to you, from which you so cruelly cut yourself off." [Pg 409]

"Children? *my* children? I have none."

"Where is Clinton's wife and his little son? Have they no claim upon your kindness?"

"It may be, it may be."

"And Clinton himself, he has been pardoned out, and is wasting his young life to gather a pittance which you could so easily bestow."

"Has he not disgraced and shamed me?"

"Pardon me, my friend; but was not the primal fault your own? Was he not driven to his desperate course by a father's pride and unkindness?"

"It may be, oh, it may be."

"Write their names upon that scroll from whence they have been crossed, and restore them once more to their rights and happiness."

"And leave you poor?"

"I am better accustomed to poverty, and can fight my way while I have strength and God's help."

Mr. Delancey drew some papers from his desk and spread them before him. [Pg 410]

"Since you so desire, my will shall be altered; I had hoped to make you happy in the possession of my wealth; if it will make you happier to see it in the possession of others, it shall be done. Young man, you have acted nobly."

The merchant bent over his desk and wrote rapidly for some time. Lifting his head at last, he called Guly to affix his name, then folded and put them once more out of sight.

"There," said he, "it is done; if any error lay there, I have done all in my power to repair it now."

"And you will receive your reward."

The merchant said nothing, but sat with his head leaning on his hand. "I cannot tell," said he, "what can have put such thoughts into my mind; perhaps, 'tis because I am growing old they come there; but I have been thinking of the other side of the river to-day, the River of Life."

"My dear friend," said Guly, turning suddenly and taking the merchant's hand respectfully in his; "I am heartily glad that your thoughts have been turned seriously in this direction. It is a subject which ought to frequently intrude upon our minds, and I am inclined to think, that whether our passage across that river be pleasant or painful, lies much with ourselves. We should live to die,

even as we would die to live."

Delancey shook his head.

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"I have lived many years," said he, with a sad look which Guly never remembered to have seen in that hard face before, "and to-day, for the first time, the thought has forced itself upon me, that I have lived to very little purpose. I have had no aim for life, and the account of my stewardship here below must fall far short of what is required."

"There are very few," replied Guly, encouragingly, "who can strike the balance-sheet of life, and be content. Your reflections are, no doubt, the natural effect of the sad season we have passed through, and of your desolate loneliness."

Mr. Delancey leaned forward, and held his hand on Guly's arm, impressively:—

"Young man, while you are yet young, let me warn you to beware of a purposeless life; have an aim, have a mark, struggle for it, grasp at it, and though you may never reach it, you will die happier."

The merchant relapsed again into silence, and Guly turned to a window, to note the fury of a wild storm which was raging without. Suddenly there came a blaze of light, instantly followed by a loud and crashing peal of thunder.

"How fearful! that bolt must have passed near, or struck us," said Guly, turning toward the merchant. There came no answer, and the boy went up, and laid his hand upon the old man's shoulder. He was sitting bolt upright in his chair, with his stony eyes fixed upon vacancy, as he was so often wont to sit. Guly lifted one of the bony hands in his, but it dropped heavily, lifelessly, back upon the desk. Mr. Delancey was dead! The fearful lightning had borne him across life's river, without pain and without warning.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

"Man wants but little here below."

Mr. Delancey's funeral was scarcely over, before Guly received a message, stating that his friend the dwarf, was very ill, and desired to see him. The ragged boy, who brought the message, offered to act as guide to the cripple's hovel, remarking, that Richard said Monsieur would give him a dime for so doing. The money was readily bestowed, and in a few minutes Guly stood by the bedside of his wretched friend. Everything about the place indicated poverty, destitution, and filth, and the dwarf lay curled up, in the last stages of cholera, beneath the few rags which served him for a covering. It was evident no physician had been called, and it was now too late for one to do any good.

"Hih, hih, Monsieur," squeaked the poor old man; "come, at last, eh? Look a long time for you; very cold, Monsieur, very."

Guly took the cramped and chilling hands in his, and strove to warm them there.

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"Hih, hih, Monsieur; poor little dwarf's time's come at last. Can't talk much, Monsieur; but got very much to say."

"Don't exert yourself much, Richard."

"Only one little. I must improve my time. Ugh! Monsieur; that cramp was very dreadful!"

A moment of silence ensued, broken only by the rattling respiration of the expiring dwarf.

"Underneath this bed, Monsieur, and underneath the broad plank in the floor—when I am gone, Monsieur, look, and you will find one strong box. It holds a little money—only a little—which I have got for little odd jobs and begging. After I am under the ground, that is yours. You are the only one ever really kind to poor Richard, and now that he's going away for ever, he wants you to remember him kindly."

"I could do it without this, Richard, always."

"No matter, Monsieur; dat is yours. Ugh! Monsieur, 'tis so cold. Don't forget—under the broad plank. Think I'll be a straight man in the other world, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Richard."

"Think you will know and love me there?"

"I hope so, Richard."

"So do I; in my heart, I do. Ugh! ugh! how cold. Give me your blessing, Monsieur."

"God bless you, Richard."

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"Ugh, Monsieur, I am going. Good-bye. There is a time when life ceases to be sweet. Hih, hih!"

The poor cripple threw himself over towards the wall; and, with a shivering moan, died.

Guly gave the remains of his friend a decent funeral, and afterwards proceeded to find the strong-box, which his last request had been for him to seek. He found it in the designated place—strong-box indeed, and very heavy. On lifting the lid, the following words, scrawled on a bit of paper, in the dwarf's own hand, met his eye:—

"For Gulian Pratt—the only man who ever gave me money without seeming to begrudge it."

Just beneath was written:—

"Love ye one another."

Upon counting the contents of the box, Guly found himself the possessor of forty thousand dollars, the miserly savings of his crippled friend. Verily, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days it shall be returned to thee."

He had enough to wed Blanche now! With a bounding heart, the boy hurried to her side, to tell her all. He did so, in the presence of Mrs. Belmont.

"It required no fortune on your part," said the lady, kindly, "to have made your suit prosper with Blanche. To have known she loved you would have been sufficient, for to see her the bride of one whom I know to be so noble and good, is the highest boon I could ask for her. You are both, however, too young as yet to wed; but if, in two years' time, you find your love unchanged, you then shall have my sanction and my blessing."

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Two years! dear reader, they pass quickly with young hearts, and they were soon flown. In the softened shadow of the old cathedral windows—at the altar, where once before they had stood with Della and Bernard—Blanche and Guly took their places, side by side, with no one to divide them now or ever, in after life. There had come but little change upon them since we saw them last, save that Guly's hair had more of the brown and less of the golden about it, and his face grown even more noble in its lofty expression. As the ceremony was ended, they turned to leave the church, but a stranger, tall and dark, stood in their path.

There was a moment's doubtful pause, then the brothers were clasped in each other's arms!

Those who had filled the building, to note the marriage ceremony, filed slowly out; and the wedding-party still stood in the dim and shadowy aisles, forgetful of all about them in this new joy—the delight of this unexpected meeting—and the hurried explanations which, even here, Arthur was induced to give. He told of long and lonely months in distant lands, of weary hours and heavy days, of fierce struggles with his rebellious spirit; of battles with his stubborn pride, and resistance to the force of evil habits. He told, too, with his handsome lip quivering with emotion, how the wild struggle ceased at last, and "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," came to his troubled breast.

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"And," continued he, "with my love and trust in 'Him who doeth all things well,' once more restored to my rebel heart, I found myself possessed of renewed energy, and an indomitable spirit of perseverance, which seemed to conquer all difficulties. I made many friends, and acquired much wealth, and then started for my native land. I reached it,—a crowd about these doors drew me hither, and you know the rest. The old times at No. — Chartres-street hang over my manhood only as a finger of warning, and I have learned that they alone can tread a prosperous path in this life, who follow God's Guide-board, which is the Bible, and trust to His finger to point it out to them."

The joyous party left at once for the shores of the Hudson. There Arthur re-purchased the old homestead for his mother, and remained "a single man," the comfort and blessing of her old age. And every summer sees Blanche and Guly there, while "*Uncle Arthur*" looks out upon the lawn, watching the bright figures flitting among the trees, and smiles to see the shadows falling by them, as in the olden time.

THE END.

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