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EVENTIDE

A SERIES OF

TALES AND POEMS.

By

EFFIE AFTON.

"I never gaze
Upon the evening, but a tide of awe,
And love, and wonder, from the Infinite,
Swells up within me, as the running brine
From the smooth-glistening, wide-heaving sea,
Grows in the creeks and channels of a stream,
Until it threats its, banks. It is not joy,—
'Tis sadness more divine."

ALEXANDER SMITH.

BOSTON:

FETRIDGE AND COMPANY.

1854.

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BOSTON.**

To the

FIRESIDES OF THE WESTERN WORLD,

With the fond Hope

THAT ITS PAGES MAY SERVE TO ENLIVEN OR ENTERTAIN SOME FEW OF THOSE EVENING HOURS WHEN PLEASANT FACES GATHER ROUND WARM, GLOWING HEARTH-STONES,

This simple Volume

IS UNOBTRUSIVELY PRESENTED,

BY THE

UNKNOWN AND NAMELESS AUTHOR,

WHO WOULD RATHER FIND WARM HEARTS AMONG HER READERS THAN WIN THE LAURELS OF A TRANSITORY FAME.

Transcriber's Note:

There are two instances of illegible words in this text, both as a result of ink blots. They have been indicated as [illegible].

PREFACE.

When the sun has disappeared behind the western mountains, and the stars sparkled o'er the blue concave, we have been accustomed to sit down to the compilation of this unpretending volume, and therefore it is called "Eventide." O, that its pages might be read at that calm, silent hour,—their follies mercifully overlooked, their faults as kindly forgiven.

Fain would we dedicate this "waif of weary moments" to some warm-hearted, watchful spirit, who might shelter it from the pitiless assaults of the wide, wide world. But will not our simple booklet prove too insignificant a mark for the critic's arrows?

In the language of another, we confidently say, melancholy is indifferent to criticism.

Thus,

"In our own weakness shielded,"

O, Reading Public, we steal upon you 'mid the falling shadows, and lay "Eventide" at your feet.

CONTENTS.

WIMBLEDON;
OR
THE HERMIT OF THE CEDARS.

CHAPTER I.

"The stars are out, and by their glistening light,
I fain would whisper in thine ear a tale;
Wilt hear it kindly? and if long and dull
Believe me far more deeply grieved than thou."

Clear and loud on the hushed silence of the midnight hour rang the chimes of the village clock, from the tall steeple-tower of the quaint old church of Wimbledon, while several ambitious chickens rose from their neighboring perches, piped a shrill answering salute, and sank to their nocturnal slumbers again. But nor clock nor chanticleer disturbed Wimbledon. Still she slept on beneath the blossoming stars; and by their soft, inspiring light, with your permission, gentle reader, we'll enter the sleeping village.

Dim gleams of snowy cottages, peeping through a wealth of embowering vines, steal on our star-lighted vision as we roam along the grassy streets, and we scent the breath of gardens odorous with the sweets of dew-watered flowers. Above and around we hear the musical stir of the night wind among boughs and branches of luxuriant foliage, while ever and anon it comes from afar with a deep-toned, solemn murmur, as though it swept o'er forests of cedar and mournfully-echoing pine. Still roaming on, the low rippling of flowing waters comes soothingly to our ears, and we pause on the bank of a flower-bordered river that goes sweetly singing on its way to the distant ocean. A tiny sailboat lies in a sheltering cove, rocked gently to and fro by the swaying current. On a hill beyond the stream we mark a large white-belfried building, relieved against a dark background of wide-stretching timber-land. And turning our delighted footsteps down an avenue of lofty cedar and linden trees, there rises at length before our vision a splendid mansion, built after a most beautiful style of architecture, with deep, bay windows, long corridors and vine-covered terraces. Magnificent gardens, displaying the perfection of taste, lay sloping to the southward. On the east the silvery river was seen glancing through the shrubbery that adorned its banks. To the west lay a beautiful park and pleasure ground, while far away to the northward stretched the deep, dense forest, tall, dark and sombre.

And over all this lovely scene the stars shed their mild, ethereal light. O, Wimbledon! art thou not beautiful 'neath their soft, silver gleams? And doth not shadowy-vested romance roam thy grassy paths and flower-strewn ways to-night, and with her wild, mysterious eyes gloating on thy entrancing scenery, doth she not resolve to dwell awhile, 'mid thy embowering vines, thy dewy-petalled flowers, mournfully-musical cedar-groves, and web a fiction from the thousand tangled threads which complicate and ramify thy social life?

We shall see what we shall see in Wimbledon; for gray dawn is already breaking in the dappled east, and a man, closely buttoned to the chin in a gray overcoat, emerges from a large brick mansion on the outskirts of the village, and directs his steps toward an old, black, rickety-looking house, which stands just on the bank of the river, surrounded by a tangled growth of brush-wood.

Here the gairish day at length disclosed what the modest night had obscured with her diamond veil of stars. Squalid poverty glared through the broken window-panes, and want seemed clattering her doleful song on the flying clapboards and crazy casements. A feeble, struggling light from within showed the inmates were stirring as the man in the overcoat gave a loud, careless thump on the trembling door, which was opened by a pale, gaunt-looking urchin, clad in garments bearing patches of divers hues.

"Is your mother at home, Bill?" inquired the man, gruffly.

"Yes, sir," answered the boy in a meek tone; "will you please to walk in, Mr. Pimble?"

"No; tell her I want her to come and wash for me to-day," said the man, in a harsh, rough voice, as he turned away.

The boy bowed and reëntered the miserable apartment, where a few soggy chips smoked on a bed of embers that were gathered in the corner of a huge fire-place. A woman, with a begrimed cotton handkerchief tied over her head, sat on the hearth endeavoring to blow them into a blaze, while the smoke, that poured down the foul and blackened chimney, caused the tears to roll from her eyes, and baffled her efforts.

"Never mind the fire, mother," said the lad, approaching; "I'll try and pick up some dry sticks in course of the day to have the room warm when you come home to-night. Mr. Pimble has just called, and wants you to go and wash for him to-day."

"He won't pay me a cent if I go," answered the woman moodily; "all my drudgery for that family goes to pay the rent of this miserable old shell."

"I think he will give you something to-day, mother, if you tell him how needy we are," suggested the boy.

"Never a cent," said the woman, with a gloomy shake of her head; "however, I may as well go. I shall get a cup of tea and bit of dinner, and I'll look out to bring you a cake, Willie."

"O, will you, mother?" exclaimed the boy, his wan features brightening momentarily at the prospect of a single cake to appease the gnawings of hunger.

The woman threw a coarse, threadbare blanket over her shoulders and went forth, while the boy bent his way along the riverbank in search of dry twigs and branches with which to replenish their wasted stock of fuel. And he thought, as he picked up here and there the scanty sticks and laid them in small bundles, of some lines of poetry he read on a bit of newspaper that blew across his path one day:

"If joy and pain in this nether world,
  Must fairly balanced be,
O, why not some of the *pain* to them.
  And some of the *joy* to me?"

And he could not settle the point in his youthful mind. He could not tell why David Pimble should go to school the year round at the great, white seminary on the hill, while he could only go about two months in the cold, biting winter to a town-school a mile distant. He could not tell why said David should have warm woollen jackets, while his were threadbare and patched with rags; nor why David should fare sumptuously on buttered toast and smoking muffins, while he starved on the crusts that were cast from his well-spread table.

All these were knotty points which poor little Willie Danforth was too young and untaught to solve. When he should be older and wiser, would he be able to solve them? He didn't know;—he hoped so; though he feared he never would be much wiser than now, if he was always to remain so poor, and be debarred from the privilege of attending school.

There's one school whose doors are and have ever been open wide for Willie—the school of poverty and experience. Lessons swift and bitter are indelibly impressed on the minds of the pupils there.

Thoughtful and abstracted, Willie wandered along, gathering his little bundles of firewood, till he found himself at the foot of the hill on which stood the great, white seminary where David Pimble, his brother and sister, went to school month after month and year after year. He heard voices, and, looking up, beheld the little group that were occupying his thoughts, on the hill-top, laughing and mocking at him as he toiled along with his bundles of sticks. His cheeks glowed with anger for a moment, and then grew ashy pale, as he plodded on toward his miserable home.

Dilly Danforth, the poor washerwoman, had seen better days; but the drunken dissipation of a husband, who was now in his grave, had reduced her to abject, despairing poverty. Her unfortunate marriage and persistence in clinging to the man of her choice, and enduring all his abuses, excited the displeasure of her family, and they cast her from them to suffer and struggle on as best she might. She knew not as she had a relative in the world. She surely had no friend, save Willie, her little boy, with whom she dwelt in the comfortless abode we have briefly visited.

Alas for the suffering poor! How prone are the wealthy, by warm, glowing grates, to forget their cheerless habitations, and turn inhumanly from their pitiful tales of want and destitution!

CHAPTER II.

"This work-day world, this work-day world,
How it doth plod along!"

Tap, tap, tap, on the back kitchen door of Esq. Pimble's great brick mansion, and a clattering of plates and tea things within which quite drowned the timid knock. A second and louder one brought a fat, red-faced woman with rolled-up sleeves and a dish-towel in hand, to answer the summons.

"Sakes, Dilly Danforth!" exclaimed she, on beholding the well-known, faded blanket of the washerwoman; "what brings you here so airly in the mornin'? If you are after cold victuals, I can tell you you can't have any, for mistress—"

"I am not come seeking charity," said Dilly, cutting short the woman's brawling speech; "Mr. Pimble wished me to come and wash for him to day."

"*He* did?" said the bold-visaged housekeeper, opening her large, buttermilk-colored eyes with astonishment; "well, for sure!"—and here she seemed debating some matter in her mind for several moments, her hand still holding the door in forbidding proximity to poor Mrs. Danforth's pale, grief-worn face.

"Well, you can come in then, I s'pose," she said, at length, flinging it open spitefully, and returning to the wiping of her breakfast dishes, which she sent together with such a crash, that poor Dilly, as she stood over the stove trying to warm her chilly fingers by a decaying fire, momentarily expected to see them scattered over the floor in a thousand fragments.

"Sakes! are you cold this warm spring morning?" snarled the plump, well-fed housekeeper, as she thumped back and forth, carrying her piles of plates to the cupboard. "Why don't you shut the outside door after you, then? For my part, I'm most roasted to death."

"You have been in a warm room, while I have not seen a fire this morning," said Dilly, meekly, as she closed the door and returned to her place by the stove.

"Well, I wish I hadn't," answered the ireful Mrs. Peggy Nonce;—"a hard fate is mine; sweltering over a great fire all my life, to cook for a family that don't know nothing only to make the work as hard as they can. Now, here's Mr. Pimble goes and gets you here to wash; never tells me a word about it till you come right in upon me just as I have got my breakfast things cleared away, settin'-room swept out, and fire all down in the kitchen. I s'pose you have had nothing to eat to-day, for you always come half starved, though why you do so I don't know, save to make me work and get all you can out of us. When Mr. Pimble rents you that great house so cheap, too! I declare, I should think, with all that man's trials, he would get to be a hypocrite and believe in total annihilation."

Dilly made no reply to this speech. Probably the latter part was beyond her simple comprehension.

Mr. Pimble himself, the man of trials, as his housekeeper affirmed, now opened the sitting-room door and looked forth. He was habited in a long, faded, palm-figured bed-gown, all muffled up round his chin, and sheep-skin slippers without heels. He had a lank, pale, discouraged visage, and thin, light hair, streaked with gray, in a very untidy state straggling about his face. He pulled his wrapper up yet closer about his head, when he discovered the washerwoman, and shambled across the clean-swept floor, his heelless slippers going clip-clap after him, as he stalked along. What a gaunt, unhealthy-looking personage was the rich Peter Paul Pimble, Esq., of Mudget Square!

"Well, you are come, then, are you?" said he, glancing toward the kitchen clock, which was on the stroke of eight; "pretty time to commence a day's work."

"And she has had no breakfast; and the water is not in the kettles," put in dame Peggy. "I could have had that all hot for her, if you had just told me she was comin' to wash. But some folks always like to be so sly and underhanded."

"Stop your clack!" said the master, turning toward her with an angry glance, "and get a bite of something to eat while she is putting her water on and building a fire. I shall be at home through the day to superintend matters and see that all is done to my wishes."

Thus saying, he scuffled back to his warm fire in the parlor; for, though it was a bright morning in the early part of May, and odorous flowers opening their petals to the genial sunbeams, and groups of singing birds merry on all the foliage-covered trees, still Esq. Pimble was cold—always cold, summer and winter. No genial influence could warm his sluggish blood, or impart a glow to his dry, parchment-colored face.

There he sat; his feet poised on the fender, and a newspaper in his skinny clutch, from which he seemed to read. Now and then he yawned, stretched himself, approached the window, gazed forth for a moment with some anxiety depicted on his expressionless face, and then sunk down in his cushioned chair again. All the while the washing was going on briskly in the kitchen. Peggy Nonce had outlived her morning's asperity, and concluded to bake a batch of dried apple pies, as there must be a fire kept

in the stove for Billy, and it would save burning the wood another day for the express purpose of cooking operations. So it appeared dame Peggy, with all her tempers, had one good point at least, and one but seldom found in servants,—a lookout for her employer's interests. The bluffy housekeeper was given to gossip, too, as all of her class are; and who could give her a better synopsis of the private affairs of half the families in Wimbledon, than Dilly Danforth, the washerwoman, who performed the drudgery and slop-work in many of the fine homes of the upper class? But, after all, Peggy had more to give than receive; for by some means the poor washerwoman did not seem possessed of the "gift of gab." She was lamentably ignorant on many points where Peggy thought, with her advantages, *she* would have been well-informed and able to answer any question proposed. And so the news-loving housekeeper, though she remembered her master's interests in the article of firewood, was fain to forget them in a matter of far more importance, and broached forth into a long tale of his trials and domestic discomforts. Warming with her discourse as she proceeded, her voice grew so shrill and vehement, that Mr. Pimble, had he not been deeply engaged in poring over the trials his loquacious housekeeper was so eloquently setting forth to her silent and rather inattentive listener, he would have discovered himself the hero of a tale which might have lost Mrs. Peggy Nonee a place she had occupied half a lifetime. But Mr. Pimble sat in bed-gown and slippers till dinner was announced at one P.M., and the three young Pimbles tumbled into the hall in boisterous glee, just escaped from the restraint of school discipline. They all rushed to the table at once, and called for half a dozen kinds of food in a voice, which the glum, abstracted father heaped indiscriminately on their plates. There was no sound save the clatter of knives and forks for several minutes, while the interesting family discussed their amply-provided and well-prepared meal. At length Master Garrison Pimble, a lad of a dozen years, declared sister Sukey had got the biggest piece of venison pie. Susan, a little girl of seven summers, said she "didn't care if she had; she ought to have."

"No, you oughtn't either," returned Master Garrison, "for you are not half as big as I."

"I don't care for that," lisped Susan; "mammy says women ought to have the best and most of everything, and do just what they like to, and go just where they want to."

"Well, they shouldn't do any such thing, should they, father?" demanded the argument-loving Garrison.

"Eat your dinners quietly, my children," returned the silent father, "and not meddle with matters you do not understand."

"But I do understand them," continued the youth. "I know sister Sukey ought not to have the largest piece of pie, and she shan't."

Thus saying, he made a dive at Miss Susan's plate, and bore off her generous slice of venison pastry on his fork. Susey screamed at the top of her voice, and, clutching her hands in her brother's hair, she pulled it so vigorously he was fain to drop his prize, which fell to the carpet and was devoured by a half-starved grimalkin, while he boxed his sister's ears soundly for her vixen attack upon his bushy black hair.

"I'll learn you to pull my hair!" said he, with a very red face.

"I'll learn you to steal my pie!" shrieked she, as, maddened by her smarting ears, she flew at him and dug long, bloody scratches in his cheeks with her sharp little nails. The father now parted the combatants, and shut the warlike Susey in the closet, where she was loud in pronouncing maledictions against her brother, and heaping vituperations upon her father; declaring, when mammy came home, she would tell her how she was abused in her absence, and mammy would take sides with her, because she knew men were all cross and ugly, and tried to hurt and wrong poor feeble woman. Garrison and David finished their meal in silence; and when the seminary bell rang to announce the hour for reöpening of school, Mr. Pimble liberated Susey, and all went shouting off together.

Then he called in Dilly and the housekeeper, and, while they dined on the fragments, went out in the kitchen to inspect the progress there. All seemed to be moving on well, and, as he was returning to his seat by the sitting-room fire, a covered buggy drove to the front piazza, and a gentleman descended and assisted two ladies to alight. Directly the parlor was dashed open, and the trio made their entry. Foremost was the mistress of the mansion, Mrs. Judith Justitia Pimble. What a puny, trembling thing appeared the husband, as he stood there like a galvanized mummy in presence of that tall, portly woman, with her broad shoulders and commanding aspect! Her first act was to smother the fire; her second, to throw open the windows; her third, to ensconce herself in her liege lord's easy-chair, and bid her guests lay aside their travelling garbs, and make themselves at home. Finding his comfortable seat appropriated, and no notice vouchsafed him, Mr. Pimble shuffled off into the kitchen.

"Was that your husband, sister Justitia?" inquired the lady visitor, as she threw off her shawl and bonnet, with an energetic toss.

"Yes," answered the majestic lady in her most majestic tone, "that was Pimble. You will not mind him at all; he is as near nothing as can be,—a mere crank to keep the machine in motion,—you understand. He has his sphere, however. The lowest brute animals have theirs. Pimble's is to stay at home and superintend the minor matters of life, such as milking the kine, feeding the chickens, and slaughtering a lamb occasionally to subserve the grosser wants of poor human nature. In brief, all those trivial and perplexing things in which a superior mind cannot be supposed to feel an interest, and by which it is not right it should be fettered, and prevented from soaring to its own lofty sphere of thought and action."

Mrs. Pimble paused for breath as she delivered herself of the above voluble speech, and the lady visitor replied:

"You speak heroicly, sister Justitia. I see you have obtained your rightful position in your own household. O, would that all our crushed and down-trodden sisters were possessed of but a tithe of your energy and independence of character! Then would our young Reform, which encounters on every side the swords and pickaxes of infuriate battalions of the tyrant man, ride in triumphal chariot over our whole broad country's proud domain!"

"Ah, sister Simcoe, how doth your inspired language fill my soul with fire! I rejoice that you are come among us. How will your presence encourage our ranks, and, in the triumph of your medical skill, vile male usurpers of the healing art shall sink to rise no more! I long to read again the proceedings of our late convention, the thrilling speeches, the sweeping resolutions!"

"Let us thus occupy ourselves," said young Dr. Simcoe, turning toward a remote corner of the apartment where sat the small man who had accompanied the ladies, perched on a hard, uncushioned chair, his hands folded in his lap, and his eyes bent studiously on the carpet. This was the personage on whom the accomplished young medical practitioner had, a few months previous, condescended to bestow the princely honor of her hand.

"Sim," said the eloquent wife, as she glanced carelessly upon him, "where are the portmanteaus?"

"In the entry," answered the small man, raising his eyes for a moment to his fair consort's face.

"Bring them in and open them," said the lady, again sinking down in her soft seat.

The small man disappeared in a twinkling, and the portmanteaus were soon placed on the table, and their contents spread forth.

"I will now order some refreshment," said Mrs. Pimble;—"and while it is preparing, we can amuse ourselves with the documents. What would you prefer for your dinner, sister Simcoe?"

"Pea soup," returned the lady doctor; "that is my uniform dish,—simple and plain."

"And Mr. Simcoe, what would he choose?"

"O, he has no choice!—anything that comes handiest will do for him."

Mrs. Pimble glanced toward Mr. Simcoe. Mr. Simcoe simpered and bowed. So Mrs. Pimble swept into the kitchen to issue her commands. She started on beholding Dilly Danforth bending over a wash-tub filled to the brim with smoking linen, just out of a boiling suds. Darting one fiery glance toward her forceless husband, sitting humped up over the stove, his head supported on his hands, she exclaimed, "What does this mean?" Mr. Pimble looked up vacantly; Peggy turned round from her occupation of washing the dinner dishes, and Dilly kept to her wash-tub. No one seemed to understand to whom the stately mistress addressed her brief interrogatory. "Have you all lost your tongues?" at length exclaimed Mrs. Pimble, in a louder tone; and, seizing her husband's chair, she gave it a rough jerk, and demanded, "Are you dumb, Peter Pimble? What is that beggar-woman,"—pointing toward Dilly,—"doing here?"

"Don't you see she is washing?" returned the husband, rather ironically.

"Well, by whose leave?"

"Mine."

"Yours?—and why have you brought a washerwoman into the house in my absence, and without my permission?"

"Because all my linen was dirty."

"What if it was?"

"I wanted it washed."

"What for?"

"Because the spring courts are held in Olneyville next week."

"What if they are?"

"I would like to attend."

"You would, would you? No doubt, and confine me at home to superintend the domestic affairs. No, Mr. Pimble, you don't enslave me in that manner. I'm a free woman, and acknowledge no man master. I'll see if I'm not mistress in my own house. Here, Dilly Danforth, take your hands out of that wash-tub, and pack off home, instanter. There will be no more washing done in my house to-day, or ever again, unless I order it done. And you, Peggy Nonce, make a pea soup and broil a nice steak, with all the appropriate dishes, and have a dinner prepared in half an hour, to serve myself and guests."

There was an instant commotion in the kitchen, and the mistress swept back to her guests in the parlor.

CHAPTER III.

"She is a saucy wench,
Somewhat o'er full
Of pranks, I think—but then with growing years
She will outgrow her mischief and become
As staid and sober as our hearts could choose."

OLD PLAY.

Mr. Salsify Mumbles was a grocer in a small way, and his good wife took boarders,—young ladies and gentlemen from different parts of the country, who came to attend Cedar Hill Seminary, a school of high repute and extended celebrity. Her number was limited to three this summer, because she conceived her health to be delicate, and because Mr. Salsify had communicated to her in private that he was certainly "rising in his profession;" and the quick-sighted lady foresaw the day speedily approaching when she would no longer be obliged to perplex herself with so ungrateful a class of beings as boarders, but should roll through the streets of Wimbledon in her coach and four, the "observed of all observers."

Mrs. Mumbles had one fair daughter, Mary Madeline, upon whom she doted with true maternal fondness. This young lady was most perversely inclined to smile upon one Mr. Dick Giblet, a clerk in her father's grocery. Mrs. Mumbles was inconsolable, and Mr. Giblet was banished from the premises, and taken into employ by the firm of Edson & Co., the largest merchants in Wimbledon.

Rumor said these gentlemen were so well pleased with the young man, that they had offered him a yearly salary of several hundred dollars, and proposed, should he continue to perform his duties as well as hitherto, to take him into the firm, on his coming of age. Mrs. Salsify now began to regard Dick with different eyes, as what prudent mother would not? She sent Mary Madeline to the store of Edson & Co., whenever she was in want of a spool of cotton or yard of tape; but the young clerk had grown so vain with his elevation, that he looked very loftily down upon her, bowed in the most distant manner, and never exchanged more words with her than were necessary in the buying and selling of an article. So Mary Madeline told her mother, and upbraided her as the cause of the young man's cold treatment. Mrs. Salsify bade her daughter be of good cheer. "'Twas all a feint on Dick's part, to conceal his love till he was sure of hers,—all would come round right in time." But Mary Madeline would not believe it, and said she should die if she had to stay in the back store alone so much, sorting spices and writing labels, for she was constantly thinking of Dick, who used to be with her. She must have something to divert her attention; and, at length, Mrs. Salsify hit upon the project of sending her to school at the seminary one term. It was fitting that the daughter of the rich Mr. Mumbles that was to be, should be possessed of suitable polish and refinement to adorn the high circles in which her position would call her to move. So Miss Mumbles answered to her name among the two hundred scholars, male and female, that had assembled in the halls of Cedar Hill Seminary, for the summer term. Quite a sensation she produced in her gay muslin dress and fiery-colored silk apron; for Mrs. Salsify declared her resolve to dress her tip-top. She was not the woman to half do a thing, when she undertook; she always came up to the mark, or went a little beyond. Better overshoot than fall short, was her motto. And when Mary Madeline came home, on the evening of her debut at the seminary, walking between the two young lady boarders, Amy Seaton and Jenny Andrews, Mrs. Mumbles could not avoid drawing a comparison between the three; and her daughter appeared to her like a blazing star between two sombre clouds, for Miss Seaton and Miss Andrews, who were both orphans, wore plain, dark gingham frocks and linen aprons. The third boarder was a little brother of Miss Seaton's, about a dozen years of age. Charlie was his name; a bright, intelligent boy, brimful of mischief and fun.

Mrs. Salsify kept no girl;—she could not find a good one, she said,—a bad one she would not have, as long as she could manage to perform her work herself, which she thought she could do with Mary Madeline's assistance nights and mornings. It would not be for long, she trusted, this slavery to boarders, for Mr. Salsify continued to inform her, at stated intervals, that he was certainly "rising in his profession."

The husband and wife sat alone one evening, indulging in confidential discourse, as 'tis said conjugal mates are wont to do on certain occasions.

"Really," exclaimed Mrs. Mumbles, "it is astonishing, the quantity of victuals these boarders consume. It is so unfeminine and indelicate for young ladies to have appetites. I declare it quite shocks me to see the large slices of bread and butter disappearing down Jenny Andrews' little throat, and, as for that Charles Seaton, I believe he would eat a whole plum pudding if he could get it. I left off making them long ago."

"I have not noticed one on the table for several days," returned Mr. Salsify, "and, as I saw the last

one was sent away untouched, I feared they had detected the musty raisins."

"O, la, no! the greedy mugs don't know the difference, I assure you," answered the wife, "'twas only because they had stuffed themselves so full of veal pie, that the pudding was not devoured." Just then Amy Seaton came in and asked if she might get a lunch for Charlie, as he was not in season for supper.

"O, yes!" answered Mrs. Salsify, in her blandest tone; "here are the keys. I lock the pantry because Mr. Mumbles is so absent-minded he often leaves the door open, and the cat gets in and devours the victuals. Get just what you want for Charlie and a lunch for yourself and Jenny if you choose."

"Thank you," said Amy taking the bunch of keys from Mrs. Salsify's hand. Wide swung the pantry door on its creaking hinges, and Amy's eyes brightened as she stepped in, thinking of the little feast they were to have up stairs on the good lady's sudden fit of generosity. She glanced her light eagerly along the shelves in search of pies and sweet cakes, for she had seen Mrs. Salsify baking a large amount of good things that morning; but nothing met her wistful gaze save a plateful of burnt gingerbread crusts which had been picked over and left after the evening's meal, a plate of refuse meat, and a few bits of salt cod-fish in a broken saucer. She was about to go and tell Mrs. Mumbles her pantry was destitute of victuals, when she recollected that lady superintended her own work, and she should only inform her of what she already knew. Several similar instances of the lady's singular generosity now occurred to her mind. She recollected one day, on coming in unexpectedly from school, of finding Mrs. Salsify buying a large quantity of cherries, and of her saying she was going to pick them over, and would set them on the dairy shelf where she might go and eat of them whenever she chose. But Amy could not find them anywhere, and when she innocently asked Mrs. Salsify where she had put them, that good lady, after blushing and stammering a good deal, said they proved so dirty she was obliged to throw them away. This and other similar occurrences decided Amy to say nothing of the destitution of the pantry. So she returned the keys to her boarding mistress, and, without a word, ascended to her room, where she gave Charlie the bit of fish and crust of gingerbread she had obtained.

"Is this all I'm to have for my supper?" said he, looking ruefully on the scanty, unpalatable food.

"'Tis all I can find in the pantry, bub," answered Amy; "can't you make it answer for to-night? and to-morrow I will buy you something nice at the bakery."

"Why," said Jenny, raising her dark, fun-loving eyes from a problem in Euclid, "I saw Mrs. Mumbles baking mince pies, and custards and plum cake, this morning."

"Bah," said Charlie, "I don't want any of her plum cake if she puts the same kind of raisins in it she does in her puddings. But, Jenny, I think I know where she keeps her nice victuals."

"Where?" asked Jenny, with an earnest look on Charlie's cunning face.

"Have you never noticed that great tin boiler under her bed?" Jenny burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which Amy vainly endeavored to silence, and directly Mary Madeline appeared and said, "Mother would like to have a little less noise if they could favor her, as she had company below." Then the three sat down on the floor, and Jenny and Charlie planned a midnight attack upon the tin boiler. Amy, who was more sedate and cautious, advised them to desist; but 'twas just the exploit for Jenny's frolicsome, mischievous temperament. Charlie was to take a pillow-case, and creep softly under the bed, and fill it from the supposed contents of the mysterious boiler, while Jenny stood at the kitchen door to assist him in bearing the precious burden to their room. How slow the hours passed after the plot was formed ere it could be carried into execution! Mrs. Salsify in the parlor below kept wishing her visitors would go, for she had never seen the wicks in the camphene lamps of so surprising a length. They flooded the whole room with light, and she recollected Jenny Andrews had asked the privilege of trimming them after they were last used. She dared not rise and pick them down, for such narrow-souled persons as she are always fearful that the truth will be known and their littleness exposed; so she sat in a perfect fever, watching the fluid getting every moment lower, and scarcely heeding the remarks of her guests. At length they took their departure, and Mrs. Salsify rushed in a sort of frenzy to the lamps, and dropped the caps over the blazing wicks.

"Mary Madeline," said Mr. Mumbles, reprovingly, "don't you know how to trim a lamp properly? Enough fluid has been wasted to-night by means of those long wicks to last two evenings with wicks of a proper length."

"'Tis none of Maddie's doings," returned Mrs. S., "she is more prudent than that. 'Twas that hussy of a Jenny Andrews who trimmed them after Miss Pinkerton was here the other night."

"Well, the girl ought to pay for the waste she has occasioned," said Mr. Salsify, gruffly. "Let us retire now; I declare 'tis near eleven o'clock." The conspirators in the room above heard with eager ears the departure of the guests, and sat in perfect silence till midnight chimed from the old clock tower. Then Charlie Seaton, pillow-case in hand, crept silently down the stairs with Jenny close behind him. Mrs. Mumbles' bed-room opened out of the kitchen, and the door was always standing ajar. Thus Charlie's quick eye had detected the boiler while sitting at the dining table directly opposite her room. As he now paused a moment in the kitchen before crossing the forbidden precincts, the deep-drawn sonorous breathings convinced him that Mr. and Mrs. Salsify Mumbles were lulled in their deepest nocturnal slumbers. Gently dropping on his knees, he crawled softly to the object of plunder. Lucky chance! the cover was off, and the first thing his hand touched was a knife plunged to the hilt in a large loaf. This he captured and deposited in his bag. Then followed pies, tarts, etc., and last a small jar, which he took

under his arm, and, thus encumbered, crept on all-fours to the kitchen door, where Jenny relieved him of the jar. They softly ascended the stairs, where Amy was ready to receive them.

"How dared you take that jar?" said she; "what does it contain?"

"I don't know," said Charlie; "but I know what my pillow-case contains. It was never so well lined before, Amy."

Thus saying, he commenced removing its contents, while Jenny pulled the knife out of the loaf, which proved to be pound cake, uncovered the jar, and pronounced it filled with cherry jam. "Ay," said Amy, "there's where those cherries I saw her buying of Dilly Danforth went, then. She told me they were so dirty she had to throw them away. But I think you had better go and carry these things back."

"Never," said Charlie; "I am going to eat my fill once in Mrs. Mumbles' house."

"But what will she say when she discovers her loss?"

"That is just what I'm anxious to know," said Jenny.

"So am I," returned Charlie, chopping off a large slice of pound cake and dividing two pies in halves. "The old lady goes in for treating her visitors well, don't she? I dare say these condiments were intended to supply her guests for years. I wish we had some spoons to eat this cherry jam."

"You had better carry that back," said Amy.

"No, I will not go down on my knees and crawl under Mrs. Salsify's bed again to-night on any consideration."

"Neither would I," said Jenny, "the old adage is 'as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb;' so let us enjoy ourselves to the utmost in our power. Here is food enough, of the best kind too, to serve us well for the remainder of our stay here, only a week longer you know. I'll keep it locked in my trunk."

So saying, they cleared away, and Charlie bade good-night, and all retired to bright visions of pound cake and cherry jelly.

CHAPTER IV.

"She was a lovely little ladye,
With blue eyes beaming sunnily;
And loved to carry charity
To the abodes of misery."

There was a tiny bark floating down the flower-bordered river that wound so gracefully through the beautiful village of Wimbledon, and a smiling little lady, in a neat gingham sun-bonnet, sat coseyly in the stern, beneath the shady wing of the snow-white sail. A noble-looking lad plied the oar with graceful ease, chatting merrily the while with the little girl, and laughing at her constant and matronly care of a large basket which was placed beside her, neatly covered with a snowy napkin. "One would think that there were diamonds in that basket, Nell, you guard it so carefully," said he.

"No, only nice pies mother gave me leave to take to Aunt Dilly Danforth, the poor washerwoman," returned the little miss, again smoothing the napkin and adjusting the basket in a new position. "I wish you would row as carefully as you can, Neddie, so as not to jostle them much."

"So I will, sis," returned he; "let's sing the Boatman's Song as we glide along." And their voices rose on the calm summer air clear and sweet as the morning song of birds. Now and then their light barge touched the shore, and Ned plucked flowers to twine in Ellen's hair. O, that ever, down life's uncertain tide, these innocent young spirits might float as calmly, happily on to the broad ocean of eternity!

"Is that the old shanty where Dilly lives?" said the lad at length, pointing to a low black house, just beyond a clump of brushwood, which they were swiftly approaching.

"Yes," said Ellen, gathering up her basket.

"Here I must lose you, then," said Ned; "how I wish you would go fishing with me down to the cove!"

Ellen smiled. "Are you going to be all alone, Neddie?" asked she.

"Nobody but Charlie Seaton will be with me. You like him."

"Yes, I like him well enough," said Ellen, innocently; "but I would not care to go a-fishing with him."

"Why not, sis?" inquired Ned.

"Because it would not be pretty for a little girl to go fishing with boys."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the lad; "what a prudent little sis I have got! for all the world like Amy Seaton. But I like Jenny Andrews better, she is so full of fun and frolic. Did you know how she and Charlie Seaton robbed old Mrs. Salsify Mumbles, one night not long since?"

"O, no! robbed her? That was wrong, surely."

"O, no! You see she nearly starved them, so they helped themselves to her sweetmeats without invitation. That's all; not very wicked, I'm thinking, Nell."

"I think it was wicked for her not to give them enough food, and wicked for them to take it without her knowledge," said Ellen, after a pause. "But what did she say when she discovered her loss?"

"Not a word. What could she say?" asked Ned.

"I could not guess, and therefore inquired," said Ellen. "Will Jenny come to school next term?"

"Yes, Jenny, Amy and Charlie, and board at Dea. Allen's. That will be a good place; only I fancy the deacon's long prayers and sober phiz will prove a sad trial to Jenny. Well, you must go, sis," said he, pushing his boat high up on the green, grassy bank, by a few skilful strokes of his oar. Then assisting her out and placing the precious basket safely in her arms, he was soon gliding down the smooth current again. Ellen directed her steps toward the dilapidated dwelling a few yards before her, turning frequently to catch a glimpse of her brother's little bark as it came in view through some opening in the shrubbery that grew on the river's side.

One timid rap brought Willie Danforth to the door. The poor boy looked quite embarrassed to behold pretty, neat Ellen Williams standing there on the miserable, dirty threshold. "Good day, Willie," said she, pleasantly; "is your mother at home?"

"No, miss, she is scrubbing floors at Mr. Pimble's," said Willie, awkwardly enough.

"O, I am sorry she is gone, for I wanted to see her very much. Will you let me come in and leave this basket for her?"

"O, yes!" answered the poor lad, "or I will carry it in for you."

"I can carry it very well," said Ellen, "if you will only let me go in."

"I would let you come in, Miss Ellen," returned Willie, "only I am afraid it would frighten you to see such a sad, dirty place;" and the ragged little fellow blushed crimson, as he thus revealed his poverty and destitution.

Ellen pitied his embarrassment, and said, "I should like to go in, Willie, because, if I saw what you needed, I could tell mother, and she would make you more comfortable, I know."

The boy lifted the wooden latch of the inner room. The door opened with a dismal creak, and Ellen entered. There was one old, broken-backed chair, which he offered her, and sat down himself on a rough bench, with a sorrowful, embarrassed expression on his pale, interesting features. Ellen, still noticing Willie's painful confusion, knew not what to do after placing her basket on the rude, wooden table, and began to regret that she so strongly pressed an entrance.

"I told you you would be frightened," said the boy at length, in a choking tone.

"O, I am not frightened!" returned Ellen, glad to speak now that he had opened the way for her; "I am only sorry to find people living so forlornly in our pretty, happy village. I thought you had a good nice house to live in, for Mrs. Pimble said so, and that her husband rented it to you for almost nothing, and that your mother—but I won't say any more," said Ellen, stopping short in her discourse.

"Yes," said Willie, "tell me all she said, and then I will tell you something."

"Well, then, she said your mother only went out washing to make folks think she was needy, so they would give her food and clothing. 'Twas wicked for her to say it, surely."

Willie's face grew pale as death, and then flushed crimson to the temples.

"Don't look so," said Ellen, approaching the bench and putting her little hand on his hot cheeks. "O, Willie! you are sick and tired," she continued, soothingly; "will you not lay your head down on my lap, and tell me all about your troubles?"

Willie's full heart overflowed. Those accents of kindness, so strange to his ears, what a magic power they had! He leaned his dear bright head on her soft little palm, and his low voice told in broken accents a tale of want and suffering. Ellen wept, for her young heart was full of tenderness and sympathy. The hours sped on, while they thus held converse, till a hand on the latch aroused them. 'Twas Dilly returned from her day's work at Mr. Pimble's. Willie sprang up to meet her. "O, mother!" said he, "a sweet angel has come since you left me, this morning, crying because I was so hungry."

"Alas, my boy!" said the woman, "I fear you must still go hungry, for I have brought you nothing. Mr. Pimble says my week's work must go for rent."

Now was Ellen's moment of joy, as she bounded across the broken floor and lifted the napkin from her basket. "No, no, Willie,—no, no, Aunt Dilly, you shall not go hungry to bed to-night. Look what mother has sent you! How thoughtless of me not to have remembered my basket before, when Willie has been suffering from hunger all these long, long hours!"

"O, no! I have not thought of being hungry since you came," said the boy.

Mrs. Danforth approached the basket and gazed on its contents with tearful eyes. She had not seen the like on her table for many a day, and, dropping on her knees, she breathed a silent prayer to God for his goodness in putting it into the hearts of his children to remember her in her need! Willie brought forth a small bundle of sticks and lighted a fire, while Ellen ran and filled a black, broken-nosed tea-kettle, and hung it on a hook over the blaze. It soon began to sing merrily, and the children laughed and said it had caught some of their happiness. Then Ellen took some tea from the paper her mother had wrapped so nicely, put it in a cracked blue bowl, and Willie fixed a bed of coals for her to set it on. Dilly sat all the while gazing with tearful eyes on the two beaming faces which were constantly turned up to hers, to see if she gave her approval to their movements. At length the repast was prepared, and, after partaking with them, as Mrs. Danforth insisted upon her doing, Ellen set out for home, with Willie by her side. He hesitated some at first, when his mother told him he must accompany her, for his jacket was ragged and his shoes out at the toes. But when Ellen said so reproachfully he was "too bad, too bad, to make her go all the way home alone," he brightened, and said "he would be very glad to go with her if she would not be ashamed of him." So they set out together, each holding a handle of the basket; Ellen bidding Aunt Dilly a cordial good-by, and promising to come soon again and bring her mother. They met Mr. Pimble on their way, who scowled and passed by in silence.

Ellen found her mother anxiously waiting her return. She heard with pleasure and interest her little daughter's animated description of her visit; but when she said she had promised to visit Aunt Dilly soon again, and take her mother with her, Mrs. Williams looked sad.

"What makes you look so, dear mamma?" said Ellen; "will you not go and see poor Dilly?"

"I shall be very glad to do so, my dear child," answered the fond mother, "if it is possible. You know your father has often wished to remove to a place where his skill in architecture might be employed to better advantage, and an excellent opportunity now offers for him to dispose of his situation here, and remove to a large city, where his services will be in constant demand."

"And I shall never see Willie Danforth again," said Ellen, bursting into tears.

Childhood is so simple and unaffected, ever expressing with innocent confidence its dearest thought, and claiming sympathy! Mrs. Williams tried long to comfort her little daughter, and at length succeeded by holding out a prospect that she might some time return and visit her early associates. Ned was consoled by the same prospect. But then, we never know, when we leave a place, what changes may occur ere we revisit its now familiar scenes. Mrs. Williams felt this truth more vividly than her children. But few changes had marked their sunny years, and it never occurred to their youthful minds but what Wimbledon as she was to-night would be exactly the same should they return five or ten years hence. The mother did not disturb this pleasant illusion, "for experience comes quite soon enough to young hearts," she said, "and I'll not force her unwelcome lessons upon my happy children." So Ned and Ellen, when it was decided they should leave on the morrow, almost forgot the pangs of departure from their rich, beautiful home, so intently were they dwelling on the joy of returning and meeting their schoolmates and companions after a period of separation. O, gay, light-hearted youth! What is there in all life's after years, its gaudy pomp, its feverish flame, or short-lived honors, that can atone for the loss of thy buoyant hopes, and simple, trusting faith?

Sad was poor Dilly Danforth when she heard of the sudden departure of the benevolent Williams family, and bitterly she exclaimed, "No good thing is long vouchsafed the poor. Our poverty will only seem the darker now for having been brightened for a transient hour."

Willie, who had returned from his walk with Ellen with severe pains in his limbs and head, fell sick of a rheumatic fever, and suffered much for the want of warm clothing, care and medical treatment. O, how often he thought of Ellen! "If she were there he would not suffer thus. She would be warmth, care, clothing and physician for him."

His mother was obliged to labor every day to procure fuel for the fire; and to warm the great, cold room, where the piercing autumn blasts blew through wide gaping cracks and chasms, and get a bottle of wormwood occasionally, with which to bathe his aching limbs, was the utmost her efforts could accomplish. With this insufficient care, 'twas no wonder Willie grew rapidly worse. One bitter cold night Dilly sat down utterly discouraged as she placed the last stick of wood on the fire. Her boy had been so ill for several days she could not leave him to go to her accustomed labor, and consequently the small pile of fuel was consumed. What was she to do? Willie was already crying of cold, and she sat over the expiring blaze crying because she had naught to render him comfortable. After a while he grew silent, and, softly approaching, she found he had sunk into a quiet slumber. Carefully covering him with the thin, tattered blankets, she pinned a shawl over her head, and, softly closing the door behind her, stole forth into the biting night air, and directed a hasty tread toward Mr. Pimble's great brick mansion. A bright light gleamed through the kitchen windows as she ascended the steps and gave a hurried knock. Directly she heard a shuffling sound, and knew Mr. Pimble, in his heelless slippers, was approaching. Fast beat her heart as the door opened, and she beheld his gaunt form and unyielding features.

"What brings you here this bitter cold night, Dilly Danforth?" exclaimed he, in a surly tone, as the furious blast rushed in his face, and nearly extinguished the lamp he held in his skinny grasp.

She stepped inside, and he closed the door.

"'Tis the bitter cold night which brings me, Mr. Pimble," she said, feeling she must speak quickly, for Willie was at home alone; "my boy is sick and suffering from cold. For myself, I would not ask a favor, but for him I entreat you to give me an armful of wood to keep him from perishing."

"Why don't you work and buy your wood?" asked he, angered by this sudden demand upon his charity.

"I worked as long as I could leave my child," answered Mrs. Danforth, "and I thought maybe you would be willing to allow me something for my work here."

"Allow you something, woman? Don't I give you the rent of that great house for the few light chores you do for us, which really amount to nothing? Your impudence is astonishing;" and Esq. Pimble's voice quivered with rage, as he thus addressed the trembling woman.

Dilly stood irresolute, and Mr. Pimble was silent a few moments, when a voice from the parlor called out, imperiously, "Pimble, I want you!"

The man roused himself and rushed to the door in such haste as to lose both his slippers.

"What are you blabbing about out there?" Dilly heard Mrs. Pimble ask, in an angry tone.

"Dilly Danforth has come for some wood," was the moody reply.

"And so you are giving wood to that lazy, foolish, stupid creature, are you?"

"No, I am not. She says her boy is sick and she has no fire."

"A pretty tale, and I hope 'tis true. She'll learn by and by her sin and folly. If she had asserted her own rights, as she should have done, and left her drunken husband and moping boy years ago, she might have been well off in the world by this time. But she chose like an idiot to live with him and endure his abuses till he died, and since she has tied herself to that foolish boy. O, I have no patience with such stupid women! They are a disgrace to the true female race. Go and tell her to go home and never enter my doors a-begging again."

Dilly did not wait to receive this unfeeling message, but pulled her thin blanket around her, and stole out in the chill night air, and ran toward home as swiftly as possible. She stumbled over something on the threshold. It was a bundle of firewood. How came it there? She could not tell, but seized it in her arms, ran hastily in, and approached Willie's bed-side. He was still sleeping tranquilly, and that night a comfortable fire, lighted by unknown generosity, blazed on the lowly hearth.

CHAPTER V.

"There is a jarring discord in my ear,
It setteth all my soul ashake with fear,
Good sir, canst drive it off?"——

OLD PLAY.

All Wimbledon was aroused one cold November morning by a direful conglomeration of sounds;—strange, discordant shrieks, ominous groans, a clanking, as of iron chains and fetters, a slow, heavy, elephantine tread gradually growing on the ear, and a deep, continuous rumbling as of earthquakes in the bowels of the earth. Mrs. Salsify Mumbles, nervous and delicate as she was, clung fast to the neck of her liege lord when he attempted to throw open the sash of his window, to discover the import of this unusual disturbance of the nocturnal stillness of Wimbledon. Good Deacon Allen, who was lying on his deaf ear, became restless, and visions of the final retribution and doom of the wicked harassed his slumbers. Suddenly he awoke, and dismal groans and unearthly rumblings struck his terrified ear. "Sally! Sally!" said he, leaping from bed and giving his sleeping spouse a vigorous shake, "why sleepest thou? arise and don thy drab camlet and high-crowned cap, and prepare to meet thy Lord; for behold he cometh!"

"Samuel," said the good wife but half awake, "you are prating in your sleep. Return to your pillow and be quiet till day-break."

"You speak like a foolish virgin, Sally," returned the excited deacon. "Do you not hear the roaring of the resurrection thunder and the wailings of the wicked?"

"I do hear something," said Mrs. Allen, now poking her night-capped head from beneath the blankets, and listening a moment attentively. "'Tis a sound of heavy carts drawn by oxen over frozen ground. Ay, I guess it is the new family, that bought out neighbor Williams, moving their goods. Just look out the window,—our yards join,—and see if there is not a stir there." The deacon obeyed.

"O, yes," said he, "I can distinguish several loaded teams and dusky figures moving to and fro."

"I thought 'twas the new-comers," returned the wife, who possessed more ready wit and shrewdness than her amiable consort, and, withal, could hear vastly better. "You had better come to bed again, Samuel;—'tis an hour to daylight."

"I cannot get to sleep again, I have been so disturbed," said the husband, fidgetting round in the dark room to find his clothes.

"O, pshaw!—put your deaf ear up and you'll soon fall off," answered the wife, drawing the covering over her head. Deacon Allen, who had a very high opinion of his wife's good sense, concluded to follow her advice, and the happy couple were soon enjoying as pleasant a morning snooze, as though neither the resurrection nor the "new family" had disturbed their slumbers.

Jenny Andrews and Amy Seaton, who slept in the room above, never heard a sound, nor did Charlie in his cosey chamber beyond, and great was the astonishment of the young people, on opening their casements, to behold the long line of heavy-loaded teams drawn up in the yard of the splendid mansion which stood next above Dea. Allen's, the former residence of Esq. Williams. Teamsters in blue frocks were unfastening the smoking oxen from the ponderous carts, and as the girls hurried below to impart the intelligence of the arrival of the new family to Mrs. Allen, they heard the voice of Mrs. Salsify Mumbles, and entering the sitting-room found that lady laying aside her bonnet and shawl. Mary Madeline was standing by the window gazing into the adjoining yard. Jenny and Amy had not seen their former boarding mistress since they left her house at the close of the summer term, several months before. But she was so elate about the arrival of the new family that all memory of their former ill-usage seemed to have escaped her, and she grasped the hands of both and shook them cordially. "I am glad to see you," she exclaimed; "why have you not called on us this fall? Mary Madeline has often said I wish Jenny and Amy would come in, it would seem so much like old times. Here, my dear," said she, seizing hold of the young lady's shawl and pulling her from the window, "don't be so taken up with the new family that you can't speak to your old friends." Mary Madeline now turned and spoke to her former schoolmates. Then, drawing a chair close to the window, she resumed her gaze, with her gloves and handkerchief lying unheeded on the floor and her gay shawl dragging behind her. "O, mother! mother!" she exclaimed at length, "there comes the family."

Mrs. Salsify, who was engaged in telling Mrs. Allen of Mr. Salsify's prosperity, and how he was "rising in his profession," and how he meditated adding another story to his house and putting a piazza round it next spring, dropped all, even her snuff-box, and rushed to the window as a large covered wagon, drawn by a span of elegant black horses, drove rapidly into the adjoining yard. First alighted a tall man in a black overcoat,—the master no doubt, the gazers decided,—then a tall man in a gray overcoat, then a tall man in a brown overcoat. And the man in the black overcoat and the man in the gray overcoat moved away, the former up the steps of the mansion and around the terraces, trying the fastenings of the Venetian blinds, and examining the cornices and pillars of the porticos; the latter turned in the direction of the stables and outhouses, while the man in the brown overcoat assisted three ladies to alight, all grown-up women, one short and fat, the other two tall and thin. The gazers were a little puzzled by the appearance of the new family. As far as they could discover there was no great difference in the respective ages of the six individuals who had alighted from the wagon, and Mrs. Salsify Mumbles declared it as her opinion that the family consisted of three brothers who had married three sisters for their wives. The short, fat woman, who had a rubicund visage and turned-up nose, and wore a broad-plaided cashmere dress, drew forth a bunch of keys from a wicker basket that hung on her arm, and with a pompous tread ascended the marble steps, unlocked the broad, mahogany-panelled door, turned the massive silver knob, and, swinging it wide, strode in, the tall ladies in blue cloaks following close behind. Soon sashes began to be raised, blinds flew open, and the tall ladies were seen standing on high chairs hanging curtains of rich damask and exquisitely wrought muslin, before the deep bay windows. The three tall men threw off their overcoats, and, with the assistance of the blue-frocked teamsters, commenced the business of unlading the carts.

"All the furniture is bagged," said Mrs. Salsify, impatiently; "one cannot get a glimpse to know whether 'tis walnut, or rosewood, or mahogany. They mean to make us think 'tis pretty nice, whether 'tis or not; but we shall find out some time, for they can't always be so shy. Well, Mary Madeline," she added, turning to her daughter, "we may as well go home, I guess;—there's nothing to be seen here but chairs and sofas sewed up in canvas. I thought I would run over a few minutes, Mrs. Allen, as I knew your windows looked right into the yard of the new comers, and we could get a good view. Of course, we wanted to know what sort of folks we were going to have for neighbors. I hope they'll be different from the Williams'."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Allen, looking up from the brown patch she was engaged in sewing on the elbow of the deacon's black satinet coat. "I only hope they will prove as good neighbors and I will be perfectly satisfied."

"O, I don't know but what the Williams' were good enough, but they were too exclusive, too aristocratic for me. Mrs. W. never thought Mary Madeline fit for her Ellen to associate with."

"How do you know she thought so?" asked Mrs. Allen; "for my part, I lived Mrs. Williams' nearest

neighbor for ten years or more, and always considered her a very kind-hearted, unassuming woman, wholly untainted with the pride and haughtiness which too often disfigure the characters of those who possess large store of this world's goods and move in the upper circles."

"Well, you were more acquainted with Mrs. Williams than I was, of course; but she was not the kind of woman to suit my taste. There's Mrs. Pimble and Mrs. Lawson now, both rich and splendid, keep their carriages and servants, but they are not above speaking to common people."

"I am not personally acquainted with those ladies," answered Mrs. Allen.

"They are reformers," said Mrs. Mumbles, in a reverential tone; "you should hear their awful speeches. Daniel Webster could never equal them, folks tell me."

"I have understood that they belonged to the fanatical class of female lecturers that have arisen in our country within the last few years."

"O, they hold conventions everywhere, and such terrible gesticulations as they pronounce against the tyranny and oppression of the female sex by the monster man!" said Mrs. Salsify. "I declare I wish they would have one of their indignation meetings here, for I think the men are getting the upper hand among us."

"Doubtless you would join their ranks should they do so," observed Mrs. Allen, with a quiet smile, as she arose, gave the deacon's coat a shake, and hung it on a peg behind the door.

"Well, I don't know but I should," returned Mrs. S.; "but come, Maddie, how we are wasting time! I declare, two carts are already unloaded, and there goes the seminary bell. 'Tis nine o'clock." Jenny, Amy and Charlie, ran down stairs all equipped for school, as Mrs. Mumbles and her daughter stepped into the hall, and all went forth together. Mrs. M. repeated her invitation for the young ladies and Charlie to visit her, and the girls laughingly promised to do so at their first leisure. Mary Madeline went to Edson's store on an errand, and her mother proceeded directly home. Great was her anger to behold the back kitchen door swinging wide. She shut it behind her with a slam, muttering some impatient exclamation about Mr. Salsify's stupid carelessness. As she stood by the stove warming her chilled fingers, a noise from the pantry startled her ears, and, opening the door, she beheld the great, shaggy watch-dog, that belonged to the store of Edson & Co., lying on his haunches with a nice fat pullet between his paws, which he was devouring with evident relish and gusto. He turned his head towards her, uttered a low growl, and went on with his breakfast again. Mrs. Salsify looked up to a peg on which she had hung six nicely-dressed chickens the night before. Alas! the last one was between the bloody devourer's paws. She glanced toward a pot she had left full of cream, under the shelves. It was empty; and toward her rolling-board, where she had left a pan of rich pie-crust, with which she was intending to cover her thanksgiving pies. All had disappeared. She trembled with rage.

"Get out, you thievish rascal!" she exclaimed, bringing her foot violently to the floor.

The dog sprang toward her, and, seizing the skirt of her gay-striped, bombazine dress with his glistening ivories, rent it from the waist, flew through the parlor window, and rushed through streets, by-lanes and alleys, rending the flaring fabric, and dragging it through mud-holes till it looked like some fiery-colored flag borne away by the enemy in disgrace.

Mrs. Salsify rushed down into her husband's shop in awful plight, her hair standing on end, and her great, green eyes almost starting from their sockets. Mr. Salsify looked with amazement on his lady, as did also the half-score of customers that stood around his counters. Her saffron-colored skirt was rent in divers places, revealing the black one she wore beneath, and the gay-striped waist she still wore was hung round with ragged fragments of the vanished skirt.

"Lord, love us, what is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Salsify, rushing toward his wife.

"Edson's dog has eat up six chickens, a cream-pot, a rolling-board, pie-crust, and all!" exclaimed Mrs. Mumbles, with a frantic air, as she fell into her husband's outstretched arms, wholly unmindful of the laughter her appearance and words had excited among her good man's customers.

"Edson's dog,—how could he get into the house?" demanded Mr. Mumbles.

"I saw him out with Dick Giblet, this morning, when he was leaving packages," said little Joe Bowles, with a mischievous leer in his black eyes.

The husband and wife exchanged a glance. The whole truth flashed upon them,—'twas a trick of Dick's. Mr. Salsify ordered his customers to leave the shop, and locking the door, he led his terrified, trembling wife up stairs, where they found Mary Madeline lying on the floor in a fainting fit, with the fragments of her mother's skirt clenched tightly in her cold hands.

CHAPTER VI.

"Her face was fairer than face of earth;

What was the thing to liken it to?
A lily just dipped in the summer dew?
Parian marble—snow's first fall?
Her brow was fairer than each,—than all.
And so delicate was each vein's soft blue,
'Twas not like blood that wandered through.
Rarely upon that cheek was shed,
By health or by youth, one tinge of red,
And never closest look could descry,
In shine or shade, the hue of her eye,
But, as it were made of light, it changed
With every sunbeam that over it ranged."

The midnight stars were over all the heaven, O, wildly, wildly bright! Orion, like a flaming monarch, led up "the host of palpitating stars" to their proud zenith, while, far in the boreal regions, danced strange, atmospheric lights, with flitting, fantastic motions and ever-changing forms and colors. A young girl stood in the deep recess of a large window, with the rich, blue-wrought damask curtains wrapped closely about her slight, fragile form, gazing intently on the splendors of the midnight heaven. Long she stood there, and no sound broke the stillness, save now and then a half-audible sigh. At length she said, "I cannot endure this solitude and the depression which is stealing over me. Would that I had a mother to love and bless me! Father is often so strange and silent, and Rufus cannot sympathize with my feelings. I must call Sylva to bear me company, for one of my nervous attacks is upon me, and I cannot sleep." Softly opening a side-door, she said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, "Sylva, are you awake?"

"Yes," was the answer; "what is your wish, Miss Edith?"

"That you would come and sit with me a while."

"What time is it!"

"I know not; but, by the stars, it should be little after midnight."

"Return to your room, and I will soon be there with a light," answered the one called Sylva.

The young girl did as requested, and sank down in a large arm-chair which nearly concealed her in its soft cushions. Presently the small side-door opened, and Sylva entered, bearing an astral lamp and a few light pieces of kindling wood.

"O, I don't mind a fire!" said Miss Edith.

"Well, I do," answered the woman; "you would catch your death, up here half the night with no fire."

"'Tis a cold place we are come to, isn't it Sylva?" said the young lady, springing from her chair and wrapping an elegant cashmere dressing-gown, lined with azure satin, round her tall, delicate figure, and then again sinking down among the soft velvet cushions of her spacious fauteuil.

"Yes, Miss Edith, it is, indeed," answered Sylva, as she lighted a bright fire in the polished grate. "How your father expects to rear so fragile a bud in this bleak region I do not know."

"I have never seen him in such spirits as since we came here," returned Edith, toying with the silken tassels of her rich robe. "You know he was always so silent and reserved in our former home, Sylva. But sometimes I fancy there is something unnatural in his manner. One moment he will laugh wildly, and the next a dark frown will have gathered on his brow. Twice he has caught me in his arms and said, 'Edith! Edith, you have a part to play, and I rely on you to do it!' Then he would look on me so sternly, I would burst into tears, and strive to free myself from his embrace. What did he mean by such words, Sylva?"

"Why, that you are coming on to the stage of action, and he desires you to be educated and accomplished in a manner to adorn the high circles in which you will move."

"O, more than that, Sylva!" said Edith doubtfully; "he need not have looked so stern, were that all; but still he is a kind, indulgent father for the most part. I should not complain;" and the young girl relapsed into thoughtful silence. The pale fire-light glowed on her delicate features. One tiny white hand rested on the cushioned arm of the chair, and the large, melancholy blue eyes were fixed on the glowing blaze within the shining ebon grate. The profile was strictly Grecian in outline, and the soft, silken hair fell in a shower of golden ripples over her small, sloping shoulders. Her lips were vermilion red, and disclosed two rows of tiny pearls whenever they parted with dimpling smiles.

"Have you become acquainted with any of the village people, Sylva?" asked the fair girl, rousing at length from her reverie.

"No, save this young Mrs. Edson, who called yesterday, I have seen no one," returned the woman, "unless I mention that sunken-eyed washerwoman, Dilly Danforth, as she is called."

"O, I saw her on the steps one day! What a forlorn-looking creature she is! I think she must be very

poor. Still, it seems to me there should be no poverty in this rich, happy-appearing village. I fancy it will be a love of a place in summer, Sylva, when all the maples and lindens are in leaf, and the numerous gardens in flower. O, when father took me out in the new sleighing phaeton last week, I saw a most magnificent mansion, grander than ours, even. The grounds seemed beautifully laid out, and over the arching gateway I read the words 'Summer Home' sculptured in the marble. It is closed at present, but when the occupants return in the spring, I hope I shall get to know them, for I would dearly love to visit at so delightful a place. Father said I should become acquainted with the family. He knows their names, and I think said he had met the gentleman once." Edith grew quite smiling and happy as she prattled on, forming plans and diversions for the coming summer. Sylva listened to her innocent conversation in respectful silence, and, after a while, as the fire burned low, and the cocks began to crow from their neighboring perches, the sweet girl ceased to speak. She had wearied herself and fallen asleep.

The sun was shining brightly through the blue damask curtains when she awoke, and Sylva was bending over her, parting away the rich masses of auburn curls which had fallen over her face as she leaned her head over the arm of the chair. "Your father and Rufus are calling for you," said the attendant pleasantly.

"Why, how long I have slept!" said Edith, opening her blue eyes with a wondering expression. "What o'clock is it, Sylva?"

"It is half-past nine," answered the woman.

"I have been dreaming the strangest dream about that beautiful mansion I was telling you I saw in my ride the other day—that 'Summer Home,' as it is so sweetly styled. I thought I saw a lovely young girl there, younger than myself, but far more womanly in aspect, and she said she was my cousin, and kissed me, and gave me rare flowers and delicious fruit. Did you say father had called for me? Well, I'll dress and go down in the parlor. What are you doing there, Sylva?"

"Getting your muff and tippet," answered she.

"Is father going to take me out?" asked Edith with animation.

"Rufus is going to take you to church," said Sylva. "He said you expressed a wish to go last Sabbath, but it was too cold. To-day is more pleasant, and he is ready to attend you."

"He is kind," said Edith. "Am I not a naughty girl to murmur when I have a brother so good, and a father who loves me so dearly?"

"You do not murmur, do you, Miss Edith?"

"Sometimes I wish I had a mother, or that she had lived long enough to leave her form and features impressed on my memory."

A tear fell as the fair girl spoke thus, but she brushed it quickly away, and commenced arraying herself for church.

"I shall be delighted to behold the interior of that antiquated looking building," remarked she, as Sylva placed the dainty hat over the clustering curls; "and, besides, I can see all the village people, and form some opinion of those who are henceforth to constitute our associates and friends."

"And all the people will see you, too," said Sylva, smiling.

"O, I don't mind that!" answered Edith; "they would all see me, sooner or later, as I'm to go to school, in the spring, at the white seminary on the hill."

Thus speaking, the beautiful girl descended to the drawing-room. A tall, elegantly-proportioned man, with a magnificent head of raven black hair, which hung in one dense mass of luxuriant curls all round his broad, marble-like brow, and quite over his manly shoulders, was leaning in a careless, graceful attitude against a splendid mahogany-cased piano, that stood in the centre of the apartment, and moving his white, taper fingers over the pearl-tipped keys, waking now rich bursts of song, and, anon, dwelling long on deep, solemn notes, that pierced the soul with melancholy. He did not move when the door opened, and Edith crossed the room and stood beside him ere he noticed her presence.

"Where is brother Rufus?" she asked, drawing on her tiny, lemon-colored gloves.

The gentleman turned and gazed down upon the fair speaker. The clear complexion and soft blue eyes of the daughter were exact counterparts of the father's; so were the rich red lips and pearly teeth. Their only point of difference was in the color of the hair. "What do you want of Rufus?" asked he, in a tone almost stern, after he had gazed on her several moments in silence. She turned her speaking eyes upon his face, and answered, "Sylva said he would take me to church."

"To church!" said her father, now relaxing his features into a smile, "what an odd fancy! And are you arrayed in this fine garb to attend service in an old, dilapidated country church?"

"Do you think me very finely-dressed?" said Edith, archly, as she for a moment surveyed herself in the large mirror which hung from ceiling to floor between the eastern windows. She wore a crimson velvet dress and mantle, a muff and tippet of white ermine, and a chapeau of light blue satin, with a long, drooping white plume. Her hair was gathered into luxuriant masses of curls each side of her

sweet face, and confined by sprays of pearls and turquoises.

Rufus now entered. He was very unlike his sister in personal appearance. His hair was the color of his father's, but far less abundant, and straight as an Indian's. Eyes and complexion were both dark, and his countenance indicative of rather low intelligence, and weak intellectual powers. The father looked on him as though he was not quite satisfied with the son who was, probably, to perpetuate his name.

"Are you ready, Edith?" asked the youth.

"Yes," she returned. He approached to give her his arm, and, as they were passing out, Edith caught her father looking grimly on them, and said quickly, "Do you mind our going to church, papa? We will stay at home if you wish."

"No, go along!" said he. "I'll not thwart you in so small a matter, and hope I may never have occasion to in a greater!" Edith looked up in his face as he uttered these last words. There was a dark shade flitting over it. It haunted her all the while she was walking to church; but so many things occupied her attention, after entering, it passed from her mind.

CHAPTER VII.

"I fain would know why woman is outraged,
And trampled in the very dust by man,
Who vaunts himself the lord of all the earth,
And e'en the mighty realms of sea and air."

Winter was passing away, and Wimbledon was making but slow progress toward the better knowledge of the new family that had come among them. The silver plate on the hall door announced the master's name as Col. J. Corydon Malcome, a sounding appellation enough; and he was often seen walking up and down the streets in his rich, fur-lined overcoat and laced velvet cap, placed with a courtly air over his cloud of ebon curls. He was known to be a widower, and the woful extravagancies into which Mary Madeline Mumbles cajoled her doting mother, were enough to make one shudder in relating. Wimbledon was ransacked for the gayest taffetas, the jauntiest bonnets, and broadest Dutch lace, till, at length, poor Mr. Salsify went to his wife with a doleful countenance, and told her he could never "rise in his profession" as long as she upheld Madeline in such whimsical extravagance. Mrs. Salsify looked lofty, and tossed her carroty head; but her husband had waxed bold in his distress, and could not be intimidated by ireful brows, or pursed-up lips. So he proceeded to free his mind on this wise: "As for Mary Madeline's ever catching that haughty, black-headed Col. Malcome, I know better; she can't do it, and I would much rather have her marry Theophilus Shaw, who is a steady, modest shoemaker. He makes good wages, and can maintain a wife comfortably, and would treat her well; which is more than I would trust that murderous-looking colonel to do."

"Well, you will have your own way, I suppose," said Mrs. S., putting on an injured expression. "I see it is about as Mrs. Pimble and the sisterhood tell me. Men are all a set of tyrants, and the women are their slaves."

"Come, come, wife!" said Mr. Salsify, impatiently; "pray, don't get any of those foolish notions in your head. Depend upon it, nothing could so effectually put a stop to my 'rising in my profession.' The piazza and second story could never be built, if you neglected your home affairs, and went cantering about the country, like those evil-spirited women, turning everything topsy-turvy, and mocking at all law and order; but I know my wife has a mind too delicate and feminine to commit such bold, masculine actions."

Mr. Mumbles had chosen the right weapon with which to combat his wife's inclinations toward the Woman's Rights mania. A love of flattery was her weak point. It is with half her sex. We too often say, by way of expressing our disapproval of a certain man, "O, he is a gross flatterer!" thus very frequently condemning the quality we most admire in him;—or, if not the one we most admire, at least the one which affords us most pleasure and gratification when in his society. But to our tale:

On a certain blustering January day, a sleigh, containing two ladies and a gentleman, drove to the door of Col. Malcome's elegant mansion, and were ushered into the spacious drawing-room by the blooming-visaged housekeeper. Col. Malcome arose from the luxurious sofa on which he had been reclining among a profusion of costly furs, and received his visitors with an air of courtly magnificence, which might have had the effect to intimidate a modest, retiring female; but not king Solomon in all his glory could intimidate or abash Mrs. Judith Justitia Pimble, or Mrs. Rebecca Potentia Lawson. As for poor, insignificant Peter Pimble, he looked quite aghast with terror and astonishment at his own temerity in penetrating to a presence so imposing and sublime, and cuddled away in the most obscure corner he could find, while his majestic wife assumed a velvet-cushioned arm-chair, which stood beside a marble table.

"Perhaps you do not know our names?" said Mrs. Pimble, bending a sharp glance on Col. Malcome from beneath her shaggy brows.

"I certainly have not that pleasure, madam," answered the colonel, with a graceful bow.

"I do not like that style of address," said Mrs. Lawson, arising from the ottoman on which she had been sitting, with her broad, white palms extended to the warmth of the glowing grate, and throwing her stately form upon a crimson sofa; "it is a fawning, affected, puppyish manner, which men assume when speaking to women, as if they were not capable of understanding and appreciating a plain, common-sense mode of address."

"Ah, yes!" said Mrs. Pimble, "man has so long reigned a tyrant of absolute sway, that centuries will pass, I fear, before he is dethroned, and woman elevated to her proper stand among the nations of the earth."

Here she tossed her bonnet on the table, smoothed her bushy hair, and, drawing a red bandanna from her pocket, gave her long nose a vigorous rub, and settled herself in her soft chair again. Col. Malcome sat bolt upright among the furs which were piled up around him, and stared at his visitors. Yes, refined and polite though he was, he forgot his good-breeding in surprise at the coarse, singular manners of his involuntary guests. The figure in the extreme corner of the apartment at length attracted his notice, and placing a chair in proximity to the fire, he said, "Will you not be seated, sir?"

The muffled shape moved, but the brawny lady in the rocking-chair spoke, and it was still again.

"O, Pimble can stand, Mr. Malcome," she said, "that's his name, and mine is Mrs. Judith Justitia Pimble, author of tracts for the amelioration of enslaved and down-trodden woman; and this is Mrs. Rebecca Potentia Lawson, my sister and co-operater in the work of reform."

Col. Malcome bowed; but, recollecting the rebuff one brief remark of his had received, remained silent.

"The object of our visit," said Mrs. Lawson, "is to see and confer with the ladies of your household."

"Begging your pardon," said the colonel, "my family contains but one lady."

"Ah, the one we met at the door, then?" remarked Mrs. Pimble.

"No, madam; that was my housekeeper," returned the colonel.

"Well, what do you call *her*?" asked Mrs. Lawson.

"My housekeeper, madam, as I have just informed you."

"She has no other name, I suppose?" said Mrs. Pimble, in a loud, ironical tone; "she is to you a housekeeper, as a horse is a horse, or a cow a cow;—not a woman"——

"O, yes! a woman, certainly," interrupted the colonel.

"A woman, but not a lady?" continued Mrs. Pimble.

The gentleman bowed as if he felt himself understood. "Well, sir," said Mrs. Lawson, peering on him through her green glasses, "will you please to inform us of the difference between a woman and a lady?"

Col. Malcome, who loved the satirical, had a mind to apply it here, but his politeness restrained him, and he merely remarked, "In a general sense, none: in a particular, very great."

"That is, in *your* opinion," said Mrs. Pimble. "Now let me tell you there is no difference, whatever. The wide world over, every woman is a lady—(the colonel hemmed,)—every woman is a lady," repeated Mrs. P., "and every lady is a woman."

"That is, in *your* opinion?" remarked Col. Malcome.

"In every sensible person's opinion."

"Well, sister Justitia," said Mrs. Lawson, drawing forth a massive silver watch, by a steel fob-chain; "we are wasting time. There's but an hour to the lecture, and we have several miles to ride. Let us state the object of our visit in a form suited to this man's comprehension."

The colonel felt rather small, on hearing this depreciation of his intellectual powers, but said nothing.

"Well, make the statement, sister Potentia," said Mrs. Pimble, folding her brawny arms over her capacious chest, and giving a loud, masculine ahem.

"Mr. Malcome, we would like to see the female portion of your household," said Mrs. Lawson, in a slow, measured tone, with an emphasis on every word.

As the colonel, indignant at the coarse vulgarity of the intruders, was about to reply in the negative—the door opened, and Edith entered, accompanied by Sylva, who led a small, white Spanish poodle by a silver cord. The little animal capered gracefully about, cutting all sorts of cunning antics, much to the

amusement of the young girl, till at length discovering the muffled shape of Pimble behind the door, he ran up to him, smelt at his clothes, and commenced a furious barking.

"You had better go out doors, Pimble," said his wife; "you are so contemptible a thing even insignificant curs yelp at your heels."

Mrs. Lawson laughed loudly at this witty speech, and the poor man was about disappearing outside the door, when Col. Malcome prevented his exit by bidding him be seated, and ordering Sylva to drive Fido from the room. Quiet being restored, and Mr. Pimble having ventured to drop tremblingly on the extreme edge of the chair offered for his comfort and convenience, Col. Malcome said, "You wished to see the female portion of my household:—here are two of them; my daughter and her attendant."

"Her attendant!" remarked Mrs. Lawson, "I do not know as I exactly understand the signification of that term, as applied by you in the present instance."

"Her waiting-woman, then," answered the colonel, "if that is a plainer term."

"Ay, yes; her waiting-woman," resumed Mrs. L. "Well, your daughter looks rather puny and sickly. She needs exercise in the open air, I should say,—narrow-chested,—comes from a consumptive family on the mother's side?"

"Madam," said Col. Malcome, with a sudden anger in his tone and manner, "I don't know as it is any business of yours, from what family my daughter comes."

"O, no particular business," continued Mrs. Lawson, with undisturbed equanimity; "I only judged her to come of a consumptive race by her face and form. Public speaking would be an excellent remedy for her weakly appearance. That enlarges the lungs, and creates confidence and reliance on one's own powers. Miss Malcome, would you not like to attend some of our lectures and reform clubs?"

"I don't know," answered Edith, tremblingly. "I think I would if father is willing;" and she turned her sweet blue eyes up to his face, as if to read there her permission or refusal.

"A slave to parental authority, I see," remarked Mrs. Pimble; "but this lady, grown to years of maturity; she, surely, should have a mind of her own. Don't you think woman is made a galley-slave by the tyrant man?" she demanded, turning her discourse on Sylva, who looked confused, as if she did not quite understand the speech addressed to her. At length, she asked timidly, "What woman do you refer to, madam?" "To all women upon the face of the earth!" returned Mrs. Pimble, vehemently. "Are they not loaded with chains and fetters, and crushed down in filthy mire and dirt by self-inflated, tyrannizing man?"

"O, no!" answered Sylva, innocently; "no man ever put a chain on me, or on any woman of my acquaintance, or ever pushed one down in the dirt."

"Poor fool!" exclaimed Mrs. Pimble, with great indignation; "you are grovelling in the mire of ignorance, and man's foot is on your neck to hold you there."

The figure that trembled on the edge of the chair was now heard calling faintly, "Mrs. Pimble—Mrs. Pimble."

"Pimble speaks, sister Justitia," said Mrs. Lawson.

"What do you want?" asked the lady, turning sharply round.

"'Tis four o'clock, ma'am," gasped he.

"Four o'clock! didn't I tell you I wished to be at the lecture-room at that hour?"

"I didn't like to interrupt you," he answered feebly.

"What a fool of a man!" exclaimed the enraged wife. "Bring the sleigh to the door, instanter;" and Pimble rushed out, the ladies following close on his heels, vociferating at the top of their voices, without even a parting salutation to the family they had been visiting.

CHAPTER VIII.

"It is a hermit.
Well, methinks I've read
In romance tales of such strange beings oft;
But surely ne'er did think these eyes should see
The living, breathing, walking counterpart.
Canst tell me where he dwells?
Far in the woods,
In a lone hut, apart from all his kind."

The pale moonbeams peeped through the rents and crevices of Dilly Danforth's wretched abode, as the poor woman sat on the hearth with Willie's head lying in her lap, while he read by the flickering fire-light from the pages of a well-worn Bible. The little fellow had never fully recovered from that long, painful illness that had nearly cost him his life, and from which it is very possible he would never have arisen but for those little bundles of firewood that were so providentially laid on poor Dilly's threshold, by some charitable, though unknown, hand. They still continued to be placed there, and it was well they were so, for Mrs. Danforth's health had failed so much she was not able to perform half her former amount of labor; and had it not been for these small armfuls of fuel, which very much resembled those Willie used to collect, the washerwoman and her boy must have perished during the long, cold winter season. Yes, perished in the very midst of Wimbledon; within a stone's throw of many a well-filled woodyard, and under the nose of a Mrs. Pimble's philanthropic efforts for the amelioration of her species. Dilly's neglect on the part of the many arose, not so much from inhumanity and covetousness, as from a wrong bias, which a few words had created in the people's minds. A report had passed through the village, several months before, purporting to come from a reliable source, which represented Mrs. Danforth as not so poor as she appeared; that she assumed her poverty-stricken garb and appearance to excite sympathy, and thus swindle, in a small way, from the purses of her wealthy neighbors. There is nothing of which people have a greater horror than of being humbugged, if they know it; so, for the most part, the Wimbledonians turned a deaf ear and cold shoulder on the washerwoman's sorrowful supplications for charity. Little Edith Malcome pitied the pale, sad face that appeared at the kitchen door every Monday morning, and always asked her father's permission to give her a basket of victuals to carry home, which were always received with many grateful expressions by the poor woman.

Edith sat by the drawing-room window, one bleak, stormy winter morning, watching the snow as it fell silently to the earth, when a man of singular appearance, walking slowly along the opposite side of the street, attracted her notice.

"O, father!" exclaimed she quickly, "come here; the oddest-looking man is going past."

Col. Malcome rose from his seat by the fire and approached the window. "What a disgusting appearance he presents!" said he, gazing on the slowly-receding figure. "It angers me to see a man degrade himself by such uncouth apparel."

"O, not disgusting! is he, father?" said Edith, "only odd and droll; and his face looked so pale and mild, I thought it really pretty. If he only wouldn't wear that short-waisted, long-tailed coat, with those funny little capes on the shoulders, and leave off that great tall-crowned hat with its broad, slouching brim, and have a little cane instead of that long pole he carries in his hand, he would be quite a pretty man,—don't you think so, father?"

"Well, really I don't know how he might look were he thus transformed," answered Col. Malcome. "I only expressed my opinion of his present appearance."

"Don't you know who he is?" asked Edith.

"No," said her father, returning to his seat.

"Well, I wish you would try and learn his name," pursued the fair girl.

"What for?" asked Col. M., resuming the perusal of the volume he had left to obey her summons to the window.

"Because I would like to know it," returned she. "I fancy he is some relation of that pale Dilly Danforth's, for he has just such mournful eyes."

"I do not wish to see them then," said her father, with some impatience of manner, "for I don't like the expression of that woman's eyes."

"They are very sad," said Edith, "but sorrow has made them so. I think they were once very beautiful. But won't you learn this strange man's name? Perhaps he is very poor, and we could alleviate his wants by kind charities."

"No," answered Col. M. in a tone which dismissed the subject; "I cannot run about the country to hunt up old stragglers for you to bestow alms upon."

Edith looked on her father's stern brow, and, feeling it was useless to urge her plea any longer, stole away to her own apartment, where she found Sylva engaged in feeding her canaries and furnishing them with fresh water. The little bright creatures were singing sweetly, but Edith did not heed their songs. She stood apart by a window, and gazed out on the falling snowflakes. At length she saw Rufus enter the yard, and soon heard him ascending the stairs. "Where have you been, brother?" she asked, as he came in, his face reddened by exposure to the cold, biting atmosphere.

"Down on the river, skating with some of the village boys," answered he, drawing a chair close to the glowing fire; "and O, such a fine time as we had! I shall be glad when we go to school, Edith; it will be so much more lively and pleasant."

"I shall be glad when the snow is gone, so I can run out doors, and sow my flower-beds," returned Edith, thoughtfully. Then she sat gazing in the fire a long time, as was always her wont when thinking deeply on any subject. Sylva had finished her care of the birds, and brought forth Fido from his little cot-bed in her room. He sprang into Edith's lap, then into Rufus', kissing their cheeks and evincing his joy at beholding them in various pleasing, expressive ways. But Edith pushed him away and told Sylva to put him to bed again. So the brisk little fellow was carried off, looking very sorry, and wailing piteously, as if he pleaded permission to remain by the warm fire.

Rufus was younger than his sister, and of an intelligence and refinement so far below hers, that she seldom evinced much pleasure or enjoyment in his society, but she looked towards him now with an eager expression of interest, as he said,

"O, Edith, I saw the funniest man this morning!"

"Where?" she asked quickly.

"Down by the side of the river among a clump of brushwood, gathering little bundles of sticks. Charlie Seaton and I spoke to him, but he did not answer us."

"Did he wear a long overcoat with small capes on the shoulders, and a slouching-brimmed hat?" inquired Edith earnestly.

"Yes," said Rufus. "Have you seen him, then?"

"Passing along in the street," returned she. "Did Charlie know his name?"

"No; but he said it was a man who lived alone in a small hut, far off in the forest, made of the boughs and branches of cedar trees, curiously twisted together; and he is thence styled the *Hermit of the Cedars*."

"A hermit!" exclaimed Edith. "I have read of such beings in old books, but I never supposed they really existed, or at least never expected I should see one with my own eyes. I shall like this place better than ever, now; it will be so romantic to have a hermit in our vicinity. What do you suppose he was going to do with his bundles of sticks, Rufus?"

"Use them for firewood, probably," said he.

"But I should have thought he might have obtained that in the forest where he lives, and not been obliged to travel all the way down here, this stormy day, to pick up wood from among the snow, and then carry it two or three miles in his arms," said Edith, in a ruminating tone.

"O, hermits are strange beings, sis!" answered Rufus, whistling a vacant tune as he stood before the window gazing forth on the dismal storm which debarred him from his accustomed diversion of skating on the frozen surface of the river.

While his children were occupied with the preceding conversation, Col. Malcome had donned his fur-lined overcoat and stepped across the yard to Deacon Allen's cottage. The good people were quite embarrassed to behold so smart a visitor in their unostentatious little parlor, but the colonel, by his gentlemanly grace, soon placed them at their ease. After a few moments' conversation on general topics, he asked, casually enough, who was the owner of the fine mansion he had noticed in his rambles about town, with the appellation "Summer Home" sculptured on its marble gateway?

"O, that is Major Tom Howard's!" answered Deacon Allen. "His family have made it their abode for six or eight months every season since they owned it; and I understand, after their next return, it is to become their permanent residence."

"'Tis a delightful location," remarked Colonel M.; "a very large mansion. Has Mr. Howard a family corresponding with its dimensions?"

"O, no, only a wife and one child—a beautiful girl."

"How old is his daughter?" inquired the colonel.

"Well, about fourteen I should say; but seems much older from her matured growth and manners."

"Has Mr. Howard no sister living with him?" asked the visitor, carelessly.

"No," answered the deacon.

"And has he not lost one?"

"Not since he came among us; though his wife, I have understood, always dresses in black. She is a confirmed invalid and seldom seen."

"Then the family do not mingle much in society?" said the colonel.

The deacon shook his head.

"Somewhat aristocratic, probably," remarked the visitor.

"I should judge so," said the deacon. "They don't send Florence to school, but keep three tutors for her at home. She is very accomplished, but rather wilful and proud, they say."

"The effect of over-indulgence, perhaps," said the colonel, rising.

"Will you not honor us with another call?" asked Mrs. Allen.

"With pleasure," answered he, bowing a graceful good-morning to his delighted entertainers.

CHAPTER IX.

"A vestal priestess, proudly pure
But of a meek and quiet spirit;
With soul all dauntless to endure
And mood so calm that naught can stir it,
Save when a thought most deeply thrilling
Her eyes with gentlest tears is filling,
Which seem with her true words to start
From the deep fountain of her heart."

The fine parlors of Mr. Leroy Edson's tasteful mansion were brilliantly illuminated. Warm fires glowed in the shining marble grates. Dim argand lamps bathed in soft light the rich furniture, carved cornices, and rare statuary which decorated the mantels. The élite of Wimbledon were assembling, and young Mrs. Edson moved lightly to and fro, receiving her numerous guests with graceful self-possession, and welcoming them to her home and heart with warm, earnest cordiality. They were nearly all strangers to her, as she had been but a few months installed mistress of Mr. Edson's splendid mansion; but she felt they were the people among whom she was henceforth to live and find her associates and friends. She had made one call, only, since her arrival in Wimbledon, and that on Col. Malcome's family, who were later comers than herself.

Louise Edson was graceful, brilliant, beautiful. O, what a wealth of thought and intellect was hers; what a broad, generous nature; what lightning-like perceptions, quick, far-seeing judgment, sparkling humor and sarcastic wit! She floated in a sea of exuberant life and beauty, which was fed continually from the exhaustless fountains of her own thought-wealthy soul. Her calm, clear eyes mirrored the bright fancies that flitted through her brain. The chestnut hair, brushed away from the youthful brow, revealed the tiny blue veins on the white expanding temples; while the high, straight nose and curved nostrils, with the sweet little mouth and tapering chin that smiled below, made up a face whose regular features were its least claim to beauty. It was the soul within which shone over these features and lighted them at times with supernatural loveliness. And was this brilliant being understood and appreciated by the man who had won her for his bride? Faugh!—we blush at our own stupidity in asking the question. Are such lofty souls ever appreciated by even one of the swarming masses that people the earth with their corporeal bodies? Let those answer who can.

But Louise, soaring as was her nature, was yet cursed with that weakness which too often possesses souls like hers, swaying e'en a more tyrant sceptre than in meaner breasts, as though in envious hate of those sky-aspiring pinions, and a demon wish to make them lick the dust. She was an orphan, with no relative save a maiden aunt, with whom she dwelt. She felt alone in the wide world, and she wanted—O, pity her, reader, if you can!—she wanted somebody to lean on, somebody to look up to. Could she not lean on her own strong intellect, and look up to the stars?—or could she not breathe forth her rich-laden soul in lofty song and romance, and lean upon the pillars of a world-wide fame? No, O, no! With all her strength of soul and intellect, she had weak woman's heart. She must love and be loved; and when the wealthy Mr. Leroy Edson knelt, an enamored knight, at the shrine of her youth and beauty, she gave him her hand. He thought he had done a most generous deed in thus raising a poor, lone orphan girl from comparative obscurity to a position among the highest circles of society. Her superior education and gem-freighted soul were all the fortune she brought him; a fortune greater than the treasures of Ind., but of whose princely value he had not the power to form the most distant estimate. To behold her tall, graceful figure flitting through his elegant mansion, performing some light household duty, receiving her guests or chatting and singing gayly through the long evenings, was, to him, life's whole of happiness. And was Louise altogether content with the man of her choice? No, or she had not gathered Wimbledon about her to make merry the midnight hour. People do not give fêtes to display their happiness. They give them too often to relieve a tedious monotony, to silence a gnawing discontent, and forget for the moment in hilarious excitement some uneasy foreboding of evil to come, or disquieting conviction that all, even now, is not as it should be.

Louise had not been many weeks Mrs. Edson, before she discovered the man she had taken for "better or worse" till death should separate them, was no helpmeet for her. They had not a thought or sympathy in common. He hired servants to execute her commands; bought her fine clothes, and fine books too, when he found these latter most delighted her; but he never wished to hear her read from them, and invariably yawned if she spoke of literary subjects. He was good-natured and fond of display, with a fair estimate of his own importance and standing in society. He regarded himself as one of the

pillars of Wimbledon's wealth and prosperity;—remove him, and the whole structure would tremble and perhaps go down with a crash to rise no more. It took but a brief time for Louise to read her husband's soul through and through; and with her sharp, critical nature, that could not understand and would not overlook faults and follies to which her bosom was a stranger, she decided she had *married a fool*. What was to be done? The act was voluntary on her part. True, a longer acquaintance between the parties might have led to a different result, but it was too late to think of that now. And this was the end of all her heart-longings for some one to love and reverence, to lean on and look up to! O, how intense was her agony! All her fine feelings wasted, her soul's wealth poured idly forth, and her rich life in its blooming years given to one who could not understand one of her lofty dreams or soaring aspirations. A falcon with sun-daring eyes tied to a grovelling buzzard! Was't not a hard fate, reader? Pity her, all ye who can,—pity her a great deal; mourn over her cruel wreck of happiness; and if in future years the warm, impassioned nature, goaded by its own unuttered pangs, driven wild by its rayless, hopeless desolation, is guilty of some irregularities, some acts which virtue and propriety can hardly sanction, O, remember her early sufferings, and be merciful!

Mr. Edson's party passed off pleasantly. All seemed delighted with their entertainment. The lord of the mansion was in great good-humor, and his beautiful wife the star of the evening. In a simple robe of dark blue cashmere, which fastened low over her white, sloping shoulders, and fitted closely her slender waist, while the ample folds swept the rich tapestry carpets, she moved among her guests like the embodiment of a graceful thought. Her luxuriant brown hair was gathered in bands at the back of her head; a massive chain and cross of gold ornamented her swan-like neck, and bands of the same material clasped her round, white arms. Small wonder that Mr. Edson should feel proud of his wife. The whole evening she was the centre of a delighted group. All flocked around to hear her brilliant conversation and gaze on her animated, expressive features. Col. Malcome and the gentle Edith engaged a large share of her attention and regard. The young girl was insensibly attracted by the affectionate interest evinced in her manner, and the sweet voice and beaming smile with which she addressed her. Col. Malcome expressed his admiration of the exquisite taste displayed in the furnishing of her parlors.

"I cannot tell you, Mrs. Edson," said he, "what I most admire in your elegant drawing-rooms. They are one harmonious whole; but if you were removed, I think I would very soon discover what was wanting to render them complete."

"Now," said Louise, "let me tell you at the commencement of our acquaintance, which I hope for my humble sake may continue to be cultivated, that I detest flattery of all things;" and she turned a smiling glance on him, as these piquant words fell from her pretty, red lips, rendered more than usually charming by the slight sarcastic curl she gave them.

"So do I," returned he; "but truth is not flattery."

"In the language of the poet," said she, laughing, "I will not seek to cope with you in compliment. Do you know I feel a lively interest in your beautiful daughter?"

"I am gratified to know it," said he, glancing on the bright creature at his side with an expressive glance. "Edith is a timid little thing; she would improve under your accomplished tuition. Not that I have the presumption to ask for her your care and instructions beyond what she might receive by a neighborly interchange of visits."

"O, say she may spend a portion of every week with me, when spring opens and the earth is divested of its garb of snow!" said Louise, in a tone of affectionate eagerness. "You cannot tell how her innocent gayety would lighten many of my weary hours."

Col. Malcome started as he heard these words, and turned a searching glance upon her. A slight blush suffused her cheek for a moment, but she soon regained her self-possession. It was one of her faults to give too free, unrestrained expression to her thoughts. They came welling up to her lips, and escaped ere she was aware.

For several moments he continued to gaze on her, and there was something in his countenance that instantly revealed to her quick eye that he had not only believed in the weariness she had so thoughtlessly expressed, but had also fathomed its cause. She felt displeased and irritated at her own want of caution and what she silently termed his presumption.

"Why do you look on me so strangely?" she asked at length.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said he, suddenly averting his gaze.

"Which I shall not give," returned she, with a slight, dignified movement of her queenly head, "unless you tell me what you think of me."

"*All* I think of you, Mrs. Edson," said he, turning his face again toward hers, "perhaps would not please you to know."

"Yes, all," said Louise, "I will know all."

"Well, this is not the time or place for the disclosure," answered he.

She looked at him sharply as he pronounced these words. He smiled and added, "I should be monopolizing the time which belongs to your company."

"Ay, yes!" said she, "your words recall the duty I owe to my condescending guests;" and, bowing, she glided away and joined a company that surrounded the piano.

"You play, of course, Mrs. Edson," said a portly man with a benevolent countenance.

"Occasionally, though I have rather a dull ear," she answered, assuming the music-stool. Several light songs were performed with fine taste and skill, and received the warmest encomiums of her listeners. Another and another was called for, till at length she arose and said, "There are doubtless others here who play far better than myself. I have led the way, let them follow."

Col. Malcome arose from a sofa near by, on which he had thrown himself to listen to the fair musician, and assumed the seat she had vacated. A few prolonged notes, and then one of the most beautiful and intricate compositions of Beethoven, poured its sonorous strains on the ears of the assembly. The performer at length seemed to forget all around him, and at the end of the second chorus joined his own deep, rich tones with the instrument. All were delighted; but Louise, with her quick sensibilities, was thrilled to the centre of her soul. And she felt piqued and angry too; not that he had excelled her, for she was above such small envy, but——she could not tell why.

The party dispersed, and she found herself again in the solitude of her own apartment. That swelling chorus rolled through her midnight dreams, and echoed in her ears for many a day, as she superintended her domestic affairs, or sat down to the perusal of some treasured volume.

CHAPTER X.

"I tell thee, husband, 'tis a goodly thing,
To get a daughter married off your hands,
And know she's found an easy-tempered mate;
For many men there be in this rude world.
Who do most shockingly abuse their wives;
But of their number is not this mild youth
Who takes our daughter for his wedded bride."

Young Mrs. Edson's party was a three days' wonder. Mrs. Salsify Mumbles, inasmuch as she was excluded from being one of the guests, availed herself of the next choicest privilege, and learned, as far as she was able, the dresses and conversation of those in attendance; and how Mrs. E. comported herself, and what she cooked for supper. She was shocked to learn the young wife wore a low-necked dress, and set her down at once as a low, vulgar woman, in whose company she should consider it a disgrace to be seen. Mrs. Pimble said another milk-sop had come among them to fawn and giggle in the face of the oppressor, man.

The Edson fête seemed to pave the way for others, and the winter season passed gayly and pleasantly among the wealthier classes of Wimbledon. Col. Malcome, his daughter, and Rufus, were present at all the social gatherings; and, in fact, the colonel's was getting to be a familiar and welcome face at almost every door in the village. He even called on Mrs. Salsify Mumbles, one day, and addressed several civil speeches to the interesting Mary Madeline, who blushed crimson beneath the glance of his *unresistible* eyes, as she termed them, and trembled like an aspen, in her red silk gown. We do not know that we have ever spoken of the personal charms of this blooming young lady, and we will now attempt a brief daguerreotype for the reader's enlightenment and edification.

Her hair was of that peculiarly brilliant color noticed in that delightful esculent vegetable, the carrot, when boiled and prepared for table. She wore it twisted in a hard, horny knob at the top of her head, which strained her blue-green eyes, and gave them the expression of those of a choked grimalkin. Her nose turned divinely upwards; her blubber lips turned downwards with a grievous, watery expression. Her cheeks were red; so was her nose; so were her eyes at times, when the horny knob took a harder twist than usual. She had small, hairy ears, ornamented with enormous jewels. Her neck was short, and three stubborn warts, of the size of peas, stuck to its left side. Her waist might have been admired in the fifteenth century; but it was some nine inches too short by as many too broad, to elicit the admiration of the gallants of the present age, who rave, and go distracted about gossamer divinities scarcely six inches in circumference. She was about four feet four in stature, and her foot would have crushed Cinderella, and used her slipper for a thumb-cot. Such was Mary Madeline Mumbles in her eighteenth year, and never was child more like parent, than was this young lady like her doting, affectionate mamma.

We have been at considerable trouble to sketch Miss Mumbles at full length, that the reader may be able to form a correct idea of her appearance when she steps forth in full glory of silken bridal attire, on the arm of Mr. Theophilus Shaw, the promising young shoe-cobbler, upon whom Mr. Salsify had long since set his heart, as the proper man to become his future son-in-law. And Miss Mary, who lost her passion for Dick Giblet, after he shut the watch-dog in the kitchen-pantry,—a trick which had nearly cost her the loss of a beloved mother,—and finding she could not captivate the handsome Colonel Malcome with checkered aprons and broad lace, began, like a dutiful child, to receive the advances of

the mild Theophilus more graciously, and had, after much maidenly confusion, consented to become his wife, when, as we have seen, the uncompromising colonel called, and distracted her with fear lest she had been too precipitate in accepting Theophilus, when a higher prize might be on the point of falling into her arms. But her apprehensions were banished after a while, as the colonel did not appear a second time, and the marriage was finally consummated; and Mary Madeline Mumbles became in due form Mrs. Theophilus Shaw. Jenny Andrews and Amy Seaton officiated as bridesmaids, and a large party were invited to make merry on the occasion.

The bride's apparel was magnificent; so was the bridegroom's. We would attempt to describe it in detail, but dare not, knowing well we should fail to do it justice. Mrs. Salsify had the wicks of her parlor lamps full half an inch in length, and never seemed to notice how swiftly the camphene was disappearing, so elate was she with the prospect of marrying her beautiful daughter.

The happy couple were to make a short bridal excursion, and then return and dwell under the bride's parental roof for the present; Mrs. Salsify having vacated her bed-room, which the young people were going to use for kitchen, parlor, and shoemaker's shop. And a little pasteboard sign with the words, "Theophilus Shaw, Boot & Shoe Maker," scrawled on it with lampblack, in an awkward, school-boy hand, was suspended by a string from the bed-room window.

"I am glad to have Mary Madeline settled in life," said Mrs. Mumbles, after the arrangements were all complete; "and the matter off my mind."

"So am I," answered her husband; "and I am glad she has made so good a match, too. Mr. Shaw will make a much better husband than Dick Giblet, or that black-headed Col. Malcome."

"O, a better one than that scapegrace of a Dick, of course!" said Mrs. Salsify, quickly; "but as to a better one than the colonel, I don't know about that. The advantages of his position are very great. Maddie would have been the tip-top of Wimbledon if she had married him."

"So she will be now, in time," returned Mr. S., confidently, "for I am 'rising rapidly in my profession.' Next summer I shall build the piazza and second story, and in ten years I'd like to see the man that can hold his head above Mr. Salsify Mumbles."

At these hopeful words, the wife fondly embraced her husband, and the loving couple fell to forming plans and projects for their brilliant future.

CHAPTER XI.

And yet this wild woods' man was happy once,—
  Bright fame did offer him her richest dower,
But disappointment blasted all his hopes,
  And crushed him 'neath her desolating power.

Cold and bleak roared the fierce wintry blasts through the broad, dense forest that stretched away to the north of Wimbledon. The stars sparkled with unwonted brilliancy over the clear blue firmament, as a quick step crackled along the narrow, icy path, and a dark form was seen hurrying toward a faint light that gleamed dimly through a dense clump of cedars. Then there was a sound as of bars withdrawn, and a bright, blazing hearth was revealed for a moment as the dark form entered, when all was hushed and silent again, save the dismal roar of the night wind through the surrounding pines.

"You are late to-night, uncle," said a tall, dark-haired youth, as he undid the fastenings of the wanderer's long overcoat, and removed his woollen mittens and wide-brimmed hat.

"What time do you conceive it to be?" asked the man, depositing his long staff in a corner, and approaching the glowing fire.

"Past midnight, I would suppose," answered the boy, piling up a quantity of books that were scattered over a small table, and with which he had been occupying himself through the long evening hours.

"O, not so late as that!" returned the man, drawing a rude chair before the fire and extending his small, thin hands to the grateful blaze. "The village clock in the old church tower at Wimbledon was on the stroke of ten when I laid my bundle of sticks in their accustomed place, and set my face homewards. I must have travelled at a laggard pace, if it is already midnight. Are you lonesome when I'm away, Edgar?" inquired he, turning his deep, melancholy eyes on the fair, open countenance of the youth.

"Sometimes I am," returned he; "I have been so to-night. A strange power seemed to possess my thoughts, to lead them through most hideous scenes, and dark, awful glooms and shadows enveloped my soul in mazes of doubt and fear."

"What a nervous boy you are!" said the man, "come and sit beside me, and I'll tell you of a project I've been revolving in my mind these several days." Edgar did as requested, and after a brief silence the hermit commenced:

"These six months, my lad, you have dwelt in this little hut in the forest, holding intercourse with no human being save myself. It is not right your boyhood and youth should pass in this manner. I have been selfish in keeping you all to myself, to cheer my solitude. 'Twas your parents' dying wish that you should receive all the advantages of education and travel. Your life has been, for the most part, spent in the toil of study, and I knew you needed an interval of relaxation and retirement to reïnvigorate your mental and physical energies. So I brought you to share the seclusion of my hermitage for a while. Grateful as has been your presence to me, I should wrong you, and forfeit the promise given your parents on their deathbeds, if I encouraged or permitted this retirement for a longer period than is necessary for your restoration to health and vigor. You know I am your guardian, Edgar. The fortune left for you by your father was entrusted to my care till you should attain a suitable age to have it transferred to your own hands, and ample provisions were made for your education and instruction in the painter's art. Do you see what I am coming at, Edgar?" he added, pausing in his discourse, and directing his gaze toward the boy, who sat listening attentively to his uncle's words.

"No, Uncle Ralph," answered the lad; "I don't know as I do, unless you are going to send me away from you to some distant school;" and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"Would you dislike to leave me, my boy?" said the hermit, a tear dropping from his melancholy eye.

"Ah, that would I!" returned Edgar, "for I have none to care for me in the wide world, save you."

"Pshaw, pshaw, boy! don't prate in that way, with your bright, curly locks," said the man, laying his thin hand softly on the youth's light, clustering hair. "When these locks are gray, and you have toiled and labored for fame and honors never gained, or that burned and furrowed the brow that wore them; when you have engaged in the world's weary strife and sunk by the wayside worn and disheartened by the contest; when friends have proved false;"—here the hermit's voice grew deeper and more vehement —"and when those who professed for you the fondest love turn coldly away to mock and scorn at your deep devotion, then, then, my boy, you will exclaim in bitterness, 'there are none to care for me!'"

He paused, and bowed his face on his hands. Edgar longed to comfort him, but knew not what to say.

The night wind roared solemnly without, the fire burned low on the rude hearth, and the little apartment, but illy protected from the searching blasts, grew chilly. Still the hermit sat silent, his bowed head resting between his small, attenuated hands. Edgar rose, brought the long overcoat and spread it over his shoulders, as a protection from the increasing cold. Then wrapping a blanket around his own light form, he stole softly to the window, and turned his gaze upward to the star-lighted heaven. He dearly loved to sit thus through the hushed midnight hours, and listen to the deep, heavy roaring of the mighty winds, as they swept through the surrounding forest, while his soul seemed borne away on their rushing currents, up and upward till her pinions brushed the starry palaces of angels and beatified spirits; and on, and on, with new splendors ever bursting on her ravished vision, till the elysium of light in the high heaven of heavens poured its bewildering glories upon her, and her weary wings fluttered to rest at last upon the bosom of the All-Holy.

Edgar was possessed of a temperament of the most imaginative order, deeply imbued with lofty, poetic sentiment, and a tendency to reserve and melancholy. His father had been an artist, and the sunny skies of Italy cast their bright glory over his tender years, warming to impassioned ardor the springs and fountains of his youthful bosom. Very few boys of his age and acquirements could have endured the seclusion in which he had dwelt for the last six months; but nothing could have been more consonant with the reserved, romantic disposition of Edgar; and the prospect of leaving the wild hut in the forest to go forth among the wide world's jostling crowds, caused him heart-throbbing pangs.

After a long silence the hermit roused himself. The room was cold and dark.

"Edgar?" said he, in a low, broken voice.

"I am here," answered the youth, rising, and feeling his way through the darkness to his uncle's side, "Won't you lie down now? The room is so cold, and there is no wood within to replenish the fire."

"Yes, my boy, I will lie down," said the hermit, "but not to sleep; the ghosts of past joys are with me to-night."

"Drive them away, uncle!" said the lad soothingly. "I am not disposed to sleep either. Let us lie down and cover us warm, and then you tell me of your plans and projects for my future, as you had commenced to do a few hours ago."

"No, Edgar, not to-night," answered the recluse. "Your young eyes will wax heavy with these midnight vigils. You must sleep, my boy, and to-morrow I will communicate my plans concerning you."

"As you say, uncle," returned Edgar, preparing to lie down.

Young, and happily ignorant of the cares and sorrows that distract the bosoms of maturer years, he was soon asleep.

The hermit moved to the window, and, after gazing forth some time in silence, murmured, "Wild, wild

is the night! Heaven send she does not suffer. I left two bundles on her lonely sill, though my fingers grew stiff with cold ere I had gathered them. Thus do I feebly endeavor to atone for past misconduct. How the wind roars through the pines! O, what memories of long ago rush o'er my soul! I think of Mary as the time approaches when she will be near me. Shall I see her face again? God forbid!" exclaimed he, stamping his foot violently upon the stone floor. After a while he resumed his low soliloquy. "I fear for Edgar," he said, "lest the cold world chill his heart and undo his usefulness, as it has mine. He has my temperament, reserved, sensitive, and with the same accursed capacity for strong, undying attachment. What a fair prospect of fame had I! What honors were ready to crown me when that monster came and blasted them all! Such do I fear will be Edgar's fate. But he must go forth into the world; such was the wish of his parents. I can keep him near me a few months longer by sending him to the Wimbledon seminary, ere he must depart for some distant university or school of art. Then the great world will have opened before him, and I shall see him no more." The hermit suddenly ceased. Tears choked his utterance.

"Uncle!" said Edgar, starting quickly from his slumbers, "will you not come and lie down?"

"Yes, my boy," answered the sorrowing man, approaching the rude couch.

The wintry winds wailed on with piteous, mournful voices; but the *Hermit of the Cedars* slept at last,

"A troubled, dreamy sleep."

CHAPTER XII.

"Lawyers and doctors at your service.
We are better off
Without them.
True, you are,—but still
You follow on their heels, and fawn,
And flatter in their faces. If you
Would leave your brawls and fights which
Call for physic, very soon you'd be
Beyond their greedy clutches."

OLD PLAY.

Reader, do you wonder where's the doctor whose saddle-bags may be supposed to contain the divers specifics for the "ills" which the "flesh" of Wimbledon is liable to become heir to? He doth exist, and, when occasion calls, we'll trot him forth.

And do you say this same Wimbledon has never a lawyer within its precincts,—and whoever heard of a village of several hundred inhabitants without at least half-a-dozen of these learned disciples of Blackstone to settle its wrongs and right its abuses?

Permit us to inform you, friend, that we consider lawyers dangerous animals; and the less men and women have to do with them, the better!

Nevertheless, there is one o' the craft in Wimbledon; and, if you had not been blind as a bat, you would have discovered, ere this, the sign of "Peter Paul Pimble, Esq., Attorney-at-Law," hung over the door of a small, black building in Mudget square. True, Mr. Pimble don't practise his profession much, for a very good reason; nobody is in want of his services; and that's the case with two thirds of the lawyers in Christendom.

Mrs. Pimble has converted her husband's office into a committee-room, and receptacle for hoards of pamphlets and papers, containing the proceedings of divers conventions held for the advancement of the cause of "Woman's Rights, and promulgation of Universal Freedom and Philanthropy."

Mrs. Pimble, the ardent reformist, is at present detained from her labors by the illness of her eldest son, Garrison. She has sent for the young female physician, Dr. Sarah Simcoe; but the word is, "pressing business detains that medical functionary at home,"—so, in direct violation of her established principles, she has been compelled to send for old Dr. Potipher, who considers himself, par excellence, the Esculapius of Wimbledon.

But Peggy Nonce comes blowing back from her hasty errand, and says the doctor is down to Mr. Moses Simcoe's. Mrs. Pimble wonders what should take a vile male practitioner to the house of an accomplished lady-physician. Peggy looks wise, as much as to say she could explain the mystery if she chose. But no one asks her to speak, so she goes into the kitchen, where Mr. Pimble sits in his dressing-gown and sheepskin slippers, shivering over an expiring fire. He lifts his head, as the bustling housekeeper begins to rattle the covers of the stove for the purpose of putting in some more wood, and asks feebly if "Dr. Potipher has arrived."

"No," answers Peggy. "He is down to Mr. Simcoe's."

"Who is sick there?" inquires Mr. Pimble.

"His wife."

"Why, she is a doctor herself! Can't she cure her own ailments?" says Mr. Pimble.

"Not always, I reckon," is Peggy's reply, while she is evidently vastly amused by something she does not choose to communicate at present.

Beside the bed of her sick boy stood Mrs. Pimble. She laid her hand on his forehead. It burned with fever, and his pulse was quick and hard. She was not much skilled in the "art medical," but she resolved to do *something* for her child, and forthwith proceeded to the kitchen and compounded a dish of catnip leaves and ginger. It exhaled a savory smell, and she felt quite confident it would cool off Garrison's fever. Placing a large bowl of the liquid by his bed-side, she bade him drink freely of it through the evening, while she was gone to the Reform Club, and when she came home she would call at Sister Simcoe's and obtain a prescription for him. The sick lad promised to do as she requested. His fever inclined him to drink incessantly, and ere his mother was ten yards from the house, he had guzzled the whole brimming bowlful. And still he called for drink, drink; which his insensate father carried to him in copious quantities as often as he desired it.

Mrs. Pimble proceeded on her way to the club room. For some reason there was but a thin attendance. None of the prominent members were present, and the little company decided to adjourn. Mrs. Pimble hurried round to Mrs. Simcoe's, to learn the cause of her absence and get the prescription for Garrison. The lady-doctor had been lecturing for several months in different towns of the county, and was but recently returned.

Mrs. Pimble entered without knocking, as was her wont, and walked into the young doctor's office, where she beheld, not the fair, feminine face of the rightful proprietor, but the ugly, rhubarb-colored visage of the village apothecary, Dr. Potipher, ensconced in the high-backed cushioned chair, fast asleep.

She turned back and opened the sitting-room door, and there stood Mr. Simcoe before a bed, holding a tea-tray, containing several vials and glasses. Mrs. Pimble started on seeing the night-capped head of Mrs. Simcoe raised feebly from the pillow, and darting forward, exclaimed, "Mercy, Sister Simcoe! what has befallen you?"

A smothered wail from beneath the bed-clothes now met her ear, and, turning down the blankets, she discovered two red-faced, bald-headed babies, wrapped in swaddling-clothes. She started back aghast.

"What are those things—what are those things?" she demanded, hysterically, pointing to the infant strangers.

"Simcoe's children!" groaned the pale lady-doctor, turning uneasily away from the little things that lay squirming and making such grimaces, as only very young babies *can* make, in the face of Mrs. Pimble. The alleged father stood there, chuckling over the smartness of his progeny. Mrs. Pimble darted one withering glance upon him, and walked away without another word. She roused old Dr. Potipher, and took him home with her. Well she did so, for Garrison was much worse than when she left him, and the doctor pronounced it a case of brain fever, which would require the nicest care and nursing.

Thus a wet blanket was most audaciously thrown upon the Woman's Rights' Reform, which was fain to arrest its progress in Wimbledon for a while. We shall see how long.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Thy hands are filled with early flowers,
Thy step is on the wind;
The innocent and keen delight
Of youth is on thy mind;
That glad fresh feeling that bestows
Itself the gladness which it knows,
The pure, the undefined;
And thou art in that happy hour
Of feeling's uncurbed, early power."

The spring dawned bright and beautiful over Wimbledon, and when the first blue-birds sang on the budding boughs, and the grass was springing green in streets and by-ways, the tenants of "Summer Home" returned; and a bright young girl, with dark abundant hair hanging in a rich profusion of shiny

ringlets over her white, uncovered shoulders, was seen skipping lightly through the gardens and grounds, pruning shrubs, transplanting flowers, and training truant vines over arbors and alcoves.

It was Florence Howard, resplendent in the light of her girlish beauty, and buoyant overflow of health and happiness. Often, in her morning strolls, she noticed a tall, graceful boy, in a blue frock-coat, with a shining morocco cap placed over a head of light curly hair, passing along, satchel in hand, to the seminary on the hill, and every night she saw him disappear within the forest that lay to the northward of her father's residence.

She wondered what became of him, for the woods were wide and deep, and it must be a long way to the other side. There surely could be no habitation within their precincts, and Florence's curiosity was strongly excited to fathom the mystery, which in her eyes surrounded the fair-haired youth.

"Father," said she one evening, as she sat beside him on the western terrace, "I don't like being confined herewith these stupid tutors. I wish you would let me go to school at the seminary."

"Your advantages at home are far superior, my daughter," answered her father.

"O, but I should like the air and exercise, and the company of children of my own age so much," pursued she, poking her little fingers through her father's silvered locks, and leaning up against his side in a very coaxing attitude. "I shall become the saddest mope in the world if I am cooped up here."

"I apprehend small danger of that," returned her father, laughing, "for you have appeared to me, since our last return, a wilder romp than ever before."

"O, that's only because I'm so glad to get to this delightful place again, and to know we are to go away no more!" said she. "It will wear off after a while, and I shall become silent and solemn as a nun. Won't you let me go to the seminary just one term? I can still take my music lessons of Mrs. Sayles here at home, and I know my French and Italian masters would like a respite from their duties." She stood looking earnestly in her father's face.

"You smooth the way very well, my little daughter," said he, patting her rosy cheek; "but I incline to think you had better continue your studies in the old way."

Florence looked disappointed, and turned slowly from his side. Her dejected appearance touched his affectionate heart, and he called her back. She came bounding toward him, with new hope dancing in her dark liquid eyes.

"If you can obtain your mother's consent," said he, "I will not object to your attending school at the seminary one term, as you seem so much to desire it."

"O, thank you, thank you, dear father!" exclaimed the glad girl, putting her arms round his neck, and giving him a grateful kiss on either cheek, "and may I commence to-morrow? that is, if mamma consents to my going?"

"To-morrow?" said he, "had you not better wait, as this term is so far advanced, and commence with a new one?"

"O, no!" returned she, "I should rather begin at once."

"Well, go in, little Miss Rattle, and see what your sage mamma says on the subject," said her father, smiling at her earnest countenance.

Away went Florence, with the lightness of a bird up the hall stairs, and, giving a light tap at a closed door, stood dancing softly on tip-toe, as she waited a summons to enter. "Who's there?" asked a low, trembling voice at length.

"Me, mamma," answered Florence; "may I come in? I've something to ask you."

The door was opened by a short, thin woman, of dark complexion, small peering black eyes, and slick, shining hair of the same hue, which was arranged with an air of nicety and precision.

Florence entered and glanced with an expression of alarm toward the drawn curtains of a mahogany bedstead. "Is mother worse?" she asked in a voice but a breath above a whisper.

"She has had one of her bleeding spells," answered the small, dark woman. "Where is your father?"

"On the lower terrace; shall I call him?"

"No, I will go to him," returned the woman, "if you will remain by your mother a while."

"O, yes, I shall be delighted to stay!" said Florence, approaching the couch.

"You must not talk to her," remarked the woman; "she needs to be very quiet."

"I won't speak a word unless she asks me to," answered the young girl, sitting down by the bed-side, as the dark woman disappeared, closing the door softly behind her.

After a few moments' silence the sick woman stirred and parted the curtains slightly with her wan

hand. Florence rose. "Do you want anything, mother?" she asked.

"No, my dear, I have been asleep. Where is Hannah?"

"Gone below. I think to send father for Dr. Potipher."

"I hope not," said the invalid; "it is not necessary. This is only one of my common attacks. I shall be as well as usual in a few days."

"Do you think so, mother?" asked Florence, brightening. "I feared you were very ill. I had something particular to say, but I was not going to say it, for fear of hurting you."

"What is it, dear?" inquired the mother.

"Something papa and I have been talking about down on the piazza to-night."

"Well," said the sick woman, looking affectionately on the earnest expression and downcast lids of Florence's large hazel eyes.

"I asked him to let me go to the seminary this term, and he said if you had no objection I might do so," said the hesitating girl, at length, with a long-drawn breath, as though she had relieved her bosom of a heavy burden.

The pale lady was silent a few moments, as if revolving the matter in her mind. Then she spoke suddenly. "You said your father had no objection?"

"Yes," answered Florence.

"Then, of course, I have none," said the woman, turning over on her pillow and settling herself as if to sleep again.

Florence was about to pour forth her gratitude for the favor shown her request, when the dark-browed woman entered, shook her finger at her, and bade her go below. Florence's eyes flashed back her answer.

"I'll go at my mother's request, not otherwise," said she.

A dark frown gathered on the woman's features, and the invalid said tremblingly, "I would like to sleep; perhaps you had better go and stay with your father a while, my dear."

Florence kissed the pale brow, and then moved toward the door with noiseless tread. The dark woman cast a glance of angry triumph upon her, which was returned by one of fearless defiance.

Since Florence's earliest recollection her mother had been an invalid, shunning society and subject to long fits of depression, and, upon the slightest excitement, to severe attacks of palpitation and bleeding from the chest, which frequently prostrated her on a bed of suffering for weeks. Hannah Doliver had always been her attendant, though Florence, in the simplicity of her young heart, often wondered that her parents should retain her in their service; for she was a bold, impudent, violent-tempered woman, who set up her will for law in the household, and seemed to exercise an almost tyrannic sway over the weak invalid, who appeared to stand in awe of her slightest nod. She showed a marked dislike for Florence, and delighted in tantalizing her, when she was a little child, and thwarting her wishes. As the fair girl grew older, she resolved the arbitrary woman should not govern or intimidate her, and met all her attempts at petty tyranny with a bold, undaunted spirit, which seemed to increase the woman's hatred. Florence once asked her father why he did not send Hannah Doliver away.

"Your mother could not do without her, my child," said he.

"I think she could do better without her than with her," returned Florence, "for she is cross to mamma, and makes her do everything just as she says."

"O, no, I guess not," said her father.

"But she does," persisted Florence, "and I would not have her in the house." Major Howard patted his little daughter's cheek and said, "When you are older, Florence, you will understand a great many things that seem dark and mysterious to you now."

Florence was not satisfied, but she turned away, and never mentioned the subject to her father again.

Early the next morning the glad-hearted girl was astir, getting in readiness for school. She gathered her books together and placed them in a satchel of crimson broadcloth, which she had just embroidered, with bright German wools, in wreaths of spotted daisies and wild columbines. Then donning a blue muslin frock, dotted over with small silver stars, and tying on a black silk apron with open velvet pockets, from one of which peeped a snowy lace-edged handkerchief, she took satchel, gloves and gypsy hat, and descended to the parlor, ensconcing herself in a nook of the north window, where she stood gazing over the hill-tops toward the distant forest with eager eyes to behold the fair-haired boy emerge from its recesses.

At length he appeared, and she watched him till he was descending the hill which sloped past her father's mansion. Then, hastily tying on her hat and seizing her satchel, she was hurrying through the hall to gain the street, when she encountered Hannah Doliver.

"Where are you going?" demanded she in a sharp tone.

"To school," answered Florence, rushing past her.

"By whose leave, I wonder?" said the woman, running after her, to drag her back. But the nimble-footed girl was too swift for her, and she returned to the house muttering angrily to herself. Meantime, Florence bounded over the gravelled walks, and was emerging from the gateway just as the lad, in the morocco cap, was passing by. He arrested his steps on beholding her, and bowed gracefully. She returned his salute, and said, blushingly, "I am going to school up to the seminary. May I walk with you?"

"Certainly, Miss Howard," answered he; "I shall be grateful for your company."

"You know my name," said she, advancing to his side; "I am ignorant of yours."

"Edgar Lindenwood," returned he, and the two walked on together.

CHAPTER XIV.

——"She has dark violet eyes,
A voice as soft as moonlight. On her cheek
The blushing blood miraculous doth range
From sea-shell pink to sunset. When she speaks
Her soul is shining through her earnest face
As shines a moon through its up-swathing cloud.
My tongue's a very beggar in her praise,
It cannot gild her gold with all its words."

ALEXANDER SMITH.

There was a neat, little vine-covered cottage standing a few doors removed from the elegant mansion of Leroy Edson, and in it dwelt Mrs. Stanhope, a widow lady and her maiden sister, Miss Martha Pinkerton, a female of uncertain age, as authors say, and possessed of the peculiarities common to persons of her class. They were not poor, nor were they rich, but made a good living, as the world goes, by taking in needlework. Young Mrs. Edson frequently dropped in to pass an hour in social converse with Mrs. Stanhope, who was a pleasant, agreeable woman. Miss Martha, too, always wore a smile on her sharp-featured face when the lovely young wife appeared at the cottage. As they were simple, unostentatious people, living in a retired and quiet way, she laid aside all form and ceremony, and was accustomed to run in at any hour, in whatever garb she chanced to be.

On a bright May morning, as the ladies had made all things tidy, and were seating themselves to their daily avocation of the needle, they heard the garden gate swing, and beheld Mrs. Edson approaching in her little white sun-bonnet and spotted muslin dressing-gown, open from the waist downwards, revealing a fine cambric skirt, wrought in several rows of vines and deep scolloped edges. Mrs. Stanhope met her visitor on the porch.

"Good-morning," said she, extending her hand; "I am happy to see you:—how beautiful and eloquent you are looking!"

"O, this glorious, sweet-breathed morning, with its birds and flowers, is enough to brighten the most torpid thing into animation!" exclaimed Louise, grasping her friend's hand warmly. "You don't know how I love everything and everybody to-day, Mrs. Stanhope," she continued, in a tone of earnest enthusiasm, as she entered the little parlor, still holding the good woman by one hand, while she extended the other to Miss Pinkerton, who rose from her work to receive her, and drew an old-fashioned, straight-backed rocking-chair, cushioned and lined with gay copperplate, up before the window for her comfort. "I must not sit long," said Louise, assuming the proffered seat, "for I have left my house quite alone; the servants having gone out on errands for themselves. I tried one thing and another to divert myself, but the birds sang so sweetly, the sun was so bright, and everything seemed to say, up and away. So I donned my sun-bonnet and ran over here as the nicest, quietest little nook I could fly to; and where I should be as welcome in my morning-gown as in full dress of ruffles and satins."

"And even more so, if possible," answered Mrs. Stanhope; "simple people like us are always a good deal put out and embarrassed by grandeur and display. It has something awful and unapproachable in our eyes."

"It has something servile and contemptible in mine," said Louise; "I always shrink from a woman

flaunted out in rustling silks, great, glaring rings on her fingers, and alarming jewels swinging like ponderous pendulums from her ears. I think what a poor, little, pinched, narrow-contracted, poverty-stricken soul is there, that seeks to atone for the lack within, by rigging her poor body out like a veritable queen of harlots."

Mrs. Stanhope and Miss Martha burst into a cordial fit of laughter, as Louise, with a good deal of spirit and sarcasm, delivered herself of the preceding speech; and, before their merriment had subsided, a knock was heard at the inner door, and Col. Malcome stepped in, bowing gracefully, with a pleasant "Good-morning" to the three ladies. Mrs. Stanhope rose and offered him a chair. Depositing a large package he held in his arms on a corner of the sofa, he sat down.

Mrs. Edson blushed. She thought it was at being caught from home in dishabille by a gentleman of the colonel's etiquette and high breeding. After a few casual remarks upon the beauty of the morning, he turned his discourse to her, and remarked:

"I am happy to meet you, Mrs. Edson; we are getting to be quite strangers of late. Edith is lamenting that you do not honor us with more frequent visits."

"I have often wished to call on your family, Col. Malcome," returned Louise, in a calm, clear voice; "but since your daughter commenced attending school, have desisted, lest I might inconvenience her."

"Edith does not go to the seminary after two o'clock," said he; "her evenings are quite unemployed, and she would be highly gratified to receive a call from you."

"I shall be pleased to call on her, and also to receive more frequent visits from her. She has less to confine her at home than I; so her visits should outnumber mine."

"Ay, yes; you speak sensibly, Mrs. Edson," returned he; "you have more calls on your time than Edith. Strange I can never remember you are a married woman."

"It would be well for you to remember it," said Louise, with a dignified curve of her graceful neck, and slight addition of color, which very much heightened her beauty.

"Mrs. Edson is so youthful in appearance," remarked Mrs. Stanhope, "I think she might excuse one for forgetting she is a matron."

"I'll excuse you, Mrs. Stanhope," said Louise, rising; "I don't want to be anything to you, but your little girl, and to run in here just when I have a mind to, and to have you chide me when I do wrong, and love me always, whether right or wrong. So good-morning," and, curtseying gracefully, she glided from the room and retraced her steps to her own mansion.

There was a silence of several minutes after she left, during which Col. Malcome recollected his package, and, placing it on the table, politely inquired if the ladies could oblige him by sewing a quantity of linen, of which he should be in need in course of a few weeks, as he meditated going a journey. They would be very willing to do it for him, could they get it in readiness by the time he would want it; but they had a great deal of unfinished work on their hands. Miss Pinkerton was confident they could accomplish the colonel's, however.

"I am doubtful, Martha," said Mrs. Stanhope; "you know the large bundle Mrs. Howard's waiting-woman brought in, last night."

"O, that can easily be put by," returned Martha.

"But Hannah said the major wanted it in a month at longest."

"Pshaw! that's a phrase of her own making. It sounds just like Hannah Doliver's impertinent manner of expressing herself."

Col. Malcome gave a sudden start as Miss Pinkerton carelessly uttered these words.

"What did you say was the name of Mrs. Howard's woman?" he demanded, with an eagerness that astonished his hearers.

"Hannah Doliver," repeated Miss Martha; "do you know her?"

"No," said he, suddenly assuming an appearance of composure; "that is, I think not; but I have frequently heard the name of Doliver before. How long has she lived with Major Howard?"

"A great many years, I believe," answered Martha. "People hereabouts wonder at their keeping the ill-tempered, arbitrary hussy. They say she rules the whole house save Miss Florence."

"Ay; the young lady must have a spirit, then, I should judge, if she defies such a virago as you describe this woman to be."

"No more spirit than she should have," returned Miss Pinkerton. "A sweet, beautiful girl is Florence Howard as ever the sun shone upon."

"Ay, yes, indeed," interposed Mrs. Stanhope; "she used to call on us last summer, when her embroidery teacher was away, to get Martha to assist her in her tambour work; and I declare, I thought

her the most lovable creature I ever saw."

"I am told these Howards do not mingle much in society," remarked the colonel carelessly.

"No," returned Mrs. S., "Mrs. Howard never goes out. She is a confirmed invalid, and her disease inclines her to quiet and solitude. I don't believe there's a woman in the village who has seen her in all the seasons the family have passed at Summer Home."

"O, yes!" said Miss Martha. "Dilly Danforth, the washerwoman, saw her once. When she was there a year ago this spring, putting the house to rights, she cleaned the paint and windows of Mrs. Howard's room, and thus got a sight at the invalid. She told me she was a pale, thin woman, with a distressed expression of countenance. Her hair was nearly white, and she looked much older than her husband."

Col. Malcome stood before a window with his back toward the ladies, listening intently to their words.

"I have understood that Miss Florence is attending school at the seminary this term," remarked Mrs. Stanhope, at length; "do you know if it is so, Col. Malcome?"

"I think I heard Edith and Rufus say something to that effect," answered he.

"I hope she will drop in and see us some day," said Miss Pinkerton. "She and Mrs. Edson are great favorites of mine, and I doubt not your pretty daughter would become one also, if I should get acquainted with her. We are but humble people, but should be very happy to receive a call from Miss Edith."

"Thank you," said the colonel; "'tis very possible she may some time visit you, though she is rather timid and inclined to shrink from strangers. Well, ladies, shall I leave my work?" he added, laying his white hand on the package as he stepped toward the door.

"Yes," answered Miss Martha; "I will engage to have it ready in season for you."

He bowed and withdrew. Miss Pinkerton peeped through the curtain, as he walked down the garden path, and thought she had never beheld so handsome and elegant a specimen of the genus homo.

CHAPTER XV.

"O, loveliest time! O, happiest day!
When the heart is unconscious, and knows not its sway;
When the favorite bird, or the earliest flower,
Or the crouching fawn's eyes make the joy of the hour,
And the spirits and steps are as light as the sleep
Which never has wakened to watch or to weep.
She bounds on the soft grass,—half woman, half child,
As gay as her antelope, almost as wild.
The bloom of her cheek is like that on her years.
She has never known pain—she has never known tears;
And thought has no grief, and no fear to impart;
The shadow of Eden is yet on her heart."

L. E. L.

"Father!" said Florence Howard, the second day of her first vacation, "had I not better study Latin next term?"

"Latin!" answered he in a tone of surprise, "why should you study that?"

"O, for discipline to my mind," returned Florence.

"I think you will find the acquirement of French and Italian sufficient discipline," said he.

"O, but they are so easily learned! I want something more difficult—something I have to study hard on."

"Why, you would be running to me to get your lessons for you half the time!" said her father, laughing.

"No, I wouldn't," answered she, shaking her curly head cunningly. "Edgar would assist me."

"Edgar! and who is he?" inquired Major Howard.

"Why, Edgar Lindenwood! You know him," returned she.

"No, certainly I don't know anything about him," said her father.

"Why, you have seen the tall boy with the morocco cap and light curls, that used to walk to school with me last term!" said Florence, looking earnestly in his face.

"O, yes! I have seen him frequently," returned Major H. "What do you say is his name?"

"Edgar Lindenwood."

"And where does he live?"

"With his uncle."

"And who is his uncle?"

"The Hermit of the Cedars."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Major Howard. "And so, this young hermit is going to teach you Latin, Miss Florence? Romantic, upon my word!"

"Edgar is not a hermit!" said Florence, pouting her red lips and assuming an air of dignity which vastly amused her father. "He is brave, and bright, and handsome, and, our preceptor says, already a finer scholar than many a graduate from the university."

"Well, well; I cannot argue the merits of this favorite of yours, Florence," said her father; "but I promise to give him a larger share of my attention henceforth."

"I wish you would, father," said Florence. "I may bring him home with me from school some day,—may I not?"

"No!" returned Major Howard. "I can notice him in the street."

"But you cannot judge of him so far off," pursued Florence. "He looks better the nearer you approach him."

"I shall judge him best at a distance," remarked her father, moving away.

Florence did not exactly like the tone of voice in which he uttered these last words; but she soon forgot all else in the contemplation of studying Latin, and having Edgar's assistance in learning her lessons. She had never in her life taken any note of time,—never felt it lag heavily on her hands; but it appeared to her now that these interminable days of vacation would never come to an end. She passed one of them with Edith and Rufus Malcome, and this was by far the most insupportable of any. "She loved Edith dearly," she said; "but could not endure the childish prattle and frivolity of Rufus."

He was six months older than Florence, and Edith had seen seventeen summers, while Florence was only in her fifteenth; but she was so well matured in manners and appearance as to seem the senior of the delicate, retiring Edith.

Col. Malcome paid her many courteous attentions during her visit, and expressed an ardent hope that a friendship and intimacy might spring up between her and his daughter.

Florence said she should be delighted to form a companionship with Edith.

"We are located so near the seminary," said Col. Malcome, as she was preparing to return home, and Rufus stood waiting to accompany her; "while your father's mansion is so distant, that it will be very convenient for you, on rough days, to come and pass the night with Edith. Indeed, I should be highly gratified if you would make my house a sort of second home, and come in, familiarly, every day, if you choose."

Florence thanked him for his kindness, kissed Edith, and descended to the street in company with Rufus.

Col. Malcome approached the window and regarded the couple earnestly till they passed beyond his view, while strange, dark, commingled expressions passed over his face. Edith crept up to him and said softly, "What troubles you, father?"

He looked down sternly on her sweet, upturned face, and said in a tone of strong command:

"Edith, I desire you to cultivate the acquaintance of Florence Howard by every means in your power."

"I shall be glad to do so, father," answered she, with a look and tone which deprecated his sternness.

"'Tis well, then," said he, relaxing his brow and imprinting a kiss on her soft cheek as he turned away and stepped forth upon the piazza. The full moon was just rising in the east; the river rippled sweetly in the distance, and the whippoorwills piped their sharp, shrill notes on the hushed evening air. Suddenly he heard the garden-gate unclose, and, turning, beheld Mrs. Edson and her husband approaching. Descending the marble steps, he met them in the avenue, and, after a cordial interchange of salutations, ushered them into the gas-lighted drawing-room, where Edith, in a gossamer-like muslin, reclined on a velvet ottoman.

The evening passed pleasantly to all but Mr. Edson, who sat like a pantomime in a play, staring and grinning at what he could not understand or digest. Col. Malcome seemed, however, to take a malicious pleasure in placing his guest in the most awkward positions, and showing off his own superior grace and polish to the best advantage. If anything, he rather overdone. But perhaps he thought with Mrs. Salsify Mumbles in this case, "Better overshoot than fall short." Louise was graceful and self-possessed as usual; and it must be confessed did not appear very much disconcerted when Col. M. showed her husband in some ridiculous light, or mercilessly uncurtained his crude, narrow-minded opinions and ideas.

Scorn and contempt for the man she had married were fast mastering all kinder feelings she once had toward him.

CHAPTER XVI.

"I bid you leave the girl, and think no more
About her from henceforth."

"Ah, I can leave
Her, sire;—but to forget will be, I fear,
A thing beyond my power."

It was midsummer, and the Hermit of the Cedars sat under his low piazza, curiously constructed of the enwreathed boughs and branches of evergreen trees. He held a volume in his attenuated hand, with the contents of which, he seemed intently occupied. His appearance was melancholy in the extreme. A pale, thin face;—deep sunken eyes, and a broad, high brow, by sorrow seamed with furrows long and wide; for she doth ever dig with deeper, harsher hand than time. A loose linen garment was wrapped around his tall, gaunt form, and a white handkerchief tied over his head to prevent the passing breezes from blowing his thin, straggling gray hair about his features.

So intent was he on the contents of his book that he did not notice the approach of the cheerer of his solitude. Edgar came along the narrow path with a step quicker and more impatient than was his wont, and there was an expression on his fine, manly face which had something of mortification and anger, but more of regret and sorrow. He threw his satchel on the ground, and sat down at the hermit's feet, who laid aside his volume, on beholding him in that position, and asked him if he was fatigued or ill.

"No," said the youth, "but I shall be glad when I am gone away from here to the university."

"Ah!" returned the hermit, "it is as I knew it would be when I placed you at the seminary. Your desire for fame and honor has returned, and you long to go forth in the great world and mingle in its st[illegible]."

"No," said Edgar, "I would rather live and die within the walls of this hermitage, than ever go beyond them again; but I'm resolved I will not do the foolish thing. I'll go forth, and if my life is spared, show those who call me a foundling, and a wild cub of the woods, that I am something more than they suppose me to be."

"Who has dared apply such epithets to you, my boy?" exclaimed the hermit, his pale cheeks glowing with anger.

"Do you know Major Howard of 'Summer Home?'" asked Edgar.

"That do I," answered the hermit; "and did he call you by these names?"

"Yes," returned Edgar.

"*He* talk of foundlings!" said the hermit. "Why did you not slap him in the face, Edgar?"

"The words did not come directly from him to me," said the youth, wondering at his uncle's anger, which far exceeded his own.

"Ay, through a third person you obtained them? and that was"——

"His daughter, Florence Howard."

"Florence Howard!" repeated his uncle, "and what do you know of her?"

"I have been to school with her four or five months, and have assisted her in her Latin studies this summer," returned Edgar.

"And shall never behold her face again!" said the hermit, in a tone of angry vehemence, bringing his heavy sandalled foot down upon the wooden sill with a violence that made Edgar start from his

lounging posture on the turf, and gaze with amazement upon the fierce workings of a face he had never seen flushed by an angry emotion before. He feared his uncle had suddenly gone mad, and stood indeterminate what course to pursue, when the countenance before him changed, the eyes closed, and the hermit fell heavily on the green sward in front of his door. Edgar, in his alarm, lifted the prostrate form in his strong, young arms, and bore him to the low, rough couch, which was their nightly resting-place. Then, taking a bottle from a [illegible] shelf above the huge, black fire-place, he poured its contents in a cup, and bathed the temples of the deathly-looking face till the eyes opened with recognition, and the lips moved, though inaudibly.

He watched by the bed-side several hours, and at length the hermit rose suddenly to his feet, and bade Edgar retire. He obeyed, and closed his eyes, but not to sleep. Opening them after a while, he beheld his uncle sitting before the table engaged in writing. Again the lids closed, and he fell into a light drowse, during which Florence Howard flitted before him in countless variety of forms. When again he looked around he was alone. The long summer twilight had deepened into evening, and Edgar rose and lighted a lamp. On the table he discovered a small, folded billet, addressed to him. He sank on his knees, opened it, and read. Various were the expressions that flitted over his features as he did so. When he had finished he refolded it carefully, and, drawing a bunch of keys from his pocket, unlocked a small box which sat on the table, placed the letter within, then relocked it and returned the keys to his pocket.

Then he extinguished the lamp and sat down in the window-nook to his watch of the stars.

But his thoughts were different from what they once were when he gazed on their glistening faces.

His soul-pinions had kissed the earth, and become fouled by contact with a grosser element; and heavy with a weltering weight of woe, that they could not soar aloft and hover over the casements of angelic homes, to rest at last on the glory-bright hills of heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I only know their dream was vain,
  And that they woke to find it past,
And when by chance they met again,
  It was not as they parted last.
His was not faith that lightly dies;
  For truth and love as clearly shone
In the blue heaven of his soft eyes
  As the dark midnight of her own.
And therefore heaven alone can tell
  What are his living visions now,
But hers—the eye can read too well
  The language written on her brow."

PHEBE CAREY.

The yearly examination and exhibition of Cedar Hill Seminary was approaching, and teachers and pupils were busied with preparations in order to pass the ordeal creditably to themselves and to the institution.

Prominent among the list of performers stood the name of Edgar Lindenwood, often in juxtaposition with that of Florence Howard. Since the scene in the hermit's hut, Edgar, as commanded by his uncle, had studiously avoided Florence, and she, for a still longer period, had evinced a certain distance and reserve toward him. Edgar's knowledge of her father's dislike might be sufficient cause to part him from her, but it could by no means justify his growing intercourse with Edith Malcome.

As the time approached for the exhibition, Florence asked her father's permission to absent herself entirely and remain at home. Maj. Howard thought she had better attend, as she had been to school several terms; but she said she felt too languid to take part in the exercises, and thus obtained the excuse of her indulgent father.

Edgar's quick, impassioned nature regarded her absence as a direct insult to himself, for in all the parts assigned her, she would be brought on the stage in company with him, and frequently obliged to hold single converse. If this opinion needed further confirmation it was added, when she appeared at the Scholars' Levee, held on the evening of the exhibition, in elegant dress and dashing spirits, with Rufus Malcome for a partner.

They passed each other in the dance without a token of recognition. Edgar attached himself to Edith for the larger part of the evening. After the first two or three cotillons he did not care to join them; and Edith, being too delicate to bear the excitement, they roamed through the hall, conversing together of the events of the exhibition, or mingling among groups of the village people who had assembled by

invitation to partake in the festive scene.

"Ha, my little fairy!" whispered Mrs. Edson in the ear of Edith, as she was sauntering past on the arm of Lindenwood, unmindful of her friend's proximity; "are you so far skyward you can't see poor Louise? Introduce me to your princely gallant, an' it please you."

Edith turned and presented Edgar to Mrs. Edson, who instantly found them a place in the group around her.

"This scene brings vividly before me my happy school days," she remarked, tears welling up to her beautiful eyes, which she dashed hurriedly away, exclaiming, "but I must not begin to prose about myself when I was young, lest I drive you all away by my tedious recitals."

"Mr. Lindenwood," said she, turning to Edgar, "though we have never met before, your vivid personations on the stage to-day have caused you to seem more like an old friend than a comparative stranger."

Edgar expressed his pleasure that his poor performances had met her approbation, and also that she condescended to recognize him as a friend.

"What a graceful creature is Florence Howard!" continued Mrs. Edson, as the fair girl whirled past her in the dance. "Edith, your brother should consider himself most fortunate in securing the most brilliant lady in the room for a partner; no disparagement to your charms, my dear," she added, leaning over and bestowing a kiss on the soft cheek of the blushing girl. "You know what I think of you, darling. The spirit of beauty is everywhere, says the poet. She assumes the largest variety of types and forms, and, verily, she has given her most dangerous one to Florence Howard. She is the brilliant dahlia, the pride of the gay parterre; but my Edith is the modest daisy blooming in some sheltered nook. The stormy winds shall rend the one from its lofty stalk and scatter its wealth of purple leaves o'er the miry earth, while dews and sunbeams kiss the modest plant that blooms in the lowly vale. Is it not so, Mr. Lindenwood?" she asked, as, pausing, she encountered his gaze fixed earnestly on her face.

"I don't know," he said; "that is, I have not considered the subject. Edith, I think the party are retiring," he added, turning his eyes to several disjointed groups; "remain with Mrs. Edson a few moments and I will return to you."

As he entered the ladies' dressing room, he saw Florence standing alone by the window, in the very spot where they had often stood in the interim of recitations, and studied their lessons from the same book. He thought he would give the world to know she was thinking of those times now. Approaching softly he stood near her in silence a few moments.

"O, Florence!" said he, at length, in a low, deep tone, tremulous with intense feeling and tenderness. Was there not enough of passionate devotion breathed in that one word to convince her of his eternal, unchanging affection?

What poor, weak simpletons are we, to pine and languish for words, where looks and tones are infinitely more expressive! Some people affirm that "actions speak louder than words." But we can't say much in favor of those, because, as far as we know, people in love invariably act like fools.

Florence turned at Edgar's adjuration, and he saw, by the moonlight, two great tear-drops dimming her starry eyes. He was about to extend his hand when Rufus Malcome rushed into the room, calling her name. Changing his purpose, he said, in a light conventional tone, "Have you been happy to night?"

"O, very!" answered she, with a gay laugh, which echoed in his ear long after she had taken the arm of Rufus and tripped lightly away.

When Edgar returned to Edith, he found Col. Malcome in lively conversation with Mrs. Edson. Florence and Rufus had disappeared, and Edith signifying her wish to retire, he led her from the hall and escorted her home. He found Florence in Col. Malcome's parlor sitting on a sofa with Rufus at her side.

"Come in, Lindenwood," said he; "here's room for us all."

"Thank you," returned Edgar. "I have a long walk before me, and must not tarry."

"O, stay with us to night," said Rufus.

"We should be pleased to have you remain, if agreeable," remarked Edith, timidly.

"It would be very agreeable," said Edgar, politely, "but my absence would alarm my uncle."

"O, he wants to be off to his hermitage!" laughed Rufus, coarsely; "let him go. You will stay, won't you, Florence?"

"If Edith invites me," returned she.

"Well, I do," said Edith quickly.

"Then the point is settled," remarked Florence.

"Good-night to you all," said Edgar, moving hastily toward the door.

Scarce ten minutes had elapsed, after his departure, when Florence rose and said, "Now I am going."

"Why, you just promised to remain all night," said Rufus, in a tone of undisguised disappointment.

"No," said she; "I made no promise, and I am going."

"Then I'll go with you," returned Rufus, seizing his hat.

"No," said Col. Malcome, suddenly entering the apartment. "With Miss Howard's consent, I'll be her escort home to-night."

Florence said she should be honored by his company. So bidding good-night to Edith and Rufus, she took his proffered arm and descended to the street.

"How have you enjoyed the ball to-night?" inquired he, as they walked on together.

"Very well," answered she, briefly.

"This young Lindenwood, that burrows with the strange chap they call the 'Hermit of the Cedars;' you are acquainted with him, I believe."

"He has attended school at the seminary, since I commenced to go," answered Florence, as calmly as she was able.

"He has been paying Edith some attentions of late," continued the colonel, in a careless tone; "do you suppose he really cares for her?"

"I don't know," answered Florence; and her voice trembled in spite of her efforts to steady it.

"Of course you don't know," the colonel went on, still in that cold, indifferent tone; "I merely asked what you thought?"

"I never thought anything about it in my life," said Florence, in a choking voice.

"That's rather strange," returned he. "I have thought of it several times lately;—but here we are at your father's gate. Present my regards, and say I would be happy to receive a call from him whenever he is so disposed."

Florence bowed good-evening to her gallant, and hurried to her own apartment.

The night was warm. A waning moon lighted the eastern terrace, and, not feeling disposed to sleep, she stepped through a window that opened to the floor, and, leaning against a pillar, stood silently gazing over the gardens and grounds below.

She had not been standing long thus when she beheld the figure of a man moving slowly along the gravelled walks, pausing frequently and fixing an earnest gaze on the windows of the apartment occupied by her mother. She grew alarmed, and was about descending the stairs to arouse her father, when she heard the hall door open softly, and saw the figure of a woman stealing down the garden path. She recognized the dark form instantly as that of Hannah Doliver. The man met her and the two went into a green-house. After an hour the woman reappeared, and retraced her steps to the mansion, but the man she saw no more. Securing her windows, Florence retired, resolving to impart to her father a history of what she had seen.

When, she did so, he only laughed at her and said he supposed it was some enamored knight come to pay his devoirs to the fair lady of his love, and counselled her to say no more of the matter, as it would needlessly irritate Hannah to know her secret was discovered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The world hath used me well, and now at length
In peace and quietness I sit me down
To feed upon the fruits of my hard toils.
Ambition doth no more distract my breast,—
I've reached the height my spirit strove to gain;
Here will I rest, and watch life glide away."

It is quite time for us to call on Mrs. Salsify Mumbles again. We fear the good lady, who is rather sensitive on such points, has felt neglected ere this; but we hope not, and, as her mansion heaves in view, we are convinced that matters of more importance than visits from our humble selves, have engaged our old friend's attention.

The second story has actually gone up, and the piazza spreads its white palings along the sides of Mr. Salsify's dwelling. The pasteboard sign of "Mr. Theophilus Shaw, Boot & Shoe Maker," is no longer seen swinging from the bed-room window, but a new sign stretches its sublime length over the doors of Mr. Salsify's old grocery, announcing, in staring black and yellow, to the inhabitants of Wimbledon, that "Mumbles, Shaw & Co., wholesale dealers in pork, cheese, onions, dried apples, sausages, and verdigris, continue at the old stand, No. 9 Temple street, where they will entertain the trading public in a genteel and finished manner."

Thus it appears Mr. Salsify's high hopes are at length realized. Most fortunate man! He has "risen in his profession" to the topmost summit of his earthly ambition.

Happy will it be for him if he remains content with his present elevation, and goes not, like too many restless mortals, clambering to a higher point, only to fall back, on some adverse day, into the slough of ill-luck and despondency.

Mrs. Salsify sits in her parlor making caps for her thumb, at least we should judge so, from their surprisingly small dimensions; and Mary Madeline is nowhere to be seen. But Dilly Danforth is in the kitchen bending over a great wash-tub, pale and sunken-eyed as ever. Now that we look at this woman attentively, it strikes us she is wonderfully like that lank-visaged man, who dwells in the lonely forest hut, the "Hermit of the Cedars," as he is called. But then it may be only the resemblance which all the sons and daughters of affliction have in common. 'Tis not likely 'tis more than that. And gazing on Willie, who stands over the great arches, replenishing the fires, and at intervals poking the white heaps of linen beneath the fierce bubbling suds with a long wooden shovel, we fancy for a moment there's something about him like Edgar Lindenwood. Of course, he is not so large or so well-dressed; nevertheless, he is greatly improved since we last saw him; and there is something in the turn of the head, which is certainly finely shaped, though placed on the shoulders of a beggar boy; and something in the set of the rusty cloth cap over the bright, sunny curls, that reminds us of the tall, graceful lad we used to see winding his way over the hills to the large, white seminary. But then, a great many boys have pretty-formed heads, and bright, curly hair; and, should we attempt, no doubt we could find a large number with more points of resemblance than we have been able to make out between Edgar Lindenwood and Willie Danforth. We are full of conceits. Sometimes Edith Malcome is like Florence Howard, and Rufus' glistening, coal-black hair reminds us of Hannah Doliver, while the handsome colonel has a look we cannot fathom, and from which we turn with a creeping shudder.

'Tis quite astonishing what strange fancies possess people at times.

While we have been indulging in ours, Mrs. Mumbles has put away those impossible caps, and come into the kitchen to see how matters and things are progressing, and just as she begins to tell Aunt Dilly, that she "wants her to get through washing in time to scour down the pantry shelves and scrub the oil-cloth on the dining-room floor," in runs Miss Susan Pimble, and says, "Mamma wants Mrs. Danforth to come and do a little light work for her, to-morrow; for she has got to go to Goslin Flats to attend a great mass convention, and can't stop to do it herself. She will pay Aunt Dilly well, if she will oblige her. Garrison has been sick—Peggy Nonce is away on a visit to her son, who has recently been married, and mamma's public duties and household affairs have proved too heavy for her shoulders," etc., etc.

Susy ran through a long rigmarole, with a volubility worthy the daughter of a fluent public speaker.

We hasten away lest our mania for discovering resemblances should detect one between Mrs. Salsify Mumbles and pert Susy Pimble.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Ay, little do those features wear
The shade of sin,—the soil of care;
The hair is parted o'er a brow
Open and white as mountain-snow,
And clusters there in many a ring,
With sun and summer glistening.
Yet something on that brow has wrought
A moment's cast of angry thought."

In an arbor of Major Howard's elegant garden, the moonlight shimmering its rich, clustering vines with silver, and the night-breezes murmuring in low, musical voices among the dark green leaves, sat a man of commanding aspect and handsome features. Light auburn hair, closely trimmed, lay in short, thick masses of wavy curls around his high, pale brow. His mien and manner indicated the well-bred gentleman. A small, dark figure crouched beside him. It was Hannah Doliver.

"We meet again at last," said the man, after a considerable silence. His voice was low and deep, and the woman trembled as she answered,

"I marvel how you have discovered me."

"Few things escape my knowledge which it subserves my interest to know," returned he. "What in the name of all the fiends possessed you to enter the service of Tom Howard?"

"A lone, forsaken female finds shelter where she can," whined the woman.

"O, don't babble in that hypocritical tone!" said the man. "I did not leave you so destitute; and I took the child off your hands that no incumbrance might fetter your footsteps."

"Fiend!" exclaimed Hannah. "You shall not talk to me thus. What have you done with my boy?"

"I have done well by him," answered the man. "He has been reared as a gentleman. No stain has ever been suspected on his birth."

"Where is he?" asked she, in a voice trembling with emotion.

"He is near you. I left him but an hour ago, well and happy."

"Near me!" said the woman almost wildly. "It cannot be—you lie to me, Herbert!"

"By the heavens above, I utter the solemn truth!" returned the man.

"What name does he bear?"

The man bowed his tall form and whispered in her ear. She sprang to her feet, paced hurriedly to and fro down the little alcove, and at length threw herself on her knees and exclaimed,

"O, let me see him! Can you be so cruel as to withhold the child from his mother's right?"

"It rests with you to decide whether you see him or no," said the man, wholly unmoved by her distress and emotion. Swear to keep my presence here a secret, and do my bidding in all things, and you may see your boy when you choose."

"I swear!" answered the woman, frantically.

"Tell me first why you are here serving Tom Howard's wife?"

"I am not serving his wife."

"Who then?"

"His sister."

"His sister!" exclaimed the man, now evincing strong emotion. "And does she live?"

"She lives; and lives to palm herself off on the world as the wife of her own brother."

"What iniquity!" said the man. The woman burst into a low laugh.

"Why do you laugh?" demanded he, fiercely.

"Because iniquity comes so prettily from your lips," replied she in a sarcastic tone.

"Take care, woman!" said he. "Remember you are in my power."

The little dark figure trembled and was silent.

"I wonder she would receive you again into her service," remarked the man at length in an absorbed tone.

"Fear is a strong motive. I threatened to reveal her deception to the public."

"Ay, you have some skill and tact, I find!" said he, rising. "Now remember, when I wish to see your mistress, you are to gain me an entrance to her."

"What do you want to see her for?" asked the woman. "I believe a sight of you would throw her into fits."

"It is none of your business why I wish to see her," said he. "But mind, you do not look on your boy unless you implicitly obey all my commands." Here he stooped and whispered again in her ear.

"I hate the girl!" she said, after he had ceased speaking and stood gazing down on her, twirling his velvet cap carelessly in his hand.

"But you would like to see your boy so well married," remarked he.

"'Twould be a sweet revenge," she said in a chuckling tone. He turned to depart.

"Herbert!" she called, softly.

"What do you wish?" said he, pausing.

The woman hesitated, and at length said, "The girl—her child I mean; is she——?"

Again the man whispered in her ear. "None can say," he added aloud, "that I have not been a kind parent to my children."

"I'm glad there's some virtue in you," said the woman, turning toward the quiet mansion that stood in almost palace-like magnificence in the midst of the beautiful grounds that surrounded it on all sides. The man lingered behind, and finally left the garden by a path lying in an opposite direction from the one by which he had entered. He bent his steps rapidly in the direction of the river. Either the warmth of the night or his own emotions oppressed him; for, as he gained its banks, he slackened his pace, drew off his cap, and loosened his collar. With arms folded across his chest, he moved slowly along, like one intensely absorbed in some dark and intricate train of thought. Sometimes he muttered to himself, and made strange gestures, or tossed his head with a confident air, as though he saw onward to the success of some plan he concerted. So occupied was he in his own thoughts, that he never saw the tall, gaunt figure of a man, crouching in the shadow of a small linden tree, that stood on the bank of the river, nearly opposite Dilly Danforth's wretched abode, although he passed in so close contact as to brush against the little bundle of sticks the unknown held in his hand, while his deep, sunken eyes glared on the passer till they seemed nearly starting from their sockets.

"'Tis he!" murmured the gazer, when the abstracted one was beyond the sound of his voice. "I must see where he goes;" and, stealing noiselessly to the door of Dilly's abode, he placed the bundle of sticks on her sill, and slowly followed the receding figure.

CHAPTER XX.

"And the clear depths of her dark eye
Were bright with troubled brilliancy,
Yet the lips drooped as with the tear,
Which might oppress, but not appear.
Her curls, with all their sunny glow,
Were braided o'er an aching brow;
But well she knew how many sought
To gaze upon her secret thought;—
And love is proud—she might not brook
That others on her heart should look."

One pleasant autumn evening a social group were assembled in Mr. Leroy Edson's tasteful parlor. A tall, argand lamp on a marble table, shed its mild, ethereal light over the rich furniture. A bright fire glowed in the marble grate, and in the genial atmosphere of her own creating, young Mrs. Edson moved, a thing of grace and beauty. She wore a robe of emerald Genoa velvet, with an open bodice, laced over a chemisette of fine-wrought Mechlin lace. Broad, drooping Pagoda sleeves revealed her white arms encircled by quaintly-fashioned jet bracelets. Her guests were not numerous, but select. Col. Malcome and his family were most prominent among the number. Florence Howard was there, attended by Rufus, and Edgar Lindenwood in company with Edith. Jenny Andrews, with no less a personage than our quondam, roguish friend, Dick Giblet, shop-boy of Mr. Salsify Mumbles' grocery; now Mr. Richard Giblet, of the firm of Edson, Giblet & Co. A very respectable appearance Dick made, too, for he was a quick, sprightly young fellow, albeit somewhat over-fond of a mischievous joke; but this he would outgrow in time probably. Amy Seaton, sedate and modest as ever, with laughing Charlie for her beau, and several others, among whom we might mention Miss Martha Pinkerton, made up the little party.

Edith looked fragile and sweet as ever in a dress of azure thibet cloth, her light hair hanging in clusters of wavy curls over her small shoulders. She leaned gracefully on the arm of Lindenwood, and looked in his face with a gentle, artless expression of countenance.

Florence, in her crimson cashmere, and dark, massy ringlets, looked a shade paler than when we last saw her, but more queenly and brilliant, if possible.

There were many points of resemblance between her and Louise Edson. Both were endowed with superior mental and intellectual powers; both accomplished and beautiful; but there was at times a gentleness in Florence's manner, a dreamy light in the far depths of her large, hazel eyes, that indicated less firmness and strength of character, with tenderer susceptibilities. Perhaps life's trials would sooner unnerve her spirit.

Mr. Edson was not present, nor was it necessary he should be, to enhance the enjoyment of his gifted wife. He was, in fact, very much the same sort of an appendage in his elegant mansion that Mrs. Pimble averred her husband to be in his,—"a mere crank to keep the machine in motion." Not that Mrs. Edson monopolized her husband's sphere, as did the masculine Mrs. Pimble. By no means. She appeared to

give her lord full sway and sceptre in his own household, and the good-natured man thought never husband had so obedient, condescending partner as blessed his bosom. Consummate actress, to conquer where she seemed to yield, and use her advantages so skilfully that the vanquished felt himself the victor. Mrs. Pimble stormed and blustered, but she exercised not half the power over her household that Louise Edson swayed by a soft word or placid smile.

But we forget our party, which waxes merry as the evening progresses, warmed by the genial influences of social intercourse. Col. Malcome and Mrs. Edson discussed the merits of different authors; Lindenwood modestly joined them, and Florence dropped an occasional word. Edith sat silent. Rufus yawned, and at length commenced a game of forfeits with Dick Giblet, over which he soon grew so boisterous, that his father reproved him sternly for a violation of the rules of politeness. The youth's brow flushed with sudden anger, and for the remainder of the evening he sat apart from the company. When the party dispersed he did not come forward to claim Florence, and she fell a second time to the care of Col. Malcome. Edgar escorted Edith, and the couples went different ways to reach their destinations. Edgar took the street by the river, and Col. M. that leading past the seminary. The latter had much the longer walk; but Edith, fragile and delicate, complained of fatigue, ere they had proceeded far, and Edgar proposed she should rest awhile on the trunk of a fallen tree by the river's brink. She sat down, and he, after a few moments, assumed a seat at her side. Her veil was thrown off, and her small silk hat had fallen back from her head, revealing in full her girlish features and wavy, auburn curls. Edgar was gazing on the beautiful face, when suddenly a footstep met his ear, and, turning, he beheld his uncle, the hermit, standing before them, staring wildly upon Edith; who, as soon as she discovered the strange-looking being, uttered a faint scream and sunk on Edgar's bosom. "Don't be alarmed," said he, whispering in her ear; "this man will not harm you,"—and then lifting his head to address his uncle, and inquire what brought him there, so far from home at that late hour, he found the hermit had disappeared.

Calming Edith's alarm as well as he was able, he escorted her home, and then set off for the hut in the forest, pondering, as he went, upon the event of the evening, and wondering what could be the cause of the fierce and ireful expression which disfigured the usually placid face of his uncle, as he gazed so fixedly on Edith. It reminded him of the violent passion evinced in regard to his intercourse with Florence Howard. He knew the recluse had experienced a severe disappointment in early life, and concluded this had tended to sour his mind toward the whole female race, and caused him to look with angry distrust upon the most gentle and lovely of the sex. In no other way could he account for the repugnance manifested by his uncle toward his friendship and acquaintance with both Florence and Edith. Thus ruminating, he reached the forest habitation to find all dark and gloomy. The hermit had not returned to his hut.

Col. Malcome lingered a moment as he escorted Florence to the door of her father's mansion, and, as he did so, Major Howard stepped forth, rather suddenly. Florence presented him to the colonel, and the two gentlemen shook hands cordially.

"I have frequently desired to call on you and form your acquaintance, Col. Malcome," said the major; "but frequent absences from home, and the delicate health of my wife, have prevented me hitherto."

A slight, cynical smile flitted over the colonel's face at these latter words, but it was not observed in the obscure light of evening, and he answered, politely, that he had often desired an acquaintance with the major, and hoped that now their children had established a friendly intercourse, the parents might soon follow the example.

Major Howard expressed a wish that it might be so, and Col. Malcome, bowing gracefully, retired.

Florence, after inquiring for her mother, and learning she was comfortable as usual, ascended to her room, made fast the door, and drew forth her journal, which was the dearest companion of her lonely hours, the receptacle of her most treasured thoughts, and safety-valve for all unuttered griefs and hidden sorrows.

She had scarcely touched her gold-tipped pen to the virgin page, when a soft knock on the door displaced her train of thought.

"Father?" said she putting her lips close to the lock, for he was the only one from whom she could expect a call at that late hour. There was no answer. She hesitated a moment, and then opened the door. Hannah Doliver slid in.

Florence stood still, gazing with astonishment on the little wiry form, as it wormed around the apartment, touching the books, and giving sudden pulls at the curtains and bed drapery. She had never seen Hannah over her threshold before, and wondered what a visit from her might import.

"I came to see if you wanted anything, Miss Florence," said the woman, at length, fixing her twinkling eyes on the fair girl's face.

"No!" said Florence, in an impatient tone; "what should I want at this hour, but to be alone?"

"O, I'm not going to intrude upon you but a moment," returned Hannah. "I thought, as you had been out late and 'twas rather cold, you might want a fire lighted in your room, or a cup of warm tea, or something; so I ran up to see." Florence grew more and more astonished. "Have you enjoyed yourself this evening?" asked Hannah.

"Yes," answered Florence briefly.

"I am glad to hear it," returned the woman. "This Col. Mer—— what is his name?" she paused and asked abruptly.

"Malcome," said Florence.

"O, yes! I'm bad at remembering strange names. Well, this Col. Malcome has got some fine children, has he not?"

"Yes," returned Florence; "his daughter is a beautiful girl."

"And his son?"

"Is a loggerhead."

At these words, a furious anger, flashed over Hannah's face, and, glaring fiercely on Florence for a moment, she darted from the room and slammed the door behind her. The young girl turned the key, saying, "I'm glad to be rid of her hateful presence. What possessed her to come here is more than I can tell." And in the surprise this unusual visit occasioned, she retired and forgot her journal.

CHAPTER XXI.

"A mien that neither seeks nor shuns
  The homage scattered in her way;
A love that hath few favored ones,
  And yet for all can work and pray.
A smile wherein each mortal reads
The very sympathy he needs;
  An eye like to a mystic book,
Of lays that bard or prophet sings,
  Which keepeth for the holiest look
Of holiest love, its deepest things."

What an impetus was given to the cause of Woman's Rights, when the first Bloomer stepped upon the stage! With what tremendous huzzas of triumph and victory did the whole assaulting sisterhood mount the breaches thus made in the great bulwarks of man's tyranny and despotism; infuriately calling on every woman throughout the length and breadth of the nation to rise in the might of her slumbering strength, make her petticoats into pillars of defiance, and hurl them on the weak, unguarded outposts, till the whole tottering fabric should go down with a crash to rise no more.

Mrs. Pimble and her coadjutors commenced rolling the ball of reform with increased velocity. Mass meetings, of the most boisterous and denunciatory character, were held through the community. It appeared a war was commenced which threatened to cease only with the extermination of the masculine portion of Wimbledon. Mr. Salsify Mumbles, though as brave as most men in common encounters, was afraid to step outside his door lest his unmentionables should be seized by some of the new-fledged manhood, and a petticoat tied to his coat-tail. Even the green damask curtains and cushion-coverings that adorned the high, old-fashioned pulpit of the village church, were voted as ostentatious and calculated to foster luxurious idleness in the pastor; and a committee appointed and authorized to tear them from their places and sew them into bloomers for the comfort of the lady-lecturers, whose callings exposed them to the most inclement weathers. And so green-legged Philanthropy stalked through Wimbledon; but it never laid an armful of wood on the sill of Dilly Danforth's humble abode, though rough blew the storms of the inclement winter; nor did it put a cap over Master Willie's curly locks, or sew a charitable patch on the elbow of his ragged jacket. Because it was philanthropy in the wider sense, which sought to relieve in the sum of thousands—not of units.

Mrs. Dr. Simcoe figured not so largely among the sisterhood of reformers as she would have done had she not been encumbered by "Simcoe's children," who were two of the most ill-natured, uncompromising offshoots of barbarism that ever tormented a meek, unoffending woman.

Mrs. Lawson thought some reformer should arise to fill the place so nearly vacated by the persecuted lady, and fixed upon Mrs. Edson as her successor.

So, on a day, Mrs. Lawson, in green damask bloomers, black overcoat, and deer-skin gloves, appeared on the steps of Mrs. Edson's mansion, and gave a herculean pull at the door-bell which brought the master of the house instanter, with staring eyes, to answer the pealing summons. "I believe Mrs. Edson resides here," said the lady-reformist, looking loftily upon the man, who was evidently very much struck with his visitor's personal equipments.

"She does," answered he, at length.

"I have come to hold a conversation with her," said Mrs. Lawson, stamping the snow from her boots, and proceeding toward the open door of the sitting-room.

Louise rose as she entered, glanced at the strange figure, then at her husband, and then back to the figure again, with an amusing expression of wonder on her beautiful features.

"I do not know this—this person's name," said he, at length.

"Lawson—Mrs. Portentia Lawson!" said the lady-reformist, laying her walking-stick on the piano, and unbuttoning her over-coat. "I am actively engaged in the benevolent enterprises of the day, and have come to obtain your aid and coöperation, madam." Here she made a low inclination toward Louise.

"My wife does not meddle in such matters," said Mr. Edson, simply. "I pay a stated sum yearly toward the support of the gospel, and give as much as people in general to the missionary and Bible societies."

"It is nothing to me," said Mrs. Lawson, turning sharply upon the speaker, "what you give to support the gospel, or to endow Bible societies. I have nothing to do with such milk-sop organizations, or the donkeys that draggle at their heels. Other and loftier objects engage my attention and claim my powers. My business is not with you, sir! It is with the woman who condescends to acknowledge you as her husband!" Having delivered herself of the preceding harangue, Mrs. Lawson turned her attention to Louise, and vouchsafed no further notice of Mr. Edson, who soon slunk out of the room and returned to his counter.

"I suppose you are not wholly ignorant of the reform the more talented of your sex are making efforts to effect in the social condition of Wimbledon," remarked the nimble-tongued Mrs. Lawson to her fair auditor, who was sitting in a low rocking-chair before the glowing grate, with her tiny, slippered-feet poised on the fender.

"Yes!" answered she, purposely ignorant. "I am confined at home by my duties as a wife, and know very little of what is passing around me."

Mrs. Lawson proceeded to give a detailed account of the labors of a small band of enfranchised females for the liberation of their enslaved and suffering sisters, whose weakness and timidity had hitherto prevented their rising and throwing off the yoke of the oppressor, man. So eloquently did she rehearse her tale, so still and patient was her listener, that she felt confident of gaining a new coädjutor in the ranks of female reform. As she finished her recital, she directed a sharp, piercing glance toward Mrs. Edson, whose calm, clear eyes and placid face evinced no disturbing emotions.

"Will you join our ranks?" demanded Mrs. Lawson, "and aid us in rending the fetters forged on woman's wrists by the tyrant man?"

"No!" said Louise, in a quiet but determined tone.

"Then you do not believe in Woman's Rights!" said Mrs. Lawson, half her enthusiasm falling off and leaving her coarse features blank and bare.

"O, yes!" answered Louise, her face brightening as she spoke, "I believe in Woman's Rights with all my heart and soul. Yet not in crowds, and camps, and forums, where swarming multitudes are jostling to and fro; and brawls, and shouts, and loud harangues make tumult in the air, do I believe she finds her proper sphere. Not in halls of legislation, or among empannelled juries, or yet within the sacred desk, would I behold the form of woman. No, no! what sight so revolting to a refined soul—whether it dwell in male or female bosom—as unsexed womanhood, booted and spurred, parading over rostrums, brawling in debates, and spouting sophistical sentiments on subjects of whose true signification they are as ignorant as an idiot of the laughter and derision his babble excites? O, 'tis woman's thrice-beautiful right to relieve and succor the care-worn and distressed, wherever on this goodly earth they fall within the circle of her sphere and influence! To give sweet, unobtrusive charities to the children of want! By gentle words of sympathy and hope, to raise and cheer the drooping souls of her erring sisters; and in dim-lighted rooms, where restless disease tosses on couches of pain and agony, 'tis hers to move with noiseless tread, to smooth the pillow, bathe the brow, and give the healing potion! Say not her sphere is limited, her influence small, her mission low, or her rights unacknowledged."

Louise rose as she proceeded, her face glowing with the sentiments she uttered. Mrs. Lawson stood before her, moving backwards gradually, till she finally receded through the open door, took to the street, and was seen no more in the home of Louise Edson.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Babies are very well when they don't cry,
But when they do, I choose not to be nigh;
For of all awful sounds that can appal,
The most terrific is a baby's squall;
I'd rather hear a panther's hungry howl,
Or e'en a tiger's deep, ferocious growl,
Than sit in chimney-corner 'neath my hat,

We thought we would go to Mrs. Stanhope's this cold, starry, winter evening, but on passing the parlor windows of Dea. Allen's cottage, the curtains being yet undrawn, we distinguished, by the blazing firelight within, the form of that good lady, and also that of her maiden sister, Miss Martha Pinkerton, both sitting at the family table, drinking tea with the good deacon and his amiable spouse. Amy Seaton and Charlie were there, too, but we missed the laughing face of Jenny Andrews, and Mrs. Allen said she was gone on a sleighing excursion, which a number of the young people of Wimbledon were enjoying, this fine, bright evening.

"I want to know," asked Miss Pinkerton, sipping her bohea, "if you believe there's any truth in the report of Florence Howard's engagement with Rufus Malcome, Mrs. Allen?"

"Well, I never thought much about the matter," returned that mild-visaged lady. "The young people's affairs don't interest me particularly. The two families are quite intimate. We have the Malcomes at our next door, and can't well avoid seeing a large number of their visitors, as they come and go."

"Col. Malcome is a very gentlemanly man," remarked Mrs. Stanhope, as they were rising from the table.

"Yes," said the good deacon, wiping his face with a yellow silk handkerchief; "but sometimes I fear he is not the Christian he should be. He never goes to church, and every Sunday that wicked-looking woman of Major Howard's is there the whole day, racketing about with Rufus and the servants. I don't think a peaceable, pious man would counsel such doings, for my part."

"That Hannah Doliver at Col. Malcome's every Sabbath?" said Miss Pinkerton, opening wide her large, light eyes; "I don't see what she does there; really, the impudence of some people is astonishing. 'Tis likely she wants to see all she can and gossip about the colonel's affairs."

Nobody replied to this pert speech of Miss Martha's, and Mrs. Stanhope resumed the conversation by giving a brief account of Mrs. Lawson's discomfiting attempt to convert Mrs. Louise Edson into a reformer; she having received an amusing description of the scene from Louise's own lips. This was exciting considerable merriment among the group, when there came a rap on the door, and Mrs. Salsify Mumbles entered with her daughter, Mary Madeline; the latter carrying a bundle in her arms. Before the salutations were fairly over, said bundle began to squeal, and on removing several yellow flannel blankets, a baby was discovered of nearly the same hue as the shawls which had enveloped it.

And the baby became the toast on all sides; as what baby does not, when making its debut among strangers? Mrs. Allen said it was the image of its grandma, whereupon Mrs. Salsify laughed and looked supremely silly. The deacon patted its back and said, "Poor little innocent! what a world of sin and misery it has come into!"

Mrs. Stanhope said it appeared very strong of its age, and Miss Pinkerton gave it a hasty, expressive glance, which spoke *her* opinion more eloquently than words could have done.

Amy and Charlie approached in their turn, and, gazing on it, exclaimed, innocently,

"What a *funny thing*!"

Verily, there was more truth than fiction in these words. It certainly *was* a funny thing. On the crown of its long, bare, peaked head, stuck one of the little, furbelowed caps we once saw Mrs. Salsify engaged in making, which was tied down over its flapping ears with orange-colored ribbon. A receding forehead, little specs of eyes, a turned-up nose, and great blubber lips, adown whose corners flowed eternally two miniature cataracts. O, what a face! Surely, nobody but a grandmother would be pleased to have it said to resemble theirs. 'Twas such a scowling, uncomfortable-looking baby, and had such a shrill, piercing squeal for a cry; for all the world like a miniature porker. Mary Madeline tossed it up and down in her arms, trotted it on her knee, but still it squealed, and Mrs. Salsify said it was squealing for its father; it always did so when it was carried away from him, and they should have to take it home. So they bundled off, and then Miss Martha spoke. "It was strange people would carry their squalling brats into their neighbors' houses to annoy them."

"Children are usually more trouble among strangers than at home," Mrs. Allen remarked.

Then Charlie Seaton said, "Willie Danforth told him it was always squealing when he passed Mr. Salsify's, which was several times a day, on his way to and from the seminary; and he thought they kept a pig in their parlor, till one day he saw the baby's face at the window, and discovered the sounds proceeded from its noisy throat."

"How happens it that Willie Danforth goes to school at the seminary, when his mother is so poor?" asked Miss Pinkerton.

"Willie says his mother found a paper on her door-sill one morning," answered Charlie, "and on opening it several bank-notes fell out. On the paper was written, 'Use these for William's tuition at the seminary.' So he is going to school till the money is spent."

"Well, I declare," said Miss Martha, "that was a strange incident. Does Mrs. Danforth know who left

the money?"

"She thinks it was the same one who leaves little bundles of sticks at her door, every now and then," answered Charlie.

"Well, who is that?" inquired Miss P.

"O, she don't know," returned the lad.

"I am glad some kind soul remembers the poor widow," said Mrs. Allen; "for I have often feared many of us were too neglectful of the lone woman."

"You know, wife," said the deacon, "what sad reports we heard of her hypocrisy; how she assumed an appearance of extreme poverty to create sympathy and wheedle people into deeds of false benevolence. I do not think such sinfulness should be countenanced."

"I know such reports were spread abroad concerning her," remarked Mrs. Stanhope; "but I never could trace them to any other source than that ranting, blustering Mrs. Pimble."

"What! that brawling, fanatical, crazy-pated, man-woman?" exclaimed the deacon, vehemently; "pray, don't mention her. The wrath of God will fall upon her and all the guilty brood who have desecrated His sanctuary, by tearing down its curtains and converting them into garments to serve Satan in." The excitable deacon was waxing warm, when his wife gave him a conjugal nudge, and he held his peace.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"From the hour by him enchanted,
  From the moment when we met;
Henceforth by one image haunted,
  Life may never more forget.
All my nature changed—his being
  Seemed the only source of mine.
Fond heart, hadst thou no foreseeing
  Thy sad future to divine?"

Florence Howard sat in a deep-cushioned fauteuil, beside a marble table which graced the centre of the elegant apartment she called her own. A loose robe, of India cashmere, in superb colors, with a lining of the softest, rose-colored velvet, was folded carelessly about her graceful form. One white hand toyed with the luxuriant chestnut curls, that hung in beautiful profusion over her shoulders; the other rested lightly on the cushioned arm of the chair. A quantity of rich writing materials were spread out on the table before her; but she glanced towards them listlessly, and at length bowed her queenly head between her hands, and sat a long time still and silent, as if absorbed in reverie. Ever and anon her little foot tapped impatiently the soft carpet beneath it, as though some harassing, unpleasant vision disturbed her brain. The clear, ringing chimes of the college clock finally aroused her to consciousness.

Rising, she drew aside the heavy folds of the damask curtain, and gazed for a moment forth on the sleeping earth. The stars were bright, and a slender crescent rim hung just above the dark cedar forest that swept and swayed to the northward. Florence dropped the curtain, and, returning to the table, opened a large morocco-bound volume, which revealed a virgin page. Twirling the silver top from a carved, mosaic inkstand, she dipped the golden tips of a pearl-handled pen in its ebon contents, and holding it between her small, taper fingers, rested her arm a few moments on the stand, as if waiting for her thoughts to form and arrange themselves ere she gave them expression. Suddenly the pen dashed off, and line after line of graceful characters grew on the pure, white page till it was completely filled.

"I have looked out on the midnight," she wrote, "with all its countless diamonds blazing on its brow; and far on the verge of the northern horizon hung the pale disc of the young crescent moon hurrying to obscure itself behind the dark, gloomy forest,—like as my hopes fail when I turn my eyes toward those cedar-tops. O, earth, how soon thy children learn the lesson of sorrow and distrust! But where is my old pen taking me this evening? This journal grows a sad, ghostly thing, o'ersplashed with tears, and wo-fraught to the edges.

"To turn the subject: What have I done to-day? Moped dismally till evening, and then muffled myself in furs; sat down among cushions and buffalo robes in the omnibus-sleigh, beside ——, shall I write it? yes! beside Rufus Malcome, and dashed away over the snow-clad earth to the music of merry bells and merrier voices around me.

"How finely Jenny Andrews and Richard Giblet enjoyed themselves! I understood their happiness well. Mrs. Edson was not quite so buoyant with spirits as usual; but she conversed with Rufus in her charming style. I was quite indignant to hear so much eloquence and refinement wasted on a churl like

him, and just malicious enough to think the fair speaker would have preferred to say her pretty things in the ear of one who could have better appreciated their worth and beauty, namely, Col. Malcome. He is really a splendid man, though I hardly relish the power he seems to exercise over father, who is so infatuated with him I believe he would scarcely be able to refuse any request he might choose to make. I wonder so talented a father should own a dolt like Rufus for a son. Silly-pated fellow! he has made love to me several times. I say *made* it, and truthfully; for no such simpleton as he could ever actually *feel* it in their bosoms. But then, no doubt, he thinks he is in love,—desperately so. I have no pity for him; nothing but contempt, and yet, should he propose for me to my father, I fear the result would be his acceptance. He has wealth and position, and I know father has a suspicion that I have yet a lingering recollection of the hermit's boy, as he calls Edgar. O, name of all others! Have I dared write it in full on these pages? I must draw an obscuring line over it. There! Now,

'One last, long sigh to hope and love,
Then back to busy life again.'"

While Florence was occupied with her journal in the room above, Col. Malcome sat with her father in the parlor below, and that which she had feared might some time come to pass had actually occurred; and when she nestled down on her soft pillow and sank to sleep, if her slumbers were not tranquil and dreamless, they were sweeter than any she might know for many a weary night to come; for she slept in blissful ignorance that she was the affianced bride of Rufus Malcome. Early on the following morning her father imparted to her the dismal intelligence.

"I have accepted him," said Major Howard, "on the conditions that the engagement shall remain a secret between the families, and the union not be consummated for at least one year, as you are both young. Col. Malcome will give his son fifty thousand dollars on his marriage, and also a splendid situation wherever he chooses to reside."

He ceased, and Florence remained silent and abstracted.

"This will be a match suitable for my daughter," said the fond father, approaching and laying his hand affectionately on her bowed head. "Does she not agree with me?"

Florence lifted her face; the light seemed suddenly to have gone out of her eyes and left them in utter darkness. No tinge of color glowed on her features, which worked with painful and scarcely suppressed emotion. The father started back on beholding her. "My child!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"Leave me alone, father, I entreat of you!" she said.

"Not till you tell me what is distressing you so," said he, chafing her cold hands in his. "Is this engagement so repulsive, so averse to your feelings, as to cause this appearance of agony and distress?"

But she only said, "Leave me, dear father, I entreat you, for a while! I have a sudden illness. By and by I will speak to you."

Awed by her tone and manner, the fond father obeyed. An hour passed by, during which the grief-stricken girl never moved, when the door opened, and Hannah Doliver entered. She glowered on Florence with an expression of hate and gratified revenge, which changed to one of fawning fondness when the pale, tear-stained face was turned toward her. "Pray, don't sit here in the cold all day!" said she. "Your mother desires you to come to her."

Florence wrapped her rich dressing-gown around her, stole down the stairs and entered the apartment of the invalid, who reached her wasted arm from the bed as she approached, and clasped it round the slender, graceful waist. The young girl bowed her head on the pillow, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"He held a letter in his withered hand
Which brought good tidings of the absent one.
O, what soul-cheering things are letters, when
They come fresh from the hand of one we love,
All brimming o'er with kindly-uttered words!"

The wailing winds swept onward with low and piteous sound, while the "Hermit of the Cedars" sat beneath his humble roof, beside a rough table, and, by the light of a tallow candle, pored over a closely-written page. In the recess of the small window, a bright-haired boy was sitting, very like the dreamy Edgar who sat there in summers and seasons passed by, and watched the stars gleaming, like showers of diamonds, through the interlacing forest-boughs. But it was not Edgar, for he was far away, storing his mind from the mines of ancient lore.

It was our little friend, Willie Danforth, the washerwoman's boy, for whom the hermit had taken a large fancy since Edgar left him, and often coaxed him from his mother to pass a few nights at the hut in the forest. Willie, as we see him now, in the place where we were wont to behold Edgar, is certainly wonderfully like him; and so thought Florence Howard, when she saw the tall, graceful youth, in the same morocco cap and blue frock coat Edgar used to wear, wending his way past her father's mansion to the seminary on the hill. She sought to learn his name; and some person, not very well informed, said 'twas William Greyson, another foundling of that strange hermit's.

But we wander from the lonely man, who still pores over the sheet he holds in his attenuated fingers. It is a letter from Edgar Lindenwood.

"Dear, dear uncle," it runs, "gladly I turn from musty tomes of olden time lore, to give to you the star-lit midnight hour. Fancy, on airy pinions, flits away over mountain-top and valley, and rests upon that long arm of the tall linden, that stretches close to your lowly window, and gazes through the narrow panes on your dear form, bending over some treasured volume, or sitting, with bowed head, before a blazing fire, lost in reveries of thought and contemplation. You express a fear that I may have deemed you arbitrary and severe in the control sometimes exercised over my humors and inclinations. Your fear is groundless, uncle. Though some of your commands may have cost me a struggle ere I could unmurmuringly obey, I have too high an estimate of your judgment and discrimination to rebel against an authority I feel is grounded in reason, and only exercised for my benefit and welfare in future life.

"I remember a tale, my mother oft breathed in my infantine ears, of a bright star that once skirted the literary horizon, and ere long darkly disappeared; of a lofty, sensitive nature, that met a staggering blow, and reeled to earth, no more to soar aloft. And, though I have never known the details of that early disappointment, I regard, with overflowing reverence, sympathy, and devotional affection, the suffering, uncomplaining heart that struggles silently on, with its wreck of youthful hopes and aspirations.

"Shall I tell you, uncle, my university life promises to be a brief one? You will think it augurs badly for the erudition of the faculty of this institution, when I inform you that they have placed me among the senior class, which will graduate in the coming spring. Then I propose to take a brief tour of travel, and amuse myself by sketching from the beautiful scenery of this country. I find the passion for art increases with my years. Once I wished to be a poet, but now the painter's pencil yields me most delight.

"Ere long I hope to return to that home among the Cedars, and sit down to quiet evenings by my dear uncle's side, with no sound in our ears save the eternal roar of the mighty forest winds.

"Far from experiencing a jealous pang, I rejoice to learn you have found an object of interest in the youth you have taken under your care. May he prove a grateful companion to your solitude, is the sincere wish of, Yours, most truly, EDGAR."

Such were the contents of the letter which the hermit perused several times ere he folded it, and turned his attention to the boy, who was still sitting by the small window, gazing forth into the windy night.

"William," said he—and the lad approached.

Something seemed trembling on the thin lips of the recluse which he hesitated to reveal. At length, as if suddenly changing his purpose, he said: "Do you think your mother is comfortable, to-night, my boy?"

"O, yes, sir!" answered Willie, "the large bundle of sticks you left at her door yesterday evening will keep her warm for several days."

"I hope they may," returned the hermit; "'tis a sad thing to be poor, Willie, but 'tis a sadder thing to be wicked."

"You do not think my mother is wicked, do you?" asked the boy, turning his blue eyes quickly on the hermit's countenance.

"Why do you ask?" said he, returning Willie's startled glance with a grave smile.

"Because I knew Mr. Pimble's folks said harsh things of her, and I didn't know but you believed them, as you never chose to enter our humble abode."

"My gloomy disposition is averse to intercourse with the generality of my species," returned the hermit, in a solemn tone; "nor do I ever heed or hear the tales and gossipings of idle lips. In the last ten years I have held no converse with any human beings, save you and your —— and my nephew, Edgar Lindenwood."

Willie gazed on the strange man before him in silent awe. "Has your mother ever expressed a wish to see me?" inquired the hermit, after a pause.

"Often," said Willie.

"For what purpose?" demanded the recluse, in a quick, sudden tone, looking eagerly on the boy's face.

"To thank you for all your kindness to her," replied the lad, ingenuously.

"O, yes!" returned the solitary man, his features relapsing into their usual placid serenity. "I wish not, nor deserve, her thanks for the humble charities given. Let us seek our couch, my boy."

"Have you another name than William?" he asked, as they were lying down.

"Yes," answered the youth; "William Ralph is my name,—the first for my father, the second for an uncle who went to distant countries, ere I can remember, and has never been heard of since."

"Was the uncle your father's or mother's brother?" inquired the hermit, in a careless tone.

"My mother's. Ralph Greyson was his name."

"And does your mother appear to mourn his loss, or wish for his return?" said the hermit, still in the same careless, half-absorbed tone of voice.

"She speaks pityingly of him sometimes, for he was a bright, promising youth, she says, when one distressful circumstance crushed his hopes and ruined his usefulness; but I do not think she desires his return, for he left his native shores cursing her as the cause of his misfortunes."

"Ah! how had she caused his misfortunes?" asked the hermit, drowsily.

"By marrying below her sphere," said Willie, in a trembling, embarrassed tone; "a man who proved a vulgar sot, and thus disgracing him in the eyes of a proud family, with whom he sought an alliance."

As Willie ceased speaking, the hermit breathed heavily, as if in deep sleep; so, turning his face to the cedar-plaited wall, the lad was soon wrapped in his own sweet, youthful slumbers.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Wasting away—away—away,
Slowly, silently, day after day.
Fainter, and fainter and fainter the flow,
Of the current of life more sluggish and slow,
And a ghastly glare in the glassy eye,
And the wan cheek tinged with a hectic dye."

In the dim gloom of a soft spring evening, a slender, graceful form bent silently over a low, curtained couch, gently fanning the annoying insects from the pale brow of its slumbering occupant. The apartment was furnished with almost princely magnificence. Curtains of the richest blue-wrought damask, hung in massy folds from ceiling to floor, before the deep bay-windows. Rosewood sofas and fauteuils, in costly coverings of the same soft color, rested on the brilliantly interwoven flowers of the Persian carpet, whose velvety softness echoed not the slightest tread. A fairy chandelier hung suspended from the lofty, corniced ceiling. Rare statuary decorated the mantel. Large mirrors and pictures in broad gilt frames adorned the walls. Marble stands, covered with deep-fringed cloths of gold, on which lay books in superb bindings, graced the several corners, and the carved mahogany bedstead, behind whose ample curtains of azure velvet the sleeper reposed, among white-piled cushions of softest down, vied in elegant luxury with the couch of an eastern princess. And there, with one white, wasted arm thrown above the head, all shorn of its bright wealth of auburn curls, and the other concealed 'neath the silken coverings, lay Edith Malcome, the blue veins almost starting from her pale brow, and a bright crimson spot on the sunken cheek. Alas, that earth's most lovely should fall the earliest victims to the withering hand of disease! The door did softly asunder, and her father entered. With an expression of deep care and suffering depicted on his handsome features, he approached the bed-side.

"Is she still sleeping?" demanded he, in a whisper which would have been inaudible to an ear less quick than that of the silent watcher.

"She is," was the ready answer, in the same hushed tone. He gazed intently for several moments on the attenuated form before him, while every variety of expression passed over his countenance.

"If she dies," said he, at length, in a voice broken with grief, "what will be left on earth to me?"

The watcher was deeply affected by his grief-stricken appearance. "O, speak not thus!" she said, bursting into tears. "She will not die; the doctor has given us better hopes to-day. But even if she were to be taken to her home in the skies, you must not say there's nothing left on earth for you. You, so bright in soul and intellect, surrounded by admiring friends and all the luxuries of princely wealth, with a son to perpetuate your name"——

"Say no more," interrupted the afflicted man. "I cannot endure your words."

Louise was grieved to see she had only wounded where she meant to soothe, and, with a gentle, impulsive movement, placed her hand on the soft black curls of the head that was bowed among the cushions of the bed, and said, "Forgive me, I meant not to afflict."

Silently he took the little hand in his, and placed it on his throbbing temples. Louise trembled.

"Your brow is feverish," said she at length, seeking an excuse to withdraw the imprisoned hand; "let me bathe it in some cooling lotion."

"No," said he, "this moist little palm is better than any lotion," still detaining it, as she sought to reach the stand which contained a quantity of vials on a silver tray. The slight movements aroused Edith. Opening her large, spiritual eyes, she gazed up in the faces of the watchers at her bed-side, with a vague, dreamy expression.

"Don't you know me, Edith?" asked her father, bending quickly over her.

"O, yes, father!" answered she faintly; "and that lady is my mother," she added, staring confusedly upon Louise, as if not yet in full possession of her waking faculties.

Louise looked embarrassed, and the colonel hastened to say, "That is Mrs. Edson, my dear, who watches with you to-night. You are wandering a little, I fear."

"Well, where is my mother, then?" continued Edith, in the same strange manner, which appeared to agitate her father deeply.

"My child," said he, in a soothing tone, "have I not often told you your mother died when you was a very little girl?"

"I don't know," said Edith, "but last night I dreamed she came with a pale face and bloody lips and stared so mournfully upon me. I wish you would go and bring her to me, father."

"My daughter, do I not tell you she is in her grave?" said the father, trembling with emotion. "How can I bring her to you?"

"Hannah Doliver told Rufus she would come if you would let her," continued the sick girl, in a reproachful tone, apparently not understanding her father's words.

On hearing this, Col. Malcome started with a violent exclamation, which alarmed Edith, and brought her at once into full possession of her senses. Louise, who had marked, with her quick eye, the colonel's strange excitement, approached and administered a reviving cordial to the invalid. The father soon retired, leaving the watcher alone with her charge.

As the hours dragged slowly on, many were the thoughts which passed through Mrs. Edson's active brain, as to the cause of Edith's singular words, and the anger and excitement evinced by her father. At length the gray morning dawned, and Sylva, Edith's attendant, appeared to relieve the watcher from her post.

As Louise was passing through the hall to gain the street, the door suddenly opened, and Col. Malcome entered in cap and overcoat. He paused and inquired if his daughter had passed a comfortable night, and, on receiving an affirmative answer, proceeded to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"The old days we remember;
  How softly did they glide!
  While, all untouched by worldly care,
We wandered side by side.
In those pleasant days, when the sun's last rays
  Just lingered on the hill;
Or the moon's pale light, with the coming night,
  Shone o'er our pathway still.

"The old days we remember,
  O, there's nothing like them now!
The glow has faded from our hearts,
  The blossom from the bough.
A bitter sigh for the hours gone by,
  The dreams that might not last;
The friends deemed true when our hopes were new,
  And the glorious visions past."

Rufus Malcome, as the accepted suitor of Florence, paid regular visits to her father's mansion. Great was the glee of Hannah Doliver to behold the young couple together; and great the nervous disquiet evinced by the invalided Mrs. Howard when she was aware of the young man's presence in the house. She had never met him, as her health, which had in the last six months rapidly declined, confined her now entirely to her room, and indisposed her more strongly than ever to behold strange faces.

The only person she had ever been known to express a wish to see, since her residence in Wimbledon, was Edith Malcome,—a wish excited, perhaps, by Florence's warm praises of the grace and beauty of her young friend, who was as different from Rufus, she said, "as a sweet pink from an odious poppy."

But Edith, strange as it may appear, had never visited at the Howards', though often warmly invited by the whole family.

The colonel invariably excused her in his easy, graceful manner, saying she was "a timid little thing, and dreaded to go for a moment from her father's side." Latterly, her illness had been sufficient reason for her seclusion.

Florence was restricted from frequent visits to her sick friend by the state of her own health, which had grown so feeble and delicate as to alarm her father exceedingly. Dr. Potipher was consulted, and strongly advised travel and change of scene as the most effectual remedy for the feverish disease that seemed preying upon her constitution.

Major Howard was very willing to take his daughter on a tour of travel, but knew not how to leave his invalid lady, whose strength he thought to be gradually failing. She was far too low for him to indulge the idea of making her one of the party, and he was about relinquishing the project in despair, when, on mentioning the subject to the sick woman, great was his surprise to find her even more anxious and earnest for his departure than he was to go. She said "she should do very well without him,—she always mended as summer approached, and Florence was drooping from long and close confinement. She needed exercise and change of scene, and it was his duty to do all in his power to restore her to health and cheerfulness." Major Howard felt the only obstacle removed by the invalid's assent and hearty coöperation; so Florence was informed of the project, and preparations immediately commenced for her tour.

It was a pleasant April evening as she sat in her luxurious apartment with her journal open before her. "The last of these bright spring evenings that I am to pass at home is closing in around me," she wrote. "My trunks are packed and closed down, and to-morrow I am to start on a tour of travel. How my long torpid bosom bounds at the thought! I shall sail up that picturesque Hudson! I shall look on glorious Niagara! But I fear my anticipations are too brilliant. Something will occur to dreg my expected draught of happiness with sorrow. Thus it has ever been! Too well I know I shall return to become the bride of one I detest; but I will not let that thought embitter my enjoyment of the wonders and beauties I shall behold. Besides, in so long a time as I shall be absent, what may occur? Ah, I have written words that make me shudder! I fear I may return to find the snows covering my mother's grave. Why do I leave her? Is it not selfishness to allow her to urge me away when it is her own generous care and affection for me which prompt her to do so? There is something strange in the way she speaks of my matrimonial engagement. I am sure it does not meet her approval, though she gave her consent, as she always does to everything upon which father sets his mind. She evidently dreads its consummation, perhaps because she has discovered my aversion for the man I am to marry. As to Hannah Doliver, she is wonderfully mollified toward me of late; but her fawning fondness is more intolerable than her asperity and impertinence. Nothing seems to delight her so much as to behold Rufus Malcome in company with me. I caught her watching at the parlor-door this evening when he called in company with his father to leave his adieus. She accompanied them to the door and remained several minutes in conversation in the hall. I found her in the kitchen a short time after, and she was muttering to herself and slamming things about in a great rage. When she discovered me she ceased, and grew suddenly as sunny as summer. She is a strange, dark, intriguing woman, I fear, and wish we were well quit of her. I asked mother if she had not better discharge her, and get a new person to attend her during our absence; but she said, with a sudden expression of alarm, 'O, no; she would not part with Hannah on any account!' So I said no more, but fancied her preference was dictated more by fear than love. But I spin out a long record for this last evening at home. O, budding vines and flowers! who will train your rich luxuriance into fairy, fantastic clusterings, or watch your opening petals in the summer which is to come? Who listen to the babbling fountains, or roam the cedar-walks that border the dancing river? And O, the far, far-stretching forest, from whose mysterious depths, in a bright year passed away, I saw *him* emerge, and hurried down the gravelled path to meet him at the garden-gate, with happy, bounding heart! Will new scenes, however glad and gay, e'er dim the memory of those dear times? Never!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

"It is a pleasant thing to roam abroad,
And gaze on scenes and objects strange and grand;
To sail in mighty ships o'er distant seas,

In Mrs. Stanhope's pretty cottage, close by the vine-shaded window, sat Jenny Andrews, and she said Florence Howard had started on a tour of travel.

"Who is her companion?" asked Mrs. Stanhope.

"Why, Rufus Malcome, of course," said Miss Pinkerton, quickly.

"No," said Jenny, "her father."

"Her father!" exclaimed Miss Martha, in a tone of surprise. "How in the world could he leave his sick wife, I should like to know?"

"Mrs. Howard is getting better, I believe," remarked Jenny.

"Well, that's strange enough," continued Miss Pinkerton; "with that impudent Hannah Doliver for a nurse, I wonder she has not died before now."

Hannah Doliver was Miss Martha's utter detestation, though why, we cannot tell, as the little dark woman had never injured her, nor had Miss Pinkerton ever exchanged above a dozen syllables with her in her life. But it was one of those unaccountable dislikes which often arise in people of certain temperaments, on first sight of a particular individual.

Mrs. Stanhope said she was glad Florence had gone a journey, for the dear girl had looked pale and sickly of late, and she thought change of scene might be beneficial to her health.

Miss Martha inquired if Jenny knew how Edith Malcome was getting along.

"I have just come from her," said Jenny; "she is very much changed. All her beautiful hair has been cut away, and she is, O, so thin and wasted! But they call her slowly improving."

"Who takes care of her?" asked Miss P.

"Her waiting-woman, Sylva, I believe," returned Jenny.

"Well, it must be very hard for her to do it all the time," said Martha; "if they would just ask me, I would go any time and assist them."

"Mrs. Edson is there considerable," remarked Jenny.

"I know she is; most too much for her credit," returned Miss Pinkerton; "if a man has a wife, he wants her at home sometimes."

"Why, Martha!" observed Mrs. Stanhope, mildly; "I never heard a reproachful word of Mrs. Edson breathed by any person."

"Neither did I," said Jenny, rising; "and if I do, I shan't believe it, for I think she is the dearest, sweetest creature in the world."

"With the exception of one Mr. Richard Giblet," remarked Miss Pinkerton, in a tone she conceived to be vastly witty and piquant.

Jenny's blush, as she bade good-morning, crowned the malicious maiden's triumph.

On this same morning, Mrs. Edson sat at her elegant rosewood piano, carelessly striking the ivory keys, when she heard a light footstep, and turning, beheld Col. Malcome advancing to her side. She was a little angry that he had entered unannounced, and her cheeks flushed, as she rather briefly bade him welcome.

"I beg your pardon for entering so informally," said he, at once interpreting the expression of her face. "Your doors were all ajar, and I saw no one to announce me."

"Had you rung, some one would have appeared," said Louise, with a slight curl of her red lip.

"Well, I beg your pardon for not doing so," returned he. "Will you grant it?"

There was something in the rueful appearance he assumed, which forced her to laugh in spite of her efforts at dignity and restraint, and thus he was reinstated in her good graces.

"Are you playing?" he asked, touching his own fingers upon the keys, but at a respectful distance from hers.

"No," she returned. "I have practised so little of late I have lost all my ear. Won't you favor me with that thrilling piece from Beethoven, you performed on the first evening of our acquaintance?" She looked eagerly in his face as she spoke.

"What will you do for me if I will?" he asked.

"O, anything in my power!" she replied, rising, and motioning him to assume the music-stool, which he did very readily. Skilfully running over the keys, by way of prelude, while she stood leaning gracefully against the instrument, intently regarding his movements, he commenced the symphony. The swelling notes rose on the air in brilliant variety, and when, at the end of the second chorus, the rich, mellow tones of his voice were added, Louise dropped on her knees beside the performer, while tears gathered in her eyes and rolled over her beautiful face. He did not seem to heed her position, so intently was his soul occupied with the music his lips were breathing. At length the last magic strain died mournfully away. Then he rested his deep blue eyes calmly on her glowing features.

"What shall I do for you?" she asked, smiling.

"You promised," answered he, "to do anything I wished, if I would sing the piece."

"So I will," returned she, earnestly.

"Then," said he, in a low, thrilling tone, "as Steerforth said to David, think of me at my best."

She looked at him eagerly. "Is that all?" she asked.

"That is enough," he answered; "will you promise *always* to do that?"

She paused a few moments, and then answered, in a tone which indicated her whole soul spoke in the words, "Yes, I promise."

"Thank you," said he, extending his hand.

She gave him hers. He held it a moment in his own. Then, pressing it respectfully to his lips, bade her good-morning, and retired.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"And when in other climes we meet,
  Some isle or vale enchanting,
And all looks flowery, wild and sweet,
  And naught but love is wanting,
We think how blest had been our fate,
  If Heaven had but assigned us
To live and die 'mid scenes like this,
  With some we've left behind us."

Shout, reader, on the hill-tops of deliverance, for you and I are out of Wimbledon. We have left behind us the Pimbles, the Mumbles, the Simcoes, and their multitudinous voices grow indistinct in the distance, as, borne by the rushing steam-steed, we fly on our way in search of our fair traveller, who has got the start of us by several hours. We hardly know whether to go up the Hudson, or hold straight on over the Erie road for Niagara; but as we have no particular desire to see the former, our remembrances of its picturesque scenery being marred by the unpleasant circumstances under which we first beheld it, we incline to the latter course.

So world-wondered-at Niagara shall be our destination, where Florence Howard and her father are already arrived and installed occupants of a regally-furnished suite of apartments at the Clifton House on the Canada side of the river.

The new arrival had created quite a sensation; as new arrivals at these fashionable watering-places, where the masses resort to display themselves and behold and comment upon the display of others, always do. As Florence, dressed with simple grace, leaned on the arm of her noble-looking father, and entered the spacious dining-saloon, where hundreds of both sexes, all flaunted out in the gayest and richest attire, were already seated at the splendidly laid tables, every eye levelled a critical glance on her garb and figure. Many an elegant lady, in startling silks and astonishing ear-jewels, turned her nose sublimely skyward and exclaimed "No great fetch,—these folks!" Gentlemen, in surprising pants and prodigious vest buttons, said, with a princely contempt, "Aw, an unsawphistawcated country gawl!"

But there were some, the precious few, who graced the saloons of the Clifton House, not to gorge themselves on its spicy viands, or grow inebriate over its sparkling wines, or yet to display their spindling limbs encased in miraculous tights, their alarming waistcoats and elephantine fob-chains; but who had come to look on and admire the wonderful cataract, with its surrounding scenery of wildness and grandeur; who marked the elegant bearing of an accomplished lady in the sweet open countenance, simple dress, and graceful movements of the "new arrival."

Florence seemed wholly regardless of the volleys of glances directed toward her during the sumptuously-served dinner. She retired before dessert, so great was her impatience of a nearer view of the sublime spectacle visible from the piazzas of the Clifton House.

On Table Rock she stood, with her father's arm cast protectingly around her, and gazed, tremulous with intense emotion, on the tremendous sweep of rushing waters over the mighty horse-shoe fall, down, down forever, upon the floods that boiled and surged like fathomless seas of angry foam in the depths below. Then she turned to the lofty American fall, spanned by its brilliant rainbow, like the bright wing of the Spirit of the Waters cast beauteously o'er her stupendous creation of power and sublimity.

Florence gazed till the shades of evening obscured the magnificent scene, and then, clinging to her father's arm, returned to the hotel. On gaining her room, she tossed off her bonnet and shawl and seized her journal.

"Are you not going to tea?" asked her father.

"No," answered she, almost sharply. "I cannot so suddenly descend to the actual, or come in so quick contact with the grossness of earth after the god-like sublimity I have been contemplating."

Her father called her a little enthusiast, and walked away. Left to herself she drew forth her journal.

"Eventful day!" she wrote. "I have stood among the mists of Niagara. Fain would I voice the tumult flood of emotions that rushed over my soul as I gazed on its wondrous sublimity: but language is impotent, and I am weak,—weaker than usual; I think from reaction of my overstrained powers.

"I could lie down and weep like a tired child. The tremendous roar of the mighty waters is in my ear as I write. O, Niagara, Niagara! what henceforth will be to me the brightest scene our country can afford—for I have looked on thee, and what is left me now?"

She closed her book, and, stepping out on the piazza, leaned her arms over the balustrade, and stood with her gaze riveted on the boiling cataracts, now flashing like sheets of burnished silver in the soft moonlight. While she was thus occupied a young lady approached and accosted her.

"You are just arrived at the Falls, I fancy," said she, with a pleasant smile.

"I arrived to-day," answered Florence, politely.

"You do not know me," remarked the young lady; "but I think I have seen you before."

Florence gazed on the eloquent features, but she did not detect a resemblance to any person she had ever known.

"You have the advantage of me," she said; "I do not recollect you."

"Probably not," returned the young lady; "but did you never reside in a village called Wimbledon, at a beautiful mansion styled 'Summer House?'"

"I have just come from there," said Florence, gazing with surprise in the face of her fair interrogator.

"So I thought," remarked the young lady, "and your name, excuse my boldness, is Florence Howard. Mine is Ellen Williams. I once resided in Wimbledon, and saw you several times at the village church. You, probably, did not notice me, or, if you did, my features would be easily forgotten. Not so yours. I recognized you the moment you entered the dining hall. How do you like Niagara?"

"O, I am charmed, spell-bound!" exclaimed Florence. "Its glorious sublimity thrills to the centre of my soul."

"Your enthusiasm reminds me of a young painter and poet we have had here several weeks," said Miss Williams; "he left us only this morning. I was down to the Suspension Bridge to-day, and read some verses he left in pencil on the painted railings. His sketches of the Falls from different points of view were very fine. He was very handsome, and had a sweet name. I believe half the ladies were dead in love with him, but he never bestowed a single encouraging glance on all their attempts to win his favor."

"Quite an insensible young man, I should think," said Florence, smiling. "What did you say was his name?"

"Lindenwood," returned Miss Williams. "I do not know whence he came, but from some remote part of the country, I think."

Florence heard none of the young lady's words after the name was mentioned, and it is difficult to say into what awkwardness her emotion might have betrayed her, had not her father appeared at this juncture and called her to her room. She recollected herself sufficiently to bid good-evening to Miss Williams as she hastened away leaning heavily on her father's arm.

Fastening her door, she dropped on a sofa, and exclaimed, "Alas, alas! one day too late at Niagara."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Flow on forever in thy glorious robe
Of terror and of beauty. Yea, flow on,
Unfathomed and resistless! God hath set
His rainbow on thy forehead, and the cloud
Mantled around thy feet.
Methinks, to tint
Thy glorious features with our pencil's point,
Or woo thee to the tablet of a song,
Were profanation."

Early the following morning Florence was astir, begging her father to take her to the Suspension Bridge. She hardly glanced at the magnificent appearance of the Canada fall, as the sunbeams changed its floods of spray into bright showers of diamonds.

There she stood on the piazza, her cheeks flushed with vermilion, and her dark eyes glowing with the animation and excitement within.

"I cannot take you to the bridge till after breakfast," said her father, in reply to her urgent appeals to set out immediately.

"Must I wait so long?" said Florence dismally.

While the father and daughter stood debating the point, Florence's acquaintance of the preceding day appeared, attended by a handsome young man, whom she introduced as her brother Edward.

Major Howard recollected the Williams family, and seemed gratified to renew his acquaintance.

"Col. Malcome occupies your old residence," said he to the young man, as they left the ladies to themselves and walked to the opposite side of the piazza.

After a pause, Florence asked her companion if she "had ever visited Wimbledon since she left it."

"No;" answered the young lady, "though I have often desired to do so. There was a poor washerwoman there, who had a little boy about my own age, in whom I took a childish interest, and I would like much to learn something of his fate."

"What was his name?" asked Florence.

"Willie Danforth," said Miss Williams.

"I know a washerwoman by the name of Dilly Danforth," returned Florence.

"That is his mother."

"I do not think she has a child," said Florence doubtfully.

"Then he is dead!" said Miss Williams in a trembling voice.

Florence pitied her emotion, and after a few moments said, "There is a tall, graceful lad, I think they call Willie Greyson, who lives with the strange forest-recluse, of whom you have heard, perhaps."

"Greyson!" repeated Ellen; "that I have heard was Mrs. Danforth's maiden name; but Willie was never called so; besides, why should he leave his mother to dwell with a hermit? O, no; my Willie must be dead! I said, when I left him, I should never see him again." And the gentle girl wiped a tear from her sweet blue eye.

The gentlemen now approached, and Major Howard invited the Williamses to join them in their visit to the Suspension Bridge; but they had an engagement with a party to visit Goat Island. Florence felt relieved to hear this, for she preferred, for reasons of her own, to be attended by no one but her father on the present excursion. They now descended to the dining-hall, where an elegant breakfast was served. Florence ate but a few tiny bits of a delicate crisp muffin, and sipped lightly at her cup of fragrant Mocha. Her eager desire to gain the bridge destroyed all relish for the dainty dishes spread in such variety and profusion before her. At length her father announced a carriage in readiness. Hastily folding a sheet of note-paper, and placing it in her pocket, she swung her gold chain over her neck, to which was attached a richly-embossed pencil, and followed him to the door. They were soon rolling away.

Florence saw nothing till they gained the bridge,—frail, trembling thing, thrown at such dizzy height above the wild, rushing river. Her father asked if she would ride or walk over. She would walk, and he ordered the driver to halt. Assisting her from the carriage, they stepped upon the swaying fabric. Florence kept close to the railings, though he cautioned her to walk in the centre, and called her attention to the fine view of the falls in the distance. But she did not notice them, and, pausing suddenly, drew the sheet of note-paper from her pocket and commenced writing.

"What are you doing?" said her father at length, noticing her head bowed close to the railing.

"Wait a moment and I'll tell you," said she. "There! I believe I have them all correct now. Shall I read

them to you?"

"What are they?" asked he.

"Verses. I found them written in pencil on this painted strip."

"Are they worth reading?" inquired he, carelessly.

"O, yes!" she returned, earnestly. "Very pretty, I think!"

"Well, go on, then!" said he.

She commenced in a low tone, which grew in depth and sweetness as she proceeded. Surely, if the author had never had the vanity to deem his brief production possessed of merit, he would have grown into conceit of it had he heard it falling so sweetly from those half-tremulous lips.

"Sea-green river, white and foamy,
Madly rushing on below;
While that fairy-looking fabric
Bends, and sways, and trembles so;
Fragile, frail and fairy fabric,
Boldly thrown so wildly high;
Wondrous work of art suspended
Midway 'twixt the earth and sky!

"Strong and firm the metal wires
Stretch to Canada's green shores;
As to link with bands of iron
Queen Victoria's realms to ours.
Passage-way for England's lion,
Unborn ages may it be;
While above him, in the ether,
Sails the Eagle of the Free!

"In the distance, dread Niagara,
Thing of wonder and of fear,
Pours its mighty flood of waters,
While the echoes soothe the ear.
Nature's wildest forms of beauty.
All around profusely thrown;
Bowing in her proudest temple,
Beggared Art, we humbly own!"

As Florence ceased she refolded the paper and placed it in her pocket.

"You did not read the author's name," said her father.

"There was no name attached to them," answered she. "Nothing, only some initials which were rather indistinct."

"Some modest bard," remarked the major, as they retraced their steps to the carriage, "who, as Byron says,

'Like many a bard unknown,
Rhymes on our names, but wisely hides his own.'

This poet sings of bridges, but does not sign his name to his songs."

Florence was silent during their drive to the hotel. Niagara seemed suddenly to have lost its interest for her, and after a few more days they departed, with young Williams and his lovable little sister in their company.

CHAPTER XXX.

"O, why should Heaven smile
On deeds of darkness—plots of sin and crime?
I cannot tell thee why,
But this I know, she often doeth so."

While the bright summer passed over Wimbledon, matters apparently moved on as usual in the quiet little village.

The Woman's Rights Reform lagged somewhat with the thermometer at eighty, as is frequently the case with benevolent organizations; perhaps because their zealous warmth, when increased by a high-temperatured atmosphere, mounts to spirits' boil and evaporates.

Mrs. Pimble and Mrs. Lawson sat on their respective piazzas, in nankin pants and open waistcoats, and flapped great peacocks' tails to and fro, to cool their feverish, perspiring brows.

Mr. Pimble, in his wife's sun-bonnet, clappered his heelless slippers at mid-day along the garden paths, in the vain hope of warming his laggard blood to a brisker flow. Mrs. Dr. Simcoe was still harassed by those snarling, ill-tempered brats, "Simcoe's children," who seemed contagiously disposed to all the "ills which flesh is heir to," as if to test the skill and try the patience of the lady M. D.

One of the most brilliant moons that ever showered its silvery light over a flower-covered earth, rode in the liquid zenith of a summer heaven. The splendid grounds of Major Howard's princely mansion never slept, in their luxuriant beauty, beneath a lovelier sky. Thick trailed the heavy vines in their leafy exuberance of foliage over arbors and green-houses. Whole parterres of brilliant flowers loaded the air with fragrance, and nightingales sang among the boughs of the lindens that waved against the wrought-iron palings of the terraces.

Was there aught save the breath of love and peace abroad on the air to-night? Dared a vile vulture of sin to brush with polluting wing over the vines and flowers of these odor-breathing, beam-lighted gardens?

There were low voices in one of the most obscure alcoves, and a man and woman stood in close proximity in its dimmest recess.

A low sigh or sob now and then escaped the woman, as though she struggled to suppress some choking emotion.

"Come," said the man at length, impatiently, "this blubbering will not aid your purpose."

"O, Herbert!" she exclaimed, in a tone which entreated compassion, "you have ceased to love me."

"Ceased to love you?" repeated he, with a low, ironical laugh, "I never yet began."

"You told me so," said she.

"What if I did?" returned he; "is my veracity so immaculate that my slightest word is received as an oath of probity? But I came not here to keep a lover's tryst. You know, or at least I thought you knew, the bond that unites us; and I ask you again if you will do my bidding and serve my interests?"

"I have done both," said the woman; "but you have not fulfilled your promises to me."

"Do you not see the boy when you choose?"

"I see him, but he does not recognize me."

"The better for you that he does not," returned the man. "Do you suppose, with his position and prospects, he would acknowledge a low serving-woman for a mother? He would kick her from his presence and cover her with curses."

"And do you never intend to tell him who is his mother?" asked the woman, in a trembling tone.

"Certainly not," answered he; "'tis not necessary the boy should know his own disgrace; but when the proper moment arrives, there are those who shall learn his parentage to their everlasting shame and mortification."

"I see no prospect of that moment's ever arriving," said the woman. "Here's the girl and her father gone off, the Lord knows where, or whether they will ever return, and all things left unfinished and incomplete. I must say you manage as an idiot."

"I will judge of my own management," said the man, fiercely. "There has been sickness in my family, and other things have indisposed me to hurry a revenge which will be the sweeter the longer 'tis delayed."

"But it may be so long delayed as to fail altogether," suggested the woman.

"I'll take care of that," answered he. "I fancy I am not so great a bungler as to overshoot my purposes and baffle my own designs; and, woman," said he, raising his arm threateningly above her head, "I caution you to beware. I believe you have already let drop some unguarded words; else why is your mistress so averse to this engagement, as I have learned she is, by the boy?"

The woman was silent. He seized her arm fiercely. "Have you blabbed?" he hissed in her ear.

"No," answered she faintly, and struggling to free herself from his grasp.

"Has she no suspicions of my proximity?" he demanded.

"None," returned the woman; "as I live she has none."

"Then I would look on her a moment to-night."

"That you can easily do," said she. "I left her sitting in a cushioned seat, drawn close before an open casement, with the full moon shining on her face."

"A lucky position! I will show myself to her in a few minutes," he remarked, as the twain parted. Hannah Doliver proceeded rapidly up the garden avenue to the mansion, and hurried to the apartment of her mistress.

The invalid lady was sitting in the same position in which she had left her an hour before.

"You have been absent a long time, Hannah," she observed in a languid tone.

"I went as far as Col. Malcome's to learn if they had any recent intelligence of Florence and her father," returned the woman, divesting herself of bonnet and shawl.

"Well, had he any tidings of them?" inquired the invalid.

"At last accounts they were at Saratoga, intending in a few days to start on a tour up the Hudson and St. Lawrence, to Quebec, and thence to the mountain region of New Hampshire," answered the woman.

"Florence wrote to me from Niagara," remarked the lady; "she seemed in fine spirits. I wonder if she corresponds with Rufus Malcome?"

"Of course," said Hannah; "a young lady would write to her affianced husband, if she neglected all others." The invalid turned uneasily in her chair at these words, and her waiting-woman went into an adjoining apartment under pretence of performing some duty.

The lady sat listlessly gazing on the lovely scene without, when a dark object moving up the garden path attracted her notice, and directly the figure of a man in black, with cap removed from a head of closely-trimmed auburn hair that clustered in short, thick masses of luxuriant curls around a high, pale brow, appeared before the casement, and fixed a bold stare upon her face. No sooner did her eyes encounter those that glared so fiercely upon her, than she uttered a piercing shriek, and fell back in her chair with the appearance of one from whom all life had departed.

Hannah rushed into the room and bore the insensible form of her mistress to the bed, where she commenced chafing her temples and pouring reviving cordials down her throat. At length the frightened lady opened her eyes and stared wildly around.

"Secure that casement," said she, pointing to the still open window; "and shut all the doors and lock them."

"You will stifle without a breath of fresh air this oppressive night," grumbled Hannah, as she proceeded to execute the orders of her mistress.

"Better I should stifle," answered the excited and still trembling lady, "than ever behold again the monster I have seen to-night."

"Heavens! what do you mean?" exclaimed the attendant, appearing to experience the greatest emotion.

"I have seen *him*, Hannah Doliver," said the invalid, shuddering as she spoke.

"Who?" asked the hypocritical woman, breathlessly.

"The destroyer of my happiness and your good fame," answered the lady.

"Impossible!" said Hannah, glaring on the excited features of the prostrate form before her.

"I tell you I have seen him!" returned the invalid, shaking like an aspen on her couch. "I cannot be mistaken. 'Twas his face; the high, colorless brow, surrounded by thick, short auburn curls. He stood at that casement, and gazed fiercely on me from his large, dark eyes."

"Pshaw!" said Hannah, "'twas but a hideous dream, or a sudden attack of apoplexy. The man you fancy you have seen to-night, has not been heard of these fifteen years, and is probably in his grave."

"Then it was his ghost that I saw," said the lady.

"May be it was," returned Hannah, smiling strangely; "though I don't know why it should have honored you with a visit. I am glad I was not deemed worthy his ghostship's regards."

The affrighted lady after a while grew calmer, and Hannah retired to her own apartment, which joined that of her mistress.

In a few days, a letter was despatched to Major Howard by the invalid, informing him of the strange appearance which had alarmed her, and urging his immediate return.

The letter never reached its destination.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Ask why the holy starlight, or the blush
Of summer blossoms, or the balm that floats
From yonder lily like an angel's breath,
Is lavished on such men! God gives them all
For some high end; and thus the seeming waste
Of her rich soul—its starlight purity,
Its every feeling delicate as a flower,
Its tender trust, its generous confidence,
Its wondering disdain of littleness,—
These, by the coarser sense of those around her
Uncomprehended, may not all be vain."

A jubilant party were assembled in Mrs. Leroy Edson's elegant parlors to witness the marriage ceremony of Jenny Andrews and Richard Giblet.

Even Mrs. Salsify, as one of the groom's former acquaintances, received an invite to the bridal feast, and appeared in red morocco shoes and a cap whose ruffles were the astonishment of the entire assembly. Mary Madeline's squealing baby detained her at home, and perhaps, also, she did not care to see her former lover, recreant and unfaithful though he had been to her, take the solemn vow of eternal constancy to another.

The party was more lively than wedding parties usually are. Mrs. Edson was everywhere, gliding, like the spirit of grace and beauty, among her guests, enlivening them by her humor, and spreading a rich glow of geniality through the apartments. If she ever outshone herself, and surpassed her own surpassing powers, it was to-night. Col. Malcome's eyes followed her wherever she moved, with an undisguisable expression of admiration. He seemed rather cast in the shade by her unwonted brilliancy, and held himself aloof from her side for almost the entire evening.

Miss Martha Pinkerton noticed him sitting alone and abstracted on a sofa, and her kind soul was moved with pity for his companionless situation, so she resolved to cheer his solitude as well as she was able. Approaching, she assumed a seat on the opposite side of the sofa. She looked at him, hemmed, and coughed, but he did not seem to heed her proximity. At length she resolved to speak.

"Col. Malcome," she said, in her softest tone, "do you know you have never called to take away the shirts you left for me to make more than two years ago? I have often thought I would take them to you; but sister Stanhope said I had better wait, as you would call when you wanted them. I starched and ironed them all up nice for you; but I am sure the stiffening is all out, and they are as yellow as saffron by this time."

"Ay, Miss Pinkerton, you were very kind," answered he, bowing politely. "I had forgot my call on your services entirely. I recollect now that I contemplated a journey at that time, which circumstances prevented me from undertaking, and that occasioned my forgetfulness of the package probably. I will call soon and relieve you of it."

"O, 'tis no burden," she answered; "I only thought I would speak to you about it to let you know 'twas ready any time you might choose to call. Don't you think the bride looks very beautiful?" she added, turning the discourse to more elegant subjects now she had gained his ear.

"Ay, quite interesting and pretty," answered he, turning his attention for a moment toward the young couple who formed the centre of a mirthful group.

"Mrs. Edson seems to feel wonderful smart to-night," pursued Miss Martha; "pleased with her success in match-making, I suppose."

"Ah!" said the colonel, "does Mrs. Edson make matches? I wish she would form one for me."

The modest maiden blushed scarlet at these words, and remained silent. A group was just passing, and the colonel effected his escape from his fair companion and joined them. Several voices called for him at the piano, and, seating himself before the instrument, he commenced a brilliant performance. In a few moments he became conscious of the form of Louise standing in the embrasure of a window near by, her whole soul apparently absorbed in the music. When he arose she had disappeared. He sauntered slowly to the hall door, and stepped forth upon the piazza. As he paced slowly down its marble length he came suddenly upon her, leaning languidly against a vine-covered column.

"Why do you fly your guests?" asked he; "they will soon grow dim without your presence."

"Because I am weary and dispirited," answered Louise, "and want quiet and fresh air."

"Dispirited!" exclaimed he; "I have never seen you so startlingly brilliant as to-night."

She shook her bright head mournfully. The hilarious voices from the merry groups within came full upon their ears.

"Walk with me a few moments in the cool quiet of the garden," said he; "here the air comes heavy and tainted from the crowded apartments within."

She placed her arm passively in his, and they passed down the steps and entered the shady paths.

"I marvel to find you so moody and glum," he remarked, after they had proceeded some distance in perfect silence, "when you have been so unusually gay through the evening."

She made no answer.

"Let us return to the house," said he at length.

"What for?" she asked, turning her clear eyes quickly on his face.

"Because you do not enjoy your company," he answered.

"No, that is not the reason," said she; "'tis because you are weary of my presence."

"Weary of your presence!" repeated he. "Louise, you don't believe your own words. May I stay here at your side till I wish to go away?"

"Certainly," answered she.

"Then let me put my arm around you," said he, encircling her waist, "and lay your dear head here, and you are mine henceforth, for I shall never leave you."

For a moment her tearful face was hidden on his bosom.

A low wailing wind swept through the shrubbery that surrounded them, and one single word, thrilling and awful, as if it fell from the lips of an accusing spirit, smote on their ears—'*Beware*!'

Louise started from the arm that encircled her and fled toward the lighted mansion. The party were still occupied in the merry dance, and no one seemed to have marked her brief absence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

———"Ye mountains,
So varied and so terrible in beauty;
Here in your rugged majesty of rocks
And toppling trees that twine their roots with stone
In perpendicular places, where the foot
Of man would tremble could he reach them—yes,
Ye look eternal!"

Cloud-capped, sky-crowned, mist-mantled, storm-defying Mount Washington! O, there have been days, and weeks, and months and years, when life's legion woes pressed heavily upon our souls and bowed our spirits in the dust; when we dared not glance toward the past, or contemplate the present, and turned with shuddering dread from the future of starless, impenetrable gloom; and in those doleful years, through long, long nights of sleepless pain and agony we have prayed, entreated, implored grim death to come and ease us of the thorny pangs that tore our bleeding hearts like venomed arrows. But now on reverent knee we thank the God of nature, that he has let us live to stand upon thy sky-piercing summit and look down on the world below! Wild Switzerland of America! thrice proud are we to call thy granite mountains ours, for beneath thy snow-capped summits our young existence dawned, and thy shrill winds and stormy blasts rolled forth the sleeping anthems that lulled our infant slumbers.

To this wild mountain region came Florence Howard, after luxuriating on the picturesque Hudson, and dreaming herself in elysian realms among the "thousand isles" of the queenly St. Lawrence. She was all life and animation. The excitement of travel and vivid enjoyment of the beautiful and sublime had banished every trace of the dejection and gloom which had for many months obscured her brilliancy. Major Howard was delighted with the improvement in his daughter's appearance, and seemed almost as young and buoyant as she. Young Williams and his sister were their constant companions in travel, and Florence found in Ellen a gentle nature and affectionate heart.

A storm set in on the night of our party's arrival at the Crawford House, and heavy clouds settled down over the brows of the great mountains that hemmed in the narrow valley. The hotel was thronged with visitors, and the new comers had to accept of such accommodations as two small rooms in the upper story could afford.

"I declare," exclaimed Ellen, when the porters had brought in the trunks, thrown back the fastenings, and retired, "after rackings, and tossings, and tumblings enough to disjoint and unhinge a leviathan, to what a comfortless haven are we arrived at last! O, for a tithe of the luxury I rolled in at Niagara and

Saratoga, or even one of the state-rooms of the 'Hendrick Hudson' or 'Belle of the Waters!' They were rooms of state indeed compared with these dismal little pens. How are we going to turn round in them, Florence, much less unload our trunks of their wardrobes and array ourselves for appearance in the parlors and dining saloon?"

"Dear me!" answered Florence, as she stood before the window, blowing her benumbed fingers, "I don't think we shall have any occasion to open our trunks, for there is not a frock in mine I could venture to put on, unless I was willing to be frozen to death within the hour."

"But what are we to do?" said Ellen, approaching the other window and gazing forth on the dark, stormy evening, that was rapidly closing in around them. Nothing could be seen beyond the small circle of the valley in which the house stood, save dense clouds of fog and mist. The rain poured like a second deluge, and terrific winds roared, and shrieked, and bellowed like infuriate spirits of the rushing storm.

"What geese we have made of ourselves, Florence!" resumed Ellen, after she had gazed in silence a few moments on the gloomy prospect presented to her eyes; "jamming into crowded, uncomfortable coaches, and bruising and battering our flesh and bones to jelly, all to reach this wonderful abode of grandeur and sublimity. What 'Alps on Alps' we expected would tower before our astonished visions! But here we are, sunk in a dismal abyss on the extreme northern verge of civilization, and never a mountain to be seen, or anything else save great lowering clouds that threaten to fall and crush us yet deeper into the earth."

"If I could only get to see the mountains, I would not mind all the discomfitures," said Florence, peering into the growing blackness without.

"I tell you there are no mountains," said Ellen, growing impatient in her disappointment.

"O, yes," returned Florence; "I think there must be a few somewhere in the vicinity."

"Then why can't we see them?" demanded Ellen.

"They are hidden by the clouds, I suppose," said Florence. "I am told Mount Washington is veiled in their fleecy mantles for weeks sometimes."

"No doubt it will be thus obscured during our visit," said Ellen, quite petulantly.

A knock on the door here called their attention. Florence opened it, and beheld her father, "Well, girls," said he, rubbing his hands, "what do you think of the White Mountains?"

"When we have seen them we shall be better prepared to give an opinion," said Florence.

"For my part, I don't believe in them at all," said Ellen quickly.

Major Howard laughed heartily at this pertly announced conviction of the non-existence of the wonderful summits they had come to behold, and said he trusted, "when the storm was over, the elephants would show their terrible heads."

"But are not you half frozen?" asked he, his teeth chattering as he spoke; "pray come down in the parlors; you will find them warm and filled with guests."

"We cannot go in our travelling garbs," said Ellen, "and there's no opportunity here, as you see, to open our trunks."

"Never mind your dark dresses," returned he; "you will not find the gossamer fabrics that deck the belles of Saratoga in fashion here. The fair creatures, however much in defiance of their wishes, are obliged to conceal their white arms and shoulders in thick warm coverings."

"We would be very glad to do so," said Florence; "but unfortunately our wardrobes were prepared for a temperate, instead of a frigid zone."

"Well, you will do very well as you are to-night; there are a score of ladies just arrived, all round the parlor fires, in their travel-stained garbs; so come on," said he, "and don't be bashful. You will hear the conversation of those who have passed half the summer in this region, and perhaps Ellen may come to believe in old Mount Washington."

"I shall never believe in it till I have seen it with my own eyes," returned the fair girl, as she and Florence, under the escort of Major Howard, descended the flights of stairs to the parlor.

As they entered, a hum of voices struck their ears from every side. There was a group of ladies and gentlemen round the fire, and several of them vacated their seats for the convenience of the new comers. A large woman with a very red face remained in one corner and a young girl sat by her side.

"Have you just arrived?" asked the former of Florence; who was nearest her.

"Yes, madam," returned Florence, respectfully.

"Well, it is a dismal time for strangers to make their advent, though the largest arrivals most always occur on such nights as this," said the fleshy woman, who had rather a pleasant manner, and would have been very good-looking, Florence thought, but for the rough redness of her complexion.

"Are such storms frequent here?" inquired Ellen, in a dubious tone.

"Not very," answered the portly lady. "I have been here six weeks, and have not witnessed so severe a one hitherto. I think myself rather unfortunate to have been exposed to its severity all day."

Ellen and Florence looked surprised, and the lady continued: "Myself and daughter joined a large party that ascended the mountains yesterday. We had a tedious time. I lost my veil, and my face was frozen by exposure to the biting blasts. The storm came on so furiously we were obliged to send our horses back by the guides and remain all night."

"What!" exclaimed Ellen, "remain all night on the top of a mountain exposed to a storm like this! Why did you not all perish?"

"O, we had shelter, and a good one!" returned the lady.

"Where was it? In caves of rocks, or on cold, wet turfs beneath reeking branches of lofty pines?" asked Ellen.

"Not in caves," answered the lady, "and certainly not on grassy turfs, or beneath trees of any variety; for old Mount Washington's bleak summit cannot boast the one or the other."

"What can it boast, then?" inquired Ellen; "wolves and catamounts, that, together with its shrieking winds, make night hideous?"

"Not wolves, or animals of any species," returned the lady, shaking her head; "but of huge masses of granite boulders, gray and moss-grown, heaped in gigantic piles, that eternally defy the blasts and storms of the fiercest boreal winters."

"O, what a grand thing it must be to stand on its summit!" exclaimed Florence, with glistening eyes.

"It is, indeed," said the lady, "though I have been pelted by the merciless storm all day, which added fresh difficulties to the descent, and still suffer much from my poor, frozen cheeks, I do not for a moment regret my journey. I suppose you young ladies intend to ascend?"

"I do," said Ellen. "If there is anything here worth seeing, I wish to see it, after all the fatigue and trouble of getting here."

"O, well," returned the lady, "I assure you there is enough to see. I have been here, as I have already informed you, six weeks, and some new wonder bursts upon me every day. You are a little disappointed from having been so unfortunate as to arrive on this gloomy evening, when even the nearest views are obscured by clouds. But the guides predict a splendid day to-morrow. I am sure you will be delighted in the morning when you rise and behold the great clouds rolling away their heavy masses and revealing the broad, dark summits of the mountains that hem in this grassy valley. I shall watch to see you dance into the breakfast hall in buoyant spirits."

With a pleasant good-evening the lady retired. Florence and Ellen soon followed. In the upper space they met Major Howard and young Williams, who were hastening to join them in the parlor.

"Well, sis," said Edward, "Major Howard tells me you vote the White Mountains all humbug."

"I think Ellen is growing less sceptical," said Florence, "since she has conversed with a lady who has just descended from their summits."

"O, yes, Nell, there's a Mount Washington, sure as fate," returned Edward, "and we must ascend its craggy steeps to-morrow; so retire, and get a refreshing rest to be ready for the fatiguing excursion in the morning."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Come over the mountains to me, love,
  Over to me—over to me;
My spirit is pining for thee, love,
  Pining for thee—pining for thee!"

SONG.

The sun rose bright above the mountains of the Crawford Notch on the following morning, and illuminated with his brilliant rays all the green valley below. Each member of the large party that proposed to ascend Mount Washington was at an early hour mounted on a strong-built pony, and led by a guide into the bridle-path which commenced in the woods at the base of Mount Clinton. Our little band of travellers were foremost in the file, Florence and Ellen in the greatest glee of laughter and spirits.

The whole ascent of Clinton was through a dense forest, over a rough, uneven path, constructed of small, round timbers, called "corduroys." They were in a rotted, dilapidated condition, and unpleasant as well as dangerous to ride over.

Emerging from the woods that covered Clinton, the surrounding mountains began to appear; and from the grassy plain on the summit of Mount Pleasant, a view was obtained which called forth rapturous shouts from the whole company.

The descent of Pleasant was tedious. All the ladies were obliged to dismount, as the path was very rough, and often almost perpendicular over precipitous rocks, while the frightful chasm that yawned far below caused many of the adventurers to grow giddy and pale with fear.

Ellen, who was rather timid, began to wish she had remained in the valley, and continued to disbelieve in mountains; but Florence was all exhilaration and eagerness to push onward.

Mount Franklin towered next before them. As Florence, who was among the foremost, reached its summit, she turned on her pony, and gazed down on the little cavalcade, winding along up the narrow, precipitous path in single file, with the guides hurrying from one bridle to another, as a more difficult and dangerous place occurred in the rough way. And she thought of Napoleon leading an army over the mighty Alps, and how dauntless and sublime must be the soul of a man who could successfully accomplish an enterprise so fraught with perilous hazard and disheartening fatigue.

As the little company wound their way over the unsheltered brow of Mount Franklin, tremendous blasts swept down from the summits above, and threatened to unseat them in their saddles, or hurl the whole party over the fearful gulfs that yawned on every side. The guides collected the band together and informed them half their journey was completed. Many a face grew blank with dismay at this announcement. The weather wore a less promising aspect than when they set out, and the winds pierced them through and through. Several proposed to turn back. The guides said there was about an even chance for the clouds to blow over or gather into a storm, and the party could settle the point among themselves whether they would turn back or go on.

A gentleman, with features so muffled she could not discover them, rode to the side of Florence, and said, in a voice she could barely distinguish among the clamorous winds that howled over the mountain, "Do you favor the project of returning tamely to the valley and leaving Mount Washington a wonder unrevealed?"

"No!" answered she, from beneath her thick veil; the muscles of her face so stiffened with cold she could hardly move her lips.

"Then ride your pony to the centre of these dissenting groups and propose to move on," said he. "There are none in the party so craven-souled as to shrink from what a lady dares encounter."

Florence paused a moment, and then guided her pony into the midst of the company.

"Do you wish to join those who are going back, Miss?" said a guide, taking hold of her bridle-rein.

"No!" said she in a tone of decision. "I'll lead the way for those who choose to follow to the summit of Mount Washington."

"Bravo!"—"hurrah!"—"let us on!"—burst from all sides. Three solitary ones, among them Ellen Williams, turned back, and the others formed into file and moved onward. Down Mount Franklin and over the narrow path cut in the cragged side of Monroe, where a single misstep would hurl the horse and rider down a fathomless abyss, into whose depths the eye dares hardly for a moment gaze. Then appeared a crystal lakelet, and a little plain covered with a seedy-looking grass, where the horses rested and refreshed themselves ere the last desperate trial of their strength and endurance; for the weary band of adventurers had reached at last the base of the mighty Washington, whose summit was veiled in heavy clouds. As they loitered in the plain, the muffled gentleman again approached Florence, and inquired if she was unattended.

"No, sir," said she. "My father is among the party, also a friend; but they are not yet come up."

He lingered a moment, and then asked if she would like to dismount.

As the voice met her ear more distinctly, it struck her it had a familiar sound, and a sudden thought flashed across her mind. She thanked him for his politeness, but said she was too cold to move.

Her father and young Williams now appeared. "How do you brave it, Florence?" said Major Howard, drawing in his breath with a shudder.

"Very well, father," answered she.

When the muffled gentleman heard the name Florence pronounced, he started suddenly and darted a swift glance on the speaker. Then turning away, he remounted his steed and rode into the front ranks of the line that was forming. Soon the band commenced their toilsome ascent. The path wound over perpendicularly-piled masses of gigantic granite boulders. Often it seemed the poor tired animals, with their utmost efforts, would never be able to surmount the prodigious rocks that obstructed their way. Cold, blustering clouds of mists drove in the faces of the forlorn little party as they labored up and up the precipitous steeps, till it seemed to many a despairing heart that the summit of that tremendous

mountain would never, never be gained. So densely hung the threatening clouds around them, they could not tell their distance from the wished-for goal. At length the guides halloed to the foremost rider to halt; and directly Florence felt herself in the arms of a strong man, who sprang over the craggy rocks with surprising agility, and soon placed her on the door-stone of a small habitation, which was not only "founded on a rock," but surrounded on all sides by huge piles of gray granite boulders.

In a few moments the whole dripping, half-frozen party were landed safely at the "Summit House," on the brow of Mount Washington. Great was their joy to find a comfortable shelter where they might rest and warm their chilled limbs; but great also was their dismay to find a storm upon them, and nothing visible from the miraculous height they had toiled to gain, but the wet rocks lying close beneath the small windows.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"But these recede. Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche, the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How earth may pierce to heaven, yet leave vain man below."

CHILDE HAROLD.

A calm, beautiful morning succeeded a night of terrors. O, is there in all the world a grander sight than sunrise on Mount Washington?

The first faint rays breaking gradually through clouds of mist, and dimly revealing the outlines of surrounding peaks; then long, bright streams, piercing the gloomy depths of the valleys, chasing gigantic shadows, like spirits of light contending with the legions of darkness; and, at length, the whole immense sea of mountains brought into majestic view, with their unnumbered abysmal valleys covered with forests of every intermingled variety and shade of green.

Florence Howard separated herself from the remaining portion of the party, and stood alone on the topmost summit, leaning on the moss-grown side of a granite boulder, gazing in rapt awe and wonder on the awful sublimity that opened rapidly to her view. Thin, fringy clouds of mist, white and silvery in the growing light, were flying over the dark sides of the mountains, resting a moment in the valleys, and then disappearing, as a dusky form approached the spot where Florence stood.

"We meet again, Miss Howard;" said a voice at her side, low, and deep with emotion.

"And above the clouds, Edgar;" answered she, turning toward him, her face radiant as an angel's in the intensity of the emotions which overawed her soul. "Could we have met so well in any other place as here, with earth and its turmoils all below, and only the free blue dome of heaven above our head?"

"Are you glad to have met me here?" asked he, gazing sadly on her expressive features.

"Can you ask?" said she. "And this is the only spot where I could have rejoiced to meet you now, for here you will be Edgar to me, and may I not be Florence to you?" she added, lifting her clear, liquid eyes with beseeching earnestness to his face.

He could not withstand this gentle appeal, this touching expression. Softly his arm stole round her slender waist. She placed her little hand lightly on his shoulder, and laid her head with confiding tenderness on his bosom.

O, what was Mount Washington in his glory then? What the whole boundless prospect that spread its sublime immensity before them? Their eyes looked only in each other's hearts, and they were warm—O, how warm with love, and hope, and happiness! Mount Washington was cold. They felt a pity for its great, insensate piles of granite, that loomed up there to heaven, cold, bare and stony, void of power to feel and sympathize with human emotions. Wandering to a sheltered nook among the rocks they sat down together.

An hour passed by, during which each member of the little party was intently occupied with his own delighted observations, and then Major Howard recollected the absence of his daughter, who had left his side, saying she wished to contemplate the sublime spectacle apart from the rest of the company. Gazing over the cragged summit, he beheld her approaching with a gentleman at her side.

"Ay, my little truant," said he, advancing to meet her. "So you tired of your solitary contemplation, after all."

"I found this fair lady roaming among the rocks, and ventured to escort her to the party," said the gentleman, bowing politely, as he delivered Florence to the care of her father.

"Thank you, thank you, sir," returned Major Howard, casting a scrutinizing glance toward the young man as he turned away.

"My daughter, what do you think of this scene?" he asked, turning to her.

The glowing happiness, which lighted her features with almost supernatural beauty, astonished him.

"That I have never seen aught so awfully grand and majestic before," returned she, in a tone of wild enthusiasm.

"Does it surpass Niagara?"

"Infinitely," answered she. "Niagara is grand, but it is a single, solitary grandeur. Here, our vision encompasses a boundless expanse of dread, terrific sublimities; a sea of towering Alpine summits on every hand, with fearfully-yawning gulfs and chasms; tremendous precipices, over whose dizzy edges, as we look down, and down, and down into the abysmal depths of bright green valleys, starred over with tiny white cottages, and graced with winding rivers and waving fields of grain, we mark the dark straight lines of unnumbered railways, with their flying trains of cars; countless sheets of water flashing like molten silver; the spires and domes of numerous hamlets, villages, and cities; and, far in the distance, the broad Atlantic's dark blue surface, jotted over with white gleaming sails. O, father, father!" she exclaimed, almost wild with her emotions of awe and admiration, "is there in all the world a spectacle to equal that which feasts our vision now?"

"It is a grand scene," said the father, participating in his daughter's vivid enjoyment. "Look far on those blue summits that bound the prospect to the west and north. Those singularly-formed peaks you notice are called Camel's Rump and Mansfield mountains."

"Would I might forever dwell here!" exclaimed Florence, her eyes roaming in every direction, as though her soul could never drink its fill of the sublimity around.

Perhaps other delights than the scenery would afford rose in bright anticipation, and caused her to utter this strange, wild wish.

"You forget the awful winters, Florence, when you would perish beneath the sky-piled snows," said her father.

"O, I would not mind them!" she answered. "I'd have a little habitation, hidden down among the rocks, where I could sit by a cosey fire and listen to the billowy blasts that swept over my home in the clouds."

"Alone, Florence?" asked her father. "Would you dwell alone in a place so wild with terrors?"

"O, no!" said she quickly. "I would have one companion."

"And who should that be?"

"The one I loved best on earth," replied she, turning her clear eyes on her father's face.

"And that is"——he paused, and added, interrogatively, "Rufus Malcome?"

Florence started. Her features suddenly lost their glowing light, and darkened into a contemptuous frown.

"Don't breathe that name here!" she exclaimed, almost fiercely. "It is not worthy to be spoken in the air of God's own taintless purity."

Her father gazed with astonishment and pity. He had fancied the repugnance and dislike she formerly evinced toward her affianced husband was dissipated or forgotten in the multiplied excitements and varieties of travel; and great was his regret and sorrow to find it still rankling in her bosom. Both stood silent several moments, engaged in their own thoughts and emotions. At length several voices exclaimed gleefully, "The ponies, the ponies are coming!"

Major Howard glanced downwards, and beheld the long line of riderless horses, attended by the guides, slowly wending their way around the shelving, precipitous side of Mount Monroe. The company collected together and agreed to set out and meet them; so, returning to the hotel among the rocks, they partook of a finely-prepared lunch, and, wrapping warmly in shawls and blankets went forth on their hard, laborious way, down the steep path of cragged rocks. Sometimes their feet lighted on a sharp projection, or by a misstep they fell among the stony piles, bruising and wrenching their flesh and bones. But, notwithstanding all the fatigues and hardships of the way, the party were in jubilant spirits. As the prospect narrowed with the descent, they were all taking a last look at the disappearing wonders, and shouting their earnest farewells.

At the "Lake of the Clouds" they halted and drank of its cold, crystal waters. The ponies were feeding on the plain, and the party gladly mounted and commenced their long, toilsome descent.

As the shades of evening were falling, their safe arrival in the valley was hailed by assembled groups

on the piazzas of the Crawford House.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Love thee! words have no meaning to my deep love;
It hath purged me from the weakness of my sex,
And made me new create in thee. Love thee!
I had not lived until I knew thee."

On arriving at the hotel, Florence retired to her room, which she found vacant, and learned Ellen had joined a party on an excursion to Mount Willard, one of the loftiest peaks of the Crawford Notch, to whose summit there is a carriage road.

She drew forth her journal, and, sitting down beside the window, commenced to write.

Nimbly the golden pen sped over the spotless page, leaving a train of sprightly thoughts behind it, while the bright face glowed and sparkled with the buoyant happiness of the soul within.

"I feel like one just dropped from the clouds," she wrote, "and I should be inconsolable at my sudden descent from the august abode of eternal sublimities to the grovelling haunts of care and discontent, but that a sun-soaring spirit companioned and illumined my fall.

"I have stood above the clouds that swept the brows of lofty surrounding mountains, and seen *that star of mine* rise sweet and clear upon my earnest vision, and felt my long-chilled heart grow warm and glad beneath its beaming rays of light and love. I toiled up the miraculous steeps of hoary-headed, granite-crowned Mount Washington, to realize a double joy. The stern, gloomy grandeur was alone sufficient to awaken my profoundest awe, my strongest admiration; but a warm heart-happiness stole over me, which spread a mantling glory over all the thousand dark-browed mountains that loomed in their awful majesty on every side.

"And ever, till my heart has ceased to beat, though I should roam in foreign lands, along the castled Rhine, or beneath the sunny skies of classic Italy, Mount Washington will be to me the glory of the earth! For, standing on its granite piles, while sunrise pierced the gloomy valleys far below, a love nestled warmly to my bosom, with which I would not part for India's wealth of gems. How rich am I in the knowledge of Edgar's love! My soul is strong and firm as the mountains where my joy was born. Shall I ever tremble or waver again? Am I not mailed in armor to meet unshocked the battling swords and lances of life's armied legions of cares and sorrows? With Edgar's love to nerve my soul, what is there that I cannot endure? Surely, I could survive all things save separation from him; and is not this the one which will be demanded of my strength?

"But I will not mar my happiness by dark forebodings of the future. Let me enjoy the sunshine while it lasts. What shall I say to my father?—what will he say to me when he learns who was the companion of my lonely mountain stroll, and the rider at my bridle-rein during all the long, dangerous descent? I fear he will be angry and hurry me away immediately; and yet, with his discrimination, I think he must discern the vast superiority of Edgar Lindenwood to that low-bred, mean-souled Malcome.

"But it is time this record should end, for twilight approaches, and the shadows of the great mountains darken over the valley."

She closed her journal just as Ellen Williams, returned from her excursion, burst into the room. She flung her arms around Florence, and covered her with frantic kisses.

"O, I am so glad to have you safely back!" she exclaimed; "I feared I should never behold you again. How did you live through a night like last on that dreadful mountain-top?"

"We had a comfortable shelter," said Florence, returning her friend's warm embraces.

"Did you wish you were down here in the valley, when the awful storm overtook you?"

"No, indeed," answered Florence; "my courage rose above all difficulties. O, Ellen! you know not what you lost, when, chilled by the blasts that swept Mount Franklin, you grew discouraged and turned back."

"So Ned tells me," said Ellen; "but I saw sublimity enough from Mount Willard to fill my little soul with rapture, though I had no artist-companion at my side to point out the grandest views to my untaught vision."

Here she fixed an arch glance on Florence, who blushed slightly as she said:

"I do not understand your quizzical looks."

"Probably not," returned Ellen, in a pleasant, bantering tone; "and if I should tell you Mr. Lindenwood, the young artist of whom I spoke to you at Niagara, had made his appearance in these regions, no doubt you would express appropriate surprise at the information. However, your father has been impressed with his appearance, and sought an introduction. I saw them in the parlor but a moment since, engaged in conversation."

"Is it possible?" said Florence, her eyes lighting with pleasure.

"Why, very possible," returned Ellen, "and they seemed mutually pleased with each other. Come, let us make ready and go down. I promised Ned to return in five minutes."

The young ladies descended to the parlor, where Florence beheld her father standing before a table, with Edgar at his side, examining a volume of engravings.

She approached softly, when Major Howard turned, and introduced his companion as "Mr. Lindenwood, a former acquaintance of hers, who was visiting the mountains for the purpose of sketching views, and obtaining geological specimens."

Florence saw at once, by her father's words and manner, that he did not suspect Edgar's identity with the muffled figure which had been her companion on the mountains; and, bowing politely, expressed her "pleasure at again meeting Mr. Lindenwood."

Ellen and her brother joined them, and the evening passed in pleasant rehearsals of the wonders and adventures of their late expedition to the "realms of upper air."

As Major Howard led his daughter to the door of her apartment, he remarked: "That young Lindenwood is a fine fellow. I declare, I never thought that wild hermit's boy would grow into a refined, polished gentleman. You hardly recognized him, did you, Florence?"

"He is very much changed in his appearance," said she, briefly.

"Certainly he is," returned her father; "one seldom meets a handsomer fellow. He tells me there is a great deal of fine scenery through a place called the Franconia Notch. He is going there in a few days to complete some sketches. I think we will join him: now we are here, we may as well see all there is to be seen;—unless you wish to go home," he added, finding his daughter silent in regard to the proposed excursion.

"I wish to go home?" exclaimed she, suddenly; "if you remain here till that time comes, your head will be white as the snows of these northern winters."

Laughing at her enthusiasm for mountains, he kissed her cheek and retired.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Most wondrous vision! The broad earth hath not,
Through all her bounds, an object like to thee,
That travellers e'er recorded. Nor a spot
More fit to stir the poet's phantasy;
Grey Old Man of the Mountain, awfully
There, from thy wreath of clouds thou dost uprear
Those features grand,—the same eternally!
Lone dweller 'mid the hills! with gaze austere
Thou lookest down, methinks, on all below thee here."

At the Flume House, three weeks later, we find our little party of travellers, all in apparently fine spirits and delighted enjoyment of the wild, enchanting scenery of the Franconia Notch.

"Well, Lindenwood, what do you intend to show us next?" asked Major Howard, as the group disposed themselves on the sofas of their own private parlor for an evening of rest and quiet, after a day passed in visits to different objects in the vicinity. "I declare these mountains will exhaust me entirely, and I shall be obliged to go away without beholding one half of their alleged wonders."

Young Williams laughed and said, "You are not half as good a traveller as your daughter, major. Instead of looking worn and fatigued by her repeated rambles, she seems more fresh and blooming than on our first arrival."

"Yes," returned the father, looking affectionately on his daughter, "she thrives wonderfully on mountains. I recollect, when we stood on the freezing summit of Washington, she expressed a wish to burrow among its rocks and pass a life-time there, listening to the winds o' nights, and other like charming diversions."

"I did not think her disposition so solitary," remarked young Williams.

"O, she was not going to dwell alone! She wanted one companion to share her habitation. I don't know who it was,—perhaps you were the doomed one!"

"I dare not presume to think Miss Florence would select me for a doom so blissful," returned he, gallantly. "Her choice would fall on some of my more fortunate neighbors."

"Rather say *un*fortunate," said Florence, coloring; "for in that light I think most people would regard the prospect of a life passed amid the clouds and storms of Mount Washington."

"Would you thus regard it, Lindenwood?" inquired young Williams, turning his gaze upon Edgar.

"I don't know," returned the latter. "It might prove an agreeable summer-home; but I think I would want to fly away on the approach of winter."

Major Howard drew forth his guide-book and occupied himself turning over the pages a few moments.

"We have achieved the Flume, the Pool, and the Basin to-day," said he at length. "Say, Lindenwood, where shall we go to-morrow? You are the pioneer of the band."

"I have thought, should the day prove fine," answered he, "it would be pleasant to make an excursion to the summit of Mount Lafayette, or the 'Great Haystack' mountain, as it is sometimes called, which lies several miles west from this point."

"More mountains towering before us! When shall we have done with them?" said the major, in a lugubrious tone. "How high is this Haystack you speak of?"

"But seven hundred feet less than Mount Washington," answered Edgar.

"O dear!" groaned the major. "Heaven save me from attempting the ascension! Can we do nothing better than tear our clothes and bruise our shins among brushwood and bridle-paths; clambering up to the sky just to stare about us a few moments, and then tumbling down headlong, as it were, to the valleys again?"

"Well," said Edgar, "if the Great Haystack intimidates you, suppose we ride up through the Notch, and visit the 'Old Man.'"

"What old man?" asked the major.

"The Old Man of the Mountain!"

"I should have no objection to calling on the old fellow," returned Major Howard, "if he did not live on a mountain; but I cannot think of climbing up any more of these prodigious steeps,—even to see a king in his regal palace."

A burst of laughter followed the major's misapprehension of the object which Lindenwood had proposed to visit.

"It is not a man of flesh and blood we are to see, father," said Florence, as soon as she could command her voice sufficiently to speak, "but a granite profile, standing out from a peak of solid rock, exactly resembling the features of a man's face; whence its name, 'Old Man of the Mountain.'"

"Ay, that's all, then!" said the major, referring to his guidebook. "I shall be very glad of the privilege of standing on the ground for once and looking up at an object; for I confess it afflicts my kindly-affectioned nature to be forever looking down upon this goodly earth, as if in disdainful contempt of its manifold beauties. So, to-morrow, ladies and gentlemen," added he, rising, "we are to pay our respects to this 'Old Man.' I hear music below. You young people would like to join the merry groups, I suppose. I'm going down to the office to enjoy a cigar, and then retire, for my old bones are sadly racked with the jaunts of to-day. Good-night to you all." Thus saying, he walked away.

"Would you like to join the dancers, Ellen?" asked Florence, turning to the fair girl who sat in a rocking-chair by the window, gazing out on the moon-lit earth.

"I don't care to join the dance," she returned; "but I would like to go and listen to the music a while."

"Then let us go," said her brother; "that is, if agreeable to Miss Florence and Mr. Lindenwood."

"I shall be happy to accompany you, Miss Howard," said he, offering Florence his arm, which she accepted, and the party descended to the parlors. They were well-lighted, and filled with guests. Edward and Ellen soon became exhilarated by the music, and joined the cotillons. Edgar looked in vain for a vacant sofa, and at length asked Florence if she would not like to walk on the piazzas. She assented, and they went forth. The evening was cool and delightful. A sweet young moon shed her pale light o'er the scene, veiling the roughness of the surrounding country, and heightening its romantic effect.

"I think you are growing less cheerful every day," said he, gazing tenderly on her downcast features.

"Can you not divine the cause of my depression?" she asked, raising her dark eyes to his face.

"No," said he, smiling on her. "Won't you tell me?"

"Father says we must return home soon," answered she, turning her face away.

"Is that an unpleasant prospect to you?" asked he, seeking to obtain a glance at her averted face.

"Yes," returned she; and he thought a shudder for a moment convulsed the slender form at his side.

They were both silent several moments, and then he remarked, "I intend to visit Wimbledon in a few months; may I not hope to see you should I do so?"

"I presume my father will be happy to receive a visit from you," answered she, in a formal tone.

"But his daughter would rather be excused from my company, I am to understand," said he.

"O, no! not that," returned Florence quickly, turning her face suddenly toward him, when he saw it was bathed in tears and marked with painful emotion.

"What distresses you, Florence?" asked he; gently taking her hand in his. "Will you not tell me?"

"I dare not, Edgar!" answered she, with fast-falling tears. "I have wronged you, and you will not forgive me."

"Then you do not love me!" said he, looking sadly on her countenance.

"O, yes! I love you," she returned, in a tone of pathetic tenderness, "Heaven knows, too wildly well! If that could atone for my fault, I should not fear to give it expression."

"It can!" said he, pressing her hand closely to his heart. "Believe me, Florence, it can atone for everything."

Encouraged by his tone and manner she spoke. "I am engaged"—he dropped the hand and started back—"to Rufus Malcome," she concluded, and then darting quickly into the hall, flew up stairs and locked herself into her own apartment. She paced the floor hurriedly several minutes, and then seized her journal,—always her confidant in moments of affliction.

"I knew it would come to this at last," she wrote. "I have acknowledged my error, and told him of my engagement with Rufus Malcome. It cost me a struggle, but I knew he must learn it from some source e'er long, and better from my lips than those of strangers. He will visit Wimbledon, and then, O horrible thought! I shall be the bride of another; for father tells me Col. Malcome is desirous the marriage should be consummated the approaching winter. I got a long, foolish letter from Rufus yesterday. O dear, how sick and sorry it made me! It is strange mother never writes. Col. Malcome says she is not as well as when we left, and this intelligence disposes father to hasten home. O, my poor bleeding heart! How soon this little day of happiness has past." She closed the book, and threw herself on the bed. After a while she fell asleep, and was roused by Ellen, knocking for admittance.

In the morning she met Edgar in the parlor with her father and young Williams, the three in earnest conversation about their proposed excursion to the Profile Mountain. He made her a distant bow. She returned to her room, and not the most urgent entreaties of her father could induce her to join the party. She pleaded a violent headache, and Ellen announced her resolve to remain with her. She cared nothing about the 'Old Man;' she would stay at home and nurse Florence. So the three gentlemen departed together, and in a few days the Howards had left the mountain region and set out for Wimbledon.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Once more the sound
Of human voices echoes in our ears;
And some commotion dire hath roused
The female ranks. Let's pause and learn
The drift of all this wordy war of tongues."

Back to the Mumbles, the Wimbles and Pimbles, and their clamorous voices again dinning in our ears. Will we ever be quit of them?

As cold weather approached, and the atmospheric thermometer descended to the freezing point, the philanthropic one mounted suddenly to blood heat.

Mrs. Pimble and Mrs. Lawson assumed their green legs and strode over Wimbledon with pompous, majestic tread. The Woman's Rights Reform shook off its sluggish torpor, and rose a mighty shape of

masculine vigor, strength and power. As in atonement for past sloth and inertness, the reformists became more active in their several departments than ever before. Lectures were delivered, clubs formed, and committees appointed to visit the people from house to house, and stir them up by way of remembrance, to engage in the great benevolent enterprises of the day. At length an indignation meeting was announced to be held at the village church in Wimbledon. The house was thronged at an early hour, and great excitement pervaded the assembly, when the chairman and other officers appeared and ascended the platform, which had been erected for their convenience. It must be admitted that Dea. Allen, sitting in the glaring light of the uncurtained windows, contemplated with rather wrathful visage the ample green damask Bloomers, which adorned the lower limbs of the several officiating ladies; but he quite forgot his anger when the president sublimely arose, and, advancing to the front of the stand, said in a loud, commanding tone:

"We will now proceed with the business of this convention. If there is any person in the house that wishes to pray, she, or he, can do so. We hold to liberty and equal rights for all."

She then stood in silence several moments, gazing over the assembly with a self-possessed and confident air. But it appeared no person was moved with a spirit of prayer. So the lady president, after a preparatory hem, proceeded with the duties of her office. She, in a brief speech, explained the reason for holding this meeting, and the object it had in view.

"I have spoken in public before," said she; "often has my voice been raised against tyranny and oppression in all its forms; but never until to-day has it been my happy privilege to address so large an assembly of the inhabitants of my native village on the holy subjects of freedom and philanthropy. It inspires my soul with fresh courage to behold your eager faces, for they seem to say your minds are awakening to the demands of the down-trodden portions of your race. We hold this convention to arouse an interest in the cause of reform, which shall lead to strong and energetic action.

"It is too painfully true that Wimbledon is a sink of immorality, vice and pollution, where moral turpitude stalks with giant strides, and abominable barbarisms are practised under the glaring light of heaven. (Sensation.) The object of this meeting is to crush the oppressor's might, and raise his hapless victims to their proper position in society. I call upon the women of this assembly to rise from the depths of their degradation, rush boldly in the faces of their enslavers, and assert their rights; and, having asserted, maintain them, even at the point of the sword. (Sensation and murmurings.) A series of resolutions will now be presented for the consideration of the convention."

She turned to Mrs. Lawson, who sat majestically in a large arm-chair, her strong arms folded on her broad chest, and whispered a few words in her ear. While she was thus engaged, Mr. Salsify Mumbles rose, and said in a loud tone: "Gentlemen and ladies, I rise for the purpose"—— On hearing the sound of his voice, the lady president rushed to the edge of the platform, and glaring on the upright figure, which shook like an aspen beneath her fiery eyes, exclaimed, in thundering accents, "What are you standing there for, you booby-faced, blubber-chopped baboon in boots?"

"I wish to speak," stammered the terrified man. He could utter no more.

"*You* speak!" said the lofty president, in a tone of the most supreme contempt,—"sit down."

The poor creature dropped as quick as though he had received a cannon ball in his heart.

Mrs. Pimble retired, and Mrs. Secretary Lawson arose, adjusted her green spectacles, and, taking a roll of papers from the table, advanced to the front of the stand. Elevating her brows, she said:

"I will now read several resolutions which have been handed in since the opening of the meeting.

"First, Resolved, That the enfranchised women of Wimbledon use their combined efforts for the liberation of their suffering sisterhood, who yet groan beneath the despotic cruelties of the oppressor man."

The secretary sat down. The president arose. "Are there any remarks to be made on this resolution?" she said.

None were forthcoming.

"Then I move its adoption."

"I second the motion," squealed a little voice from some remote corner.

The secretary came forward. "All in favor of this resolution will please say, ay."

A score of voices were heard.

"It is unanimously accepted," said she. "I will now proceed to the reading of the second.

"Resolved, That, as a means of humbling and destroying the tyranny which the monster man exercises over the larger portion of the women of Wimbledon, six of the usurpers be converted into lamp-posts, and placed at the corners of the principal streets, with tin lanterns fixed upon their heads, to light the cause of philanthropy in its midnight struggles." (Sensation, and several brawny hands scratching uneasily at the apex of their craniums.)

The secretary sat down; the lady president arose. "This is a very spirited as well as elegant resolve,"

said she, "and cannot fail of securing universal approbation. Mrs. Secretary, you will please read the remaining portion, and then all can be adopted by one joint action of the house."

"There are but two brief ones to follow," said the secretary, again coming forward.

"First, Resolved, That the tortuous channel of Wimbledon river be made straight, and the tyrant man be compelled to perform the labor with three-inch augers and pap-spoons.

"Secondly, Resolved, That, the steeple of this church, which looms so boldly impious toward the sky, be felled to the ground, and be converted into a liberty-pole, with the cast-off petticoats of the enfranchised women of Wimbledon flaunting proudly from its summit, as an emblem of the downfall of man's bigotry and despotism, and the triumphant elevation of woman to her proper sphere among the rulers of the earth."

Great sensation as the lady secretary pronounced the foregoing resolves, with strong impressiveness of tone and manner. As she retired, Dea. Allen rose. The lady president sprang from her seat.

"Sit down!" shrieked she, bringing her foot to the platform with a violence that caused it to tremble. But the deacon did not drop at this sharp command, as Mr. Mumbles had done.

"I thought you held to liberty and equal rights," said he, with an air of some boldness.

"I do,—and therefore I tell you to sit down."

"I will speak," said he, returning the defiant looks cast upon him by both president and secretary; "for religion and right demand it. If you dare profane with your sacrilegious hands the holy steeple of this house of God, avenging justice will fall with crushing weight upon your guilty heads."

Having delivered himself of this dread prediction, the deacon sat down.

In her loftiest style, Mrs. Pimble moved the adoption of the resolutions, vouchsafing no word of comment on the impertinent interruption. A brawling, discordant shout of "Ay—ay—ay," in every possible variety of tones, from a swarm of boisterous boys and ranting rowdies, was declared a unanimous approval, and in a storm of hisses and hurrahs the indignation meeting triumphantly adjourned.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Fare thee well! and if forever,
  Still forever, fare *thee well*,
Even though unforgiving, never
  'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.

Yet, O, yet thyself deceive not;
  Love may sink by slow decay,
But by sudden wrench, believe not,
  Hearts can thus be torn away.
Still thine own its life retaineth,
  Still must mine, though bleeding, beat,
And the undying thought which paineth,
  Is, that we no more may meet."

Sudden death had entered the home of Louise Edson and made her a widow. Her husband died of cholera, in a distant city, whence he had gone for the purchase of goods, and was brought home a corpse. Louise reeled to earth beneath the sudden and unexpected blow. Her soul was lacerated by constant memory of the wrong she had done him, and it seemed to her aroused and trembling conscience that avenging Heaven had taken to itself the man she had so deeply injured, and left her to grope darkly on in her own wickedness and sin. True she had been cruelly disappointed, and through long years compelled to struggle on in all the bitter loneliness of feelings unreplied to, bound by indissoluble chains to one who had no tastes or sympathies in common with her. Death had freed her now, but, ah! too late. The taint of sin was on her soul. She had forgot her vows at the altar, debased herself and wronged her husband by listening to words of passion from another. O, far less bitter would have been her grief, as she stood weeping over his lifeless form, could she have laid her hand on the cold, damp brow and said, "I have loved thee ever, and through life's cares and perplexities stood closely at thy side to cheer and smooth thy pathway." But this she could not say. She only felt that the soul had gone to God, to learn her falsity and sin, and looked from the skies upon her with grief and avenging anger. Bitterly she thought of the man who had led her from the path of rectitude, and resolved to see him no more. As a self-inflicted penance, she immured herself within the walls of her own mansion, and determined to pass the remainder of her life in solitude. Many of her numerous friends sought admittance to express sympathy and condolence in her affliction, but she refused to see

them and resisted all their overtures. Only one person gained entrance to her seclusion. That was Mrs. Stanhope, whose kind heart was deeply pained by the apparently incurable sorrow that had settled on the mind of her young friend, and strove, by every effort in her power, to lighten her woes and lead her to more hopeful views of the future.

"It grieves me," said she, "to see you, in the bloom of youth and health, immure yourself in a living tomb, and refuse the consolations you would receive from intercourse with your species."

"I want no more of the world," answered the sufferer; "it has no pleasure or enjoyment for me."

"But, my dear, you should not allow your feelings to overpower your better judgment," remonstrated Mrs. Stanhope.

"Ah, my feelings!" said Louise, bitterly, with tears rolling over her pale cheeks; "they have been my destruction. Had I always controlled them, I had not been the miserable creature I am to-day."

Mrs. Stanhope hardly understood this passionate outburst, but she still strove to soothe and comfort her afflicted friend.

"Your brow is hot and feverish," said she, rising to depart. "I caution you to calm yourself and take some rest, or severe sickness will prostrate you ere long."

"And why should I fear sickness or death," asked Louise, in a hopeless tone, "when the only calm for me is the calm of the grave, the only rest its dreamless slumbers?"

Mrs. Stanhope gazed on the suffering face with tearful pity, and turned away. On opening the hall door, she encountered Col. Malcome, pacing to and fro on the icy piazza. He started suddenly on beholding her, and asked if she came from Mrs. Edson. Mrs. Stanhope answered affirmatively.

"And how have you left her?" inquired he, with an expression of strong anxiety and emotion on his features.

"She seems deeply afflicted," returned Mrs. Stanhope.

"Does she still persist in refusing to see her friends?" asked he.

"She is thus disposed, I regret to say," was Mrs. Stanhope's reply.

"Would you do me the favor to return, and entreat her to grant me a few moments in her presence?" inquired he, in an earnest tone.

"I will perform your request with pleasure," she said; "but I fear I shall bring you naught but a gloomy refusal." Thus saying, she reëntered the apartment of Louise.

"I am come with a petition, Mrs. Edson," she remarked, approaching her side, and laying a hand softly on the bowed head. "Will you grant it your favor?"

"I must hear it first," said Louise.

"Col. Malcome is walking on the piazza; he wishes to see you."

"Go and tell him, in another and a darker world I'll see him; never again in this," answered Louise, starting to her feet, her whole frame trembling with excitement and anger.

Mrs. Stanhope was astonished and alarmed at her appearance, and stood gazing on her in wondering silence. At length she said, "I cannot take a message like that to him; he would think it the wild raving of a lunatic."

"Tell him, then, to go away, and never approach these doors again," said Louise, suddenly bursting into tears. Mrs. Stanhope lingered in surprise at her friend's emotion, and strove to soothe it.

"Go," said Louise; "I command you to go, and send him away. I shall die if I hear another of his footfalls on the piazza."

Alarmed by the dreadful energy of her manner, Mrs. Stanhope hurried away. The colonel came eagerly to her side, as she stepped forth.

"Does she refuse me?" he asked.

"She does," said Mrs. Stanhope.

"And does she give no encouragement that I may gain admittance at some future time?"

"None."

"Then carry this to her," said he, placing a small, folded letter in Mrs. Stanhope's hand, and turning dejectedly away.

Again she entered the mansion. Louise sat with head bowed between her hands, and did not raise her eyes. Mrs. Stanhope laid the missive on the table beside her, and silently left the apartment.

Twilight deepened into evening, and still the suffering woman sat there, in mute, unutterable agony. A servant entering with lights at length aroused her to consciousness, and her eye fell on the folded letter lying on the stand. Hastily tearing away the envelope, she dropped on her knees, and ran over its contents with devouring eagerness, while her features worked with strong, conflicting emotions, and tears rolled continually from her beautiful eyes and blistered the written page. "Why do you drive me from you?" it began. "If, in an unguarded moment, under the intoxicating influences which your bewitching presence, the quiet seclusion of the spot, and romantic hush and stillness of the hour threw around me, all combining to lap my soul in delicious forgetfulness of everything beyond the momentary bliss of having you at my side, I suffered words to escape my lips, which should have remained concealed in my own bosom, you might at least let the deep, overpowering love which forced their utterance, plead as some extenuation for my presumption and error. But it seems you have cast me from you forever—unpitied—unforgiven. O, Louise! I did not think you so implacable. The sin is mine, and I would come on bended knee to implore pardon for the suffering and sorrow my rashness has brought to your innocent heart; but you fly from my approach, and banish me from your presence. No mercy for one, who, though he may have erred, is surely atoning for his errors by anguish as deep, as poignant as your own. Night after night I walk the piazza beneath your windows. I know you hear my step and feel that I am near. But you will not open the casement and let me for a moment behold your features and crave your forgiveness. O, Louise, am I to die without a pitying word or look from you?

"I sit by my Edith's bed-side through long, weary midnight hours, and she wakes from her fitful slumbers and asks for you. 'Why does she never come to see me now? There's no arm raises me so lightly, no hand bathes my brow so gently, as hers. Will you not bring her, father?'

"O, what agony these words inflict! I have to feel my own rashness and folly have deprived my sick child of a tender nurse. Louise, do you not remember one dear, bright morning, long ago, when I was sitting at the piano in that pleasant parlor I'm forbidden to enter now, and you stood beside me in all your bewildering grace and beauty, that I sought from you a promise which was given? Still, still would I conjure you, as Steerforth said to David, *think of me at my best*. You will need to do it soon; for your contempt and scorn are hurrying me on to deeds of crime and wickedness. O, will you drive me to the wretch's doom, or win me to a life of happiness and virtue? It is yours to decide."

Such were the contents of the letter which remained clenched in the grasp of the agitated woman through the long hours of that woe-fraught night. When the first gray tints of dawn were visible, she started and hid it away in her bosom. Grasping a pen she traced a few lines with trembling hand, and placed them in an envelope directed to Mrs. Stanhope. Then unclosing her wardrobe, she selected a few articles of clothing, made them into a small bundle, and wrapping a heavy shawl round her slender form, and concealing her features in a large black bonnet with a long, thick veil, she opened softly the hall door, and stole forth into the cold, biting air, walking hurriedly over the frosty paths till she had gained the lonesome country road beyond the village.

As Mrs. Stanhope was sitting down to breakfast, a knock called her to the door, where she beheld Mrs. Edson's servant, who presented her with a letter, and said her mistress had gone away very suddenly, and she would like to know if she had left any word as to when she would return.

Mrs. Stanhope broke the seal, and read with surprise and astonishment depicted on her features. The girl stood waiting to learn its contents.

"I think," said Mrs. Stanhope, suddenly recollecting herself, "that your mistress will be absent some time. She informs me she has gone on a visit to the aunt with whom she resided previous to her marriage."

"Where does her aunt live?" asked the girl.

"I do not know," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "but I think at a considerable distance from this place."

The girl retired, and Mrs. Stanhope reëntered the breakfast room.

"Who was in the porch?" inquired Miss Pinkerton, as her sister assumed her place by the coffee urn.

"Mrs. Edson's servant," returned she, arranging the cups with an absent air.

"What did she want?" asked Miss Martha, opening her muffin and dropping a piece of golden butter on its smoking surface.

"She brought me a note from her mistress," said Mrs. Stanhope, "who has departed suddenly on a visit to her aunt, and wishes me to superintend the care of her mansion for a time."

"I guess she is coming out of her dumps," said Martha. "I always said there was no danger of her dying of grief for the loss of a husband. She'll come home one of these days a gay widow, and set her cap for Col. Malcome. I always thought she had a liking for him."

Mrs. Stanhope made no reply to this unfeeling speech. After breakfast the colonel chanced in to take the long-forgotten package away, when he learned of Louise's sudden departure, and went home in a state of increased anguish and despair.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"To the old forest home
I hie me again;
But I bring not the gladness
My spirit knew when
I roamed in my childhood
Its wide-spreading bounds;
For sorrows have pierced me,
My soul wears the wounds."

The Hermit of the Cedars sat in his antique room alone, by a peat-wood fire. He appeared wrapt in moody thought and contemplation, though ever and anon, as the wintry blast gave a wilder sweep over the swaying roof above him, he turned and glanced uneasily toward the door, as though he wished and waited the appearance of some form over its threshold. But the hours passed on, and no one came to cheer his loneliness. So, heaping the ashes over the glowing embers, he betook himself to his lowly couch, but his head had hardly touched the pillow when a quick step crackling along the icy path struck his ear. Ere he could reach the door it was pushed open, and a voice called out hastily, "Uncle Ralph!"

"Edgar, my boy!" exclaimed the hermit, groping in the darkness to clasp him in his arms. "Are you returned at last?"

"Yes, dear uncle," answered the young man; "I reached the village by the evening stage, and hurried with all speed to my old forest home."

The hermit lighted a candle and raked open the coals. A bright fire soon burned on the hearth, and by its ruddy blaze the fond uncle marked the changes two years had wrought in the appearance of his nephew. He was taller, and a manly confidence of tone and manner had succeeded the reserve and timidity which characterized his boyhood. The luxuriant masses of soft brown hair were brushed away from the clear, pale brow, and the deep blue eyes glowed in the conscious light of genius and intellectual fervor. The hermit gazed with ardent admiration on the commanding elegance and beauty of the form before him.

"Education and travel have made a wonderful improvement in your appearance, my boy," he remarked at length, his voice trembling with emotion as he spoke. "Still I don't know but I liked you better as the curly-headed boy in morocco cap and little blue frock-coat, that used to come bounding over the forest path, with his satchel in hand; or set here of long winter evenings, reading some treasured volume at my side; or perched within the window nook gazing silently upward at the glistening stars;—for the dreamy boy I could keep near me, but the lofty, ambitious man I cannot hope to prison here in a solitary wilderness,—nor should I indulge in a wish so selfish," he added. "Tell me, Edgar, of your travels, your enjoyments and occupations, since you departed from this lowly roof."

The young man gave a brief rehearsal of the principal events of the past two years. He hesitated somewhat when he came to his meeting and renewal of acquaintance with Florence Howard, recollecting his uncle's former aversion to their intercourse. He might have passed over it in silence, but his delicate sense of honor would not allow him to deceive in the smallest point the heart that loved him so devotedly. The listening man bent earnest, scrutinizing glances on the speaker's face as he proceeded with his tale, and when it was finished, bowed his gray head on his thin hands, as was his wont when engaged in deep thought, and remained silent.

At length a tremendous blast swept through the forest, blew open the door, and scattered the coals from the deep fire-place over the floor of the apartment. The moody man started from his reverie. Edgar secured the door, and, taking a broom composed of small sprigs of hemlock and cedar, brushed the scattered embers into a pile.

"Do you not wish to retire?" asked the hermit, as the young man resumed his seat in the corner.

"As you wish, uncle," returned he; "I do not feel much fatigued."

"Ay, but I think you are so," said the kind-hearted man, regarding attentively his nephew's features. "My joy at beholding you has rendered me forgetful of your physical comforts. Let me get you some refreshment, and then you shall lie down and rest your weary limbs."

The hermit took a small brown earthen jug from a rude shelf over the fire-place, and, pouring a portion of its contents into a bright-faced pewter basin, placed it on a heap of glowing coals. Then going to a cupboard he brought forth a large wooden bowl, filled with a coarse, white substance. When the contents of the basin were warm he placed it on the table, and setting a chair, said, "Come, my boy, and partake of this simple food. 'Tis all I have to offer you; not like the dainty repasts at which you are accustomed to sit in the abodes of wealth and fashion."

Edgar approached and took the proffered seat.

"Ay," said he; "you have served me a dish more grateful to my palate than the most delicately-prepared dainties would prove. This rich, sweet milk is delicious, and who boils your hominy so nicely,

uncle?" he continued, conveying several slices of the substance in the wooden bowl to his basin.

"Dilly Danforth, the poor village washerwoman, cooks it, and her boy, Willie, brings it to me," answered the hermit.

"Ay, the lad you mentioned in one of your letters," said Edgar. "Why does he not remain with you altogether? You seemed happy in his companionship, and I hoped he might become to you a second Edgar."

A strange expression passed over the face of the recluse as his nephew, with much earnest truthfulness of manner, gave utterance to these words.

"I did like to have the boy with me," he remarked; "but his mother was lonely without him."

Edgar rose from his simple repast.

"Now you had better retire," said his uncle, tenderly; "though I fear you will rest but ill on my hard couch."

"My slumbers will be sweet as though I reposed on eider down," returned he, "if you will but assure me that my coming or words have not marred your quiet and composure."

"My boy," said the hermit, gazing on him anxiously, "what do you mean? How should the arrival of one I have so longed to behold give aught but joy to my lonely soul?"

"I may have spoken words that grieved you," said the young man, sorrowfully; "but I could not bear to conceal the truth from you, dear uncle;" and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"Edgar," returned the hermit, with emotion, "I am grateful for your confidence, and though I could have wished your heart's affections bestowed on some other woman, I will no longer oppose your inclinations. Marry Florence Howard if you choose."

"Marry her!" exclaimed Edgar, suddenly breaking in upon his uncle's discourse. "She is engaged to another."

"What is his name?" asked the hermit.

"Rufus Malcome," returned the young man.

"What! a brother to the girl I saw with you on the river bank?" inquired the recluse, with a sudden excitement of manner.

"Yes," said Edgar; "the brother of Edith Malcome."

"O, the mysterious workings of fate!" exclaimed the hermit, falling again into a ruminating silence, which Edgar did not deem it wise to disturb.

So they laid down on the lowly couch, and the young man, fatigued with his journeyings, drew the coverings over his head to exclude the shrill shriekings of the sweeping blasts, and soon rested quietly in the sweet forgetfulness of sleep.

Sleep! angel ministrant to the grief-stricken soul. How many that walk this verdant earth would fain lie locked in her slumberous arms forever!

CHAPTER XL.

"No voice hath breathed upon mine ear
Thy name since last we met;
No sound disturbed the silence drear,
Where sleep entombed from year to year,
Thy memory, my regret."

In her own elegantly appointed apartment sat Florence Howard, with her journal open upon the table.

"Beneath the old roof-tree of home once more," she wrote, "to find my mother's pale face yet paler than when I left her, and a sudden tremor and nervousness betrayed on the slightest unusual sound, which is exceeding painful to witness.

"Hannah's penchant for me seems to have decreased somewhat, since father waited on Col. Malcome and asked his consent to the delay of my proposed nuptials with Rufus, till some change should occur in mother's health. Dr. Potipher thinks she will hardly survive the trying weather of the approaching

spring.

"Poor, dear mother! what shall I do without her? But I may not linger long behind.

"I used to think I was very miserable, when I pined in ignorance of Edgar's love, and grew jealous of his attentions to gentle Edith Malcome; but what were those petty griefs, compared with the agony of having known the sweet possession of his heart, and lost it,—lost it, too, through my own selfish folly and weakness? Truly, there's naught so bitter as self-reproach. Heaven only knows what I have suffered since that dreadful night, when I fled from his angry, reproachful looks, and locked myself in the solitude of my chamber. And that freezing, distant recognition on the following morning! O, what a shuddering horror will ever creep over me with the memory of Franconia Notch! And Mount Washington,—which was for aye to tower above all other scenes of grandeur earth's broadest extent could afford,—a thought of it unnerves my soul with grief. What short-sighted mortals are we!

"I think my father suspects my secret and reproaches himself for giving me so free access to Edgar's company. I would not wonder if the delay he has urged to my marriage were influenced as much by this sad knowledge as my mother's failing health. Col. Malcome gave a reluctant assent, at which I am surprised. When his sweet daughter is sinking slowly into the grave, 'tis strange he can think of any earthly interest.

"I have looked mournfully toward the cedar forest to-night, and thought of the poor lone hermit in his humble hut, and wished, O, how fervently wished! that I, like him, had a habitation afar from the world's hollow throngs, where I could sit and brood in solitude over my broken heart!

"Am I not a living, breathing, suffering example of the truth of Byron's eloquent words?

> 'The day drags on, though storms keep out the sun,
> And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on.'"

Florence closed her journal, and approached the window.

As she was dropping the curtain to retire, a dark figure moving stealthily under the leafless branches of the lindens, which stood in rows on the least public side of the house, arrested her attention. The remembrance of a similar appearance she had once seen crossed her mind, and no ill having followed that, she dismissed her fears, and ere long sank to rest.

When the village clock pealed forth the hour of midnight, the dark figure she had observed, stood on the terrace below. The hall door swung noiselessly on its hinges, and Hannah Doliver stepped forth. "Here are the matches and kindling-wood," said she in a whisper, approaching the dusky form, and holding a small basket forward.

"Are they all asleep?" asked a hushed voice.

"Yes," answered she.

"See that you give the alarm in season," returned the muffled figure, as he took the basket from the woman's hand, and passed softly down the steps of the piazza.

Silently the destroying fires were lighted. But the midnight incendiary would have proceeded less deliberately with his work of destruction, had he marked the tall, lank figure in a long, dark overcoat, and slouching-brimmed hat, which slowly dogged closely his every footstep. Suddenly a bright flash leaped up from the fragments the wicked man sought to enkindle, and revealed his garb and features. A mingled expression of hatred and revenge glared from the sunken eyes of his follower, who stood in the shadow of a linden near by, as the pale, handsome features and light, curling locks of the incendiary met his gaze.

"Villain!" exclaimed he, springing forward, as the man turned with a hurried step from his work of destruction; "would you burn innocent people in their beds?"

With one fell blow the man dashed the lank form to the earth, and fled down the avenue of cedars, which led to the river, never heeding the startled looks of a thin woman, and tall, graceful youth, against whose sides he brushed in his guilty flight.

"Who could that flying figure have been?" asked the lad of the woman, when the man had rushed past.

"I don't know, indeed, Willie," answered she, "unless it was your friend, the hermit, gone wild. You say he has been more gloomy than usual for several days."

"O, no!" returned the youth; "it was not the hermit. I distinguished this man's features very plainly as he passed, and it was no one I ever saw before. He had no covering on his head, and his hair was light and curly. His face seemed glowing with rage and anger."

"It must have been some lunatic escaped from the asylum," said the woman.

"Well, I think you are right, mother," answered the boy. "I hope he has not harmed the poor hermit, whom I left sitting on a stone among the cedars, near Major Howard's mansion. He came thus far with me to-night, as it was so late, and the way long and gloomy."

"Ah! he was very kind," remarked the woman. "I began to fear you were not coming for me, Willie, and thought I should have to remain at Mr. Pimble's all night, or go home alone. Is the hermit's nephew still with him?"

"No, he went away this morning, and the poor old man is very lonely and sad. He said he wished I could be with him all the time."

"Strange being!" said the woman. "Why does he not leave the forest, and dwell among his fellow-men?"

"I think it is because he experienced some disappointment in his youth," answered the lad, "and has come to distrust all his species."

"It may be so," returned the woman. "I have heard of such instances. He is very kind to you, my boy, and but for his little bundles of sticks, I think we must have perished during your long illness through that piercing cold winter. Strange are the realities of life; stranger than fiction! When the rich Mr. Pimble drove me from his threshold, the poor hermit of the forest braved the bleak storms, and laid the charitable piles on my poverty-stricken threshold."

The mother and son had now reached their humble abode.

"Willie," said she, "I wish you would run down by the river and gather up the few pieces of linen I washed and spread out there yesterday. The wind is rising fast, and they will blow away before morning."

The boy hastened to perform her request, and in a few moments came rushing into the house, and exclaimed:

"Mother! mother! Major Howard's house is all on fire! I am going up there," and, flinging the pieces he held in his arms on the table, he flew off toward the burning mansion.

Mrs. Danforth followed him to the door and discovered his words were but too true. Long tongues of flame darted upward to the sky, and ran fiercely over the walls and terraces of the mansion. The church bell was pealing madly to rouse the slumbering people to the rescue; but the fire gained so rapidly in the sweeping wind, all efforts to quench it could not prove otherwise than futile. To save the lives of the inmates would be the utmost which could be done, and even this seemed a perilous undertaking.

Willie Danforth was rushing up the avenue of cedars, when, just as he was entering the grounds of the burning mansion, he stumbled over some large object which obstructed the path. It moved beneath, and, by the glare of the flames, he discovered the body of his friend, the hermit, lying at full length upon the frozen ground. The prostrate man opened his eyes and recognized Willie.

"O, my good boy, I am sadly hurt!" said he, feebly. "Will you help me to rise and get away from this place?"

Willie, who forgot everything, even the burning mansion before him, in care and pity for his friend, raised him to his feet, and half supporting the tall, thin form in his young, strong arms, drew him down the long avenue and along the river bank to his mother's dwelling.

And that night the insensible form of the Hermit of the Cedars lay stretched upon the low couch of Dilly Danforth's humble abode.

CHAPTER XLI.

"There are so many signs of wickedness
Around me, that my soul is pressed with fear.
O, that the power divine would kindly aid
Me in my need, and save me from the wiles
And artful plottings of this wicked man!
For though he speaks so soft, and smiles so fair,
I've seen at times a strange look in his eye
Which doth convince me that his soul is black within."

Col. Malcome flung wide the doors of his elegant mansion to receive the suffering family who, in the space of a few short hours, had lost their all of earthly wealth by the subtle element of fire. The invalided Mrs. Howard was borne on a litter to an apartment so warm and complete in its arrangements, as to almost wear the appearance of having been fitted up expressly to receive her in her forlorn and unsheltered condition. Large, richly-furnished rooms, all glowing bright in their luxurious comforts, were also in readiness for Florence and her father. The latter was nearly overwhelmed with grief and dismay at his sudden and irremediable loss. Col. Malcome strove by every

means in his power to assuage and lighten his sorrows.

"My house is your home as long as you choose to make it so, Major Howard," said he one morning after the afflicted family had been several weeks partakers of his generous hospitality.

"I cannot consent to burden you with my family any longer than while I can find some place to which I can remove them," answered he. "And then I must engage in some kind of business to provide for their support. This unfortunate accident has given my wife so dreadful a shock, I fear she will not long survive it."

A significant smile appeared for a moment on Col. Malcome's features at these latter words, but he concealed it from the distressed man, and replied, "It grieves me to hear you talk thus. Why should you regard your family as burdensome guests beneath my roof, when we are soon to be linked in the ties of relationship by the union of our children?"

"True!" returned Major Howard. "Such a union has been proposed, but——"

"But what?" asked Col. M.

"You may not look as favorably on its consummation now as formerly."

"Judge not so meanly of me, my friend!" said he, warmly. "Your daughter's rich soul and personal charms are all the wealth I desire in the lady who shall become the wife of my son."

Major Howard was silent.

"I do not wish to hasten this marriage," resumed the colonel, "because you expressed a desire, several months ago, that it should be delayed till a change occurred in your wife's situation (a strange emphasis on the word *wife*); but were it consummated, your family could occupy one-half of my mansion with no expense to me till Rufus should rebuild the one you have recently lost by fire."

Major Howard's face suddenly brightened. The colonel saw he had made a hit, and followed up his advantage so adroitly that e'er the twain parted, the father had consented that the marriage between his daughter and the colonel's son should take place within four weeks. He sought his daughter and communicated the intelligence. Florence received it in silence. She felt they were without a home in the wide world, and at the mercy of the man under whose roof they were sheltered. A strange horror was seizing upon her soul and bowing her spirits to the earth. There were many looks and glances around her she could not understand; but they seemed possessed of some dark and hidden meaning. Hannah Doliver's glee knew no bounds. She followed Rufus from morning till night, and appeared uneasy if he was a moment beyond her sight. The young man returned her fondness with hatred and contempt. Edith, with her pale, wan face and sunken eyes, looked the mere shadow of her former self. During her long illness, her beautiful head had been shorn of its ripply wealth of auburn curls, and, as she lay languidly on the soft cushions of her luxuriant couch, few would have recognized in that wasted form the once radiant Edith Malcome. She had a feverishness and uncertainty of temper common to long-confined invalids. Florence could find little companionship in her society; besides, she was too weak to endure the excitement of laughter and conversation.

Rufus sought his affianced bride at every opportunity; and the only place where she could rest secure from his interruptions was the apartment of her mother, where he never ventured to intrude, being possessed of a strange fear and dread of sick people. He never visited Edith, unless compelled to do so by his father.

Florence was one day sitting in the deep recess of one of the drawing-room windows, with the massy folds of purple damask drooped before her, occupied in the perusal of a book of poems, when a succession of low, murmuring sounds near by, disturbed her, and listening a moment she heard Col. Malcome say, in a smothered tone, "There's no fear of detection; all moves on bravely, and we shall have a blooming young bride here in a few weeks."

Then there was a low, chuckling laugh, which Florence recognized as Hannah Doliver's. After a while the woman spoke in a stifled voice, "Don't you want to see *her*?" she said. "I should think you would." There was a slight malice in her tone, which appeared to irritate him somewhat.

"I can wait very well till the ceremony is performed," he answered at length. "Of course, she will appear at the marriage of her daughter." A strange emphasis on the last word.

"But come," he added directly, "we must not linger here. Some of the family may observe us."

Thus speaking, they passed out of the apartment, relieving Florence of the fear with which she had been shaking during their whole conversation lest they should discover her retreat in the window.

When they were gone, she clasped her hands, and exclaimed in a low, but fervent tone, "Will no arm save me from the power into which I have fallen?"

For several days she sought an opportunity to speak privately with her father, but his attention was so incessantly occupied by Col. Malcome, that none presented.

When at last she gained his ear, he laughed her suspicions to scorn, and bade her never come to him with such an idle tale again.

The good-natured major was infatuated by, what he termed, the munificent magnanimity of Col. Malcome, and, moreover, had been nurtured in luxurious tastes, and the prospect of reïnstating himself in an elegant home by so easy a process as the marriage of his daughter, was too desirable to be allowed to vanish lightly away.

CHAPTER XLII.

"And they dare blame her! they whose every thought
Look, utterance, act, hath more of evil in 't
Than e'er she dreamed of or could understand,
And she must blush before them, with a heart
Whose lightest throb is worth their all of life!"

In a neat, but scantily furnished apartment of a small, white cottage sat Louise Edson beside the low window which looked forth on a great frowning building with grated bars and ponderous iron doors.

"Is this a prison across the yard, aunt?" she asked of a tall, solemn woman, in a black head-dress, who had just entered the room, and stood laying some fresh fuel on the fire.

"It is the county jail," replied she.

"How it makes me shudder to look at it!" said Louise, turning from the window, and assuming a chair near her aunt, who was taking a quantity of sewing from a work-basket.

"It reminds me of a lady who was my near neighbor in Wimbledon, and who has been my sole companion for several months, to see you constantly occupied with your needle," remarked Louise, looking on her aunt as she assorted her cotton and arranged her work.

"What is the lady's name, of whom you speak?" inquired the woman.

"Mrs. Stanhope," answered Louise; "she is a kind soul. It pains me to think I shall never see her again."

"Do you not intend to return to your late home?" inquired the aunt, somewhat surprised at the words of her niece.

"Never!" returned Louise, with strong emphasis, "I could not endure it."

"Pshaw! you will get over this weakness in a little while," said her aunt. "You have half-conquered it by coming away, and you will complete the victory by returning."

"I tell you no," said Louise, somewhat angered by her aunt's persistence. "I have already written to Mr. Richard Giblet, one of the former firm of Edson & Co., to settle my affairs in Wimbledon, dispose of my late residence, and remit the proceeds to me in drafts."

The aunt looked astonished at this piece of intelligence, and said, "You have been rash and premature, my child, and I fear will regret your hasty proceedings."

"If you knew how much it relieved me to get out of that place, aunt, you would not fear I should ever wish to return. I was so near my enslaver there, and my heart said all the time, 'O, I *must* see him!' while conscience whispered sternly, 'You *dare* not do it.' There was a constant war 'twixt love and reason, which threatened the extermination of the latter."

"I am glad you have been ruled by your better judgment," said her aunt; "passion always leads us astray when we listen to its voice."

"That is very true," answered Louise; "but O that I had known it only by precept, and not by experience!"

"Experience is called the best teacher," remarked the aunt.

"It is the most bitter one," returned Louise. "How I wish you had been with me through the few brief years of my married life! With your kind care and admonitions I think I would never have strayed darkly into sin and error."

"We all err sometimes in our lives," said her aunt; "and I cannot discover as you have wandered so far from the paths of rectitude that your return to them should seem a thing impossible."

"But did I not tell you how I deceived my husband?" asked Louise, looking wofully in the face of her aunt.

"Yes," returned she, calmly. "Did he never deceive you?"

Louise paused a few moments, and answered, "I *was* deceived when I married him, but it was by my own blindness. However, the deception did not last long," she added, with a spice of her old spirit.

"And when it passed away," said her aunt.

"Don't recall those terrible hours to my mind," interrupted Louise, quickly, "lest I should forget the double share of respect I owe the dead in that I failed to give them their due on earth."

"I would not have the dead wronged," returned her aunt; "but I would have the living righted. You used to be free and unrestrained in your intercourse with me in the glad days of childhood and youth. I often feared some envious sorrow would overtake you to chill and despoil that buoyant exuberance of life and gayety. You were too wildly rich in heart and soul. You wasted more love on a pet rabbit than would eke out the whole passion life of a score of poorer natures. O, Louise, I trembled when you stood before the altar and took the vows of faithfulness to Mr. Leroy Edson. I knew you fancied that you loved him, and thought in the wild potency of your passion to bear him skyward on your soaring pinions; but, ah! I saw how sadly his clogging weight would drag you to the earth."

She paused, and Louise was silent, but her face showed traces of tears.

"Do not think me severe," resumed her aunt; "I am only just. Now tell me with your old-time confidence, why did you love another man while your husband lived?"

"It was because,"—— Louise hesitated, and then added, "because I was wicked."

"And for what other reason?" pursued her aunt.

"And because I was tired," Louise went on in a dreamy tone, as if thinking aloud to herself, "and because I was hungry."

"Your expressions begin to assume the old, quaint, humorous form," said the aunt smiling. "I suppose you mean your soul was tired for want of something on which to rest, and hungry for want of its proper nourishment."

"That's what I mean, aunt; but then I do not seek excuse for the crime of stealing to appease the cravings of my hunger."

"A famishing man has never yet been hung for stealing to sustain life."

"You draw a strong comparison, aunt," said Louise, laughing in spite of herself.

"To meet a strong case," returned she. "It is a duty I owe you to use my best efforts to destroy this morbid melancholy which is preying on your spirits. I know nothing of the man you have loved. He may or may not be worthy of your affections. It is not his cause I plead. But I would divest you of the false glasses through which your sensitive brain, wrought on by high excitement, and shocked by a sudden calamity, has come to regard the events of your past life, and let you behold them again with your own natural sight. If I can effect this, I confidently trust to your good reasoning powers to set all right again."

Louise remained silent after her aunt ceased speaking, but her countenance evinced far more energy and hopefulness than at the commencement of the conversation. At length she rose and said, "Well, aunt, I think I have as much logic as my weak brain can digest in one night, so I'll retire to my bed-room, if you please."

In a few weeks, young Mrs. Edson, under the tuition of her strong-minded, sensible aunt, regained a share of her former vivacity, and declared she would be quite herself again were it not for that great black jail in the adjoining yard, which frowned on her every morning and loomed dismally in her dreams.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Ah, why
Do you still keep apart, and walk alone,
And let such strong emotions stamp your brow,
As not betraying their full import, yet
Disclose too much!
Disclose too much!—of what?
What is there to disclose?
A heart so ill at ease."

The preparations for the nuptials of Florence Howard with Rufus Malcome were rapidly progressing.

The services of Dilly Danforth were put in active requisition. Day after day her tall, thin form was seen moving to and fro the great mansion, washing windows, polishing grates, and brightening the silver knobs and plates of the mahogany doors. Col. Malcome, in his delight at the approaching marriage of his son, resolved to give a large fête on the occasion, and no pains were spared to render it the most costly and sumptuous affair ever presented to the gaze of the people of Wimbledon. The greatest expense was lavished upon the wedding-banquet, and the young bride's trousseau might have vied in magnificence and profusion with that of a royal princess.

All this display and grandeur was revolting to Florence. It humbled and mortified her proud, independent nature to owe the expensive decoration of her approaching bridal to the generosity of the man she was about to marry.

Col. Malcome appeared in the most fitful spirits as the preparations advanced toward their completion. He paced the piazzas for hours together, with hurried, excited steps, pausing often and muttering indistinctly to himself.

Sometimes he stood before a window in a dejected attitude, and gazed mournfully over the intervening gardens and cottages toward the elegant and stately mansion lately occupied by the Edsons, which stood on a small elevation just across the river, in the midst of beautiful grounds. Then, as he turned suddenly away, his countenance would change from its expression of gloomy regret to one of fierceness and angry revenge.

At length the night, whose morrow was to witness the long-expected ceremony, drew on. Great torrents of rain were flooding the streets and dashing dismally against the casements of the mansion which was, ere long, to blaze in the light of the festive scene.

Still, Col. Malcome, unheeding the storm, walked the wet marbles of the piazzas, with arms folded over his chest and head bowed, in a state of absent, moody absorption. At length the hall-door opened, and Rufus advanced to his father's side.

"What do you want with me?" said the colonel, turning quickly toward him.

"Not much," returned the son. "I heard you walking here, and thought I would join you, as there was no one in the house to keep me company."

"Where is Major Howard?"

"With his wife," answered Rufus.

"And Hannah?" continued the colonel.

"Don't mention that detestable creature!" said the young man angrily. "I can't abide her. So she is out of my sight, I care not where she is."

"Why do you hate the woman so?" asked Col. M. "She seems very fond of you."

"Yes! I cannot move but what she follows me. It is strange Major Howard retains such a bold, impudent slut in his service."

The colonel coughed slightly and remained silent.

At length Rufus spoke again hesitatingly, "Father!" said he.

"Well!" returned Col. M., in a tone which indicated for him to proceed.

"I don't want to marry Florence Howard," said the young man, with a great gulp, as though it cost him a mighty effort to pronounce the words.

"Why not?" asked the father, apparently unheeding his son's emotion. "Don't you love the girl?"

"Love her!" repeated Rufus. "I don't know whether I do or not; but I am afraid of her."

"Afraid of a little, puny girl!" exclaimed Col. Malcome, in a towering rage, "I did not think you such a pitiful craven."

The young man seemed angered by his father's words, but made no retort.

"Why are you afraid of her?" inquired the colonel after a while.

"Because she looks so proud and stern upon me, and treats me with such scorn and contempt."

"O, never mind that!" said his father. "When she is once your wife trust me to lower her loftiness, and make her as meek and humble as you could wish. Let us go in now. How wildly this storm is driving! I hope it may clear before the hour for the marriage arrives." Thus speaking, the father and son entered the hall and sought their respective apartments.

While this scene was passing on the piazza, Florence sat in her room with her journal open on the table before her.

"The last evening of my free, unfettered existence has drawn on," she wrote. "How wildly shrieks the

wind, driving great torrents of rain against my curtained casements! It is fit a night like this should usher in my day of doom. Father seems delighted with the approaching festival, and mother has lost the dread she formerly evinced, which I now think was occasioned by the fear of losing me from her side. Hannah is almost wild with glee. She follows the steps of Rufus closely as his shadow. He hates her, and in this one point our feelings sympathize, but in no other. It is impossible to describe the loathing and abhorrence with which I regard the man who in a few more hours will be my husband. O, heavens! will no power save me from a fate so dreadful as a lifetime passed with him? Alas, no! Our beautiful home is gone, and we are poor, and had been shelterless but for these walls, which opened their doors to take us in. And can I make so poor a return for this friendly generosity, or so ungratefully scorn and reject the means presented to reïnstate my father in wealth and magnificence, as to refuse to perform the act which will repay the kindness and restore to him the elegant home whose loss he so deeply deplores? O, no! I must not be so selfish and ungrateful. Still, it seems a great sacrifice even to insure a father's ease and happiness. I have an increasing dread and horror of this Col. Malcome, which I cannot overcome, despite all his apparent generosity and sympathy in our misfortune, and lavish display of profusion and splendor with which he surrounds this approaching bridal. It seems to me all this munificence goes to serve some fell purpose of his own. His strange power over my easy-natured father excites dark apprehensions in my bosom. But why torture myself with imagined ills, when the dread realities are sufficient to unnerve my soul! Now, amid this piteous wailing of storm and wind, I write the last words on these dear old leaves as Florence Howard, and betake me to my pillow,—but O, not to sleep! The bride of to-morrow will make a sorry figure in her silks and jewels."

CHAPTER XLIV.

"As Heaven is my spirit's trust,
  So may its gracious power
Be near to aid and strengthen me
  When comes the trial hour."

The hour drew on; the guests assembled, and the minister waited the entrance of the bridal party to perform the solemn ceremony.

The storm drove wildly without the mansion, in strange contrast with the glowing warmth and luxuriance of the apartments within.

Col. Malcome sat on a velvet sofa, in graceful attire, supporting the wasted form of his daughter; who, thin, pale, and white as the garb she wore, leaned her head, all shorn of its beautiful curls, heavily against his shoulder. It was a sad sight to behold that feeble, emaciated figure rising from a bed of disease and pain, to mingle among the festive groups which filled those splendid drawing-rooms.

Suddenly there was a stir in the hall, and the bridal group entered. Florence, with the tips of her gloved fingers just touching the arm of the man who was in a few moments to become her husband, moved gracefully to the seat assigned her. She was magnificently arrayed in rose-colored satin, with an over-skirt of elegantly-wrought Parisian lace, and a spray of pearls and diamonds flashed their brilliant rays through the luxuriant dark curls that clustered round her pale, sweet brow, and fell in rich profusion over her white, uncovered shoulders.

Rufus was arrayed in a glossy garb of the finest black broadcloth, with a spotless vest of pearl-tinted satin, and immaculate white kids. His dark visage, small, peering black eyes, and low-bred, clownish aspect, contrasted strangely with the brilliant creature at his side.

The maids and groomsmen were in splendid attire, and looked proud and delighted with the notice their position attracted from the assembled groups.

Then came Major Howard, with a beaming countenance; his invalid lady, who had summoned all her strength and fortitude to be present on the occasion, leaning on his arm.

Col. Malcome rose politely and gave her a seat on the sofa beside his daughter, assuming himself a chair on the opposite side of the room.

Hannah Doliver, in a very elaborate dress of gay plaided silk, her jet black hair twisted into wiry ringlets, sat before her mistress, holding a fan and silver vial, to serve the invalid's need, should the unusual excitement produce a sudden nervous attack.

A significant glance was exchanged between Major Howard and Col. Malcome, when the latter arose, and, bowing to the clergyman who was to officiate on the occasion, said: "All is in readiness to proceed with the ceremony."

The man of God came slowly forward, with a grave and solemn aspect. As he was about to request the bridal group to rise, a stamping of heavy feet on the piazza outside the windows arrested his words; and directly the hall door was flung open with furious vehemence, and a party, consisting of four tall,

brawny men, in dripping hats and overcoats, rushed into the apartment, leaving the door wide open behind them, with the storm rushing in upon the assembly in its wildest fury.

Col. Malcome sprang to his feet, his face glowing with anger at this most untimely and insulting intrusion.

"*Arrest that man!*" exclaimed the foremost of the strangers, pointing his arm toward the form of the colonel, who stood glowering upon the speaker with wrathful aspect.

"For what?" said Major Howard, leaping from his seat, as two strong men rushed forward to execute the command.

"For destroying your buildings by fire, on the night of the twelfth of January last," said the man who had ordered the arrest, whom the major now recognized as the sheriff of the county.

"Prove your words! prove your words!" exclaimed Col. Malcome, darting back from the grasp of the men who approached to imprison him.

"I am prepared to do so," returned the sheriff, motioning a tall, lank form, in a long overcoat and broad-brimmed hat, which stood near the door, to advance.

"You were in the grounds adjoining Major Howard's mansion on the night of the twelfth of January last," said he, addressing the singular-looking man, whose features were so entirely hidden by his collar and hat-brim, as to be indiscernible.

The figure bowed low in token of assent.

"What did you see there?"

The *Hermit of the Cedars* hesitated a moment, as if to collect his thoughts, while the gaze of every person in the room was riveted upon him, and a breathless silence reigned as he commenced to speak in a low, measured tone of assurance and courage.

"I saw a man in dark clothes standing on the piazza of the doomed mansion. A figure in female garb appeared from within, and, after a brief, whispered conversation, left a small basket in his hand, and retired whence she had come. Then the man, after glancing cautiously around him, descended the steps and proceeded to light the fires. In three different places the devouring element was kindled, and, as he stooped to blow the light fragments with his breath, the flames suddenly leaped forth and revealed in startling distinctness the face and features of the incendiary. His hat had fallen to the ground and left his head exposed, which was covered with a profusion of light, auburn hair, clustering in short, thick curls around a high, pale forehead."

Major Howard sprang from his seat.

"Sir!" said he, darting an enraged glance on the strange man, "are you a fool? Do you not see the hair of the man you would accuse is black as midnight, while you affirm that of the one who fired my mansion to have been of a flaxen hue?"

The hermit seemed not in the least disconcerted by this speech. Raising the long cane on which his arms had been resting, he lifted the black cloud of curls from the head of Col. Malcome and dashed it upon the floor.

"Herbert Mervale!" shrieked the invalided Mrs. Howard.

On hearing this voice the muffled man, who had thrown off his broad-brimmed hat, turned suddenly round.

"And Ralph Greyson!" she added.

Then throwing her arms around the wasted form of Edith Malcome, she exclaimed: "My daughter! my daughter! is it thus I find you?" and sank insensible on the sofa beside her.

Hannah Doliver sprang toward Rufus, covering him with kisses and calling him her "dear, dear son."

The young man threw her roughly to the floor, and, alarmed by the sudden scene of tumult and confusion, rushed into the street.

Florence clung close to the side of her father, who seemed struck dumb with horror and amaze.

At length the sheriff approached him. "Do you wish further proofs against the man we accuse?" he demanded.

"Take the villain away!" roared Major Howard, bursting suddenly into a terrific ebullition of anger, "and burn him at the stake. Hanging is too easy death for such a monster of wickedness!"

The assembly, terrified by the angry, tumultuous scene, began to disperse.

"Pause for a brief moment, my friends," said the major, growing somewhat calmer; "I have a few words of explanation 'tis meet you should hear. That man," pointing to Col. Malcome, who stood in the

strong grasp of his keepers, glaring around him with the ferocity of a baffled tiger, "is the wretch who married my sister to steal her fortune, and leave her in poverty and distress with a young babe at her breast, to debauch himself with her serving-woman, by whom he had also a child. There lies the woman he has wronged," said he, his face growing fiercer, as he pointed to the form of the supposed Mrs. Howard, cast lifelessly on the sofa beside Edith Malcome, "at the feet of her daughter, and there stands the vile creature," pointing a wrathful finger toward Hannah Doliver, "who was his leman. But her bastard boy has fled the embrace of his polluted mother. My sister returned to me, after suffering inhuman barbarities from this monster, but he withheld her child. Her heart was broken by misfortune, and her only wish was to pass the remainder of her life in quiet and seclusion. My wife died when this dear girl was an infant," said he, taking the hand of Florence in his, who stood with her eyes fixed immovably on her father's face; "and I besought my sister to stand in the place of a mother to my little daughter."

Florence directed a quick, troubled glance toward the form which still lay motionless on the sofa beside Edith, but did not move.

"I have no more to say," resumed the major more calmly; "the artful wickedness which has threatened my ruin is exposed. Officers of justice, do your duty! Take Herbert Mervale from my presence!"

The strong men grasped the form of the prisoner and marched him from the room. The baffled villain made no resistance. He closed his eyes to avoid beholding the loathing, abhorrent glances which were showered on him from all sides.

As the hermit was slowly following the receding group, Major Howard stepped to his side, and, laying his hand lightly on his arm, said:

"Will you not remain till the guests have retired?"

"No," answered the recluse, shaking his head sadly, "I have done my duty and had better depart."

"You have saved me from destruction," said Major Howard, in a tone trembling with grateful emotion, as he seized the thin, emaciated hand of the hermit, and pressed it warmly to his bosom; "how shall I reward you?"

"I seek no reward from your generosity," returned the solitary, escaping from the grasp which detained him; "the consciousness of having done right is sufficient recompense."

Thus speaking, he turned away. Major Howard returned to the parlors. The guests were departing, and the several members of the family had disappeared.

He hurried to the apartment occupied by his sister, and there beheld her and Edith lying side by side, apparently in tranquil sleep, with Florence and Sylva, Edith's maid, watching at the bed-side.

Hannah Doliver was nowhere to be seen.

Florence advanced to meet her father, and, twining her arm affectionately round his neck, turned a tender glance on the pale faces of the sleepers, and said:

"O, father! father! let us kneel by this low couch and thank God for this merciful deliverance!"

CHAPTER XLV.

——————————"All this is well;
For this will pass away, and be succeeded
By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
With calm assurance to that blessed place
Which all who seek may win, whatever be
Their earthly errors, so they be atoned;
And the commencement of atonement is
The sense of its necessity."

Baby No. 2, had appeared at the home of Mrs. Salsify Mumbles, and the delighted grandmother held the tiny little creature this way and that way, gazing on its features with the most doting fondness, and nearly smothering it with affectionate kisses.

And baby No. 2 did not squeal like its lusty-lunged predecessor. O, no! it had the softest little feminine quackle, for all the world like a downy young gosling; and Mrs. Salsify said she would have it called Goslina, it quackled so sweetly. So Goslina Shaw was the euphonious sobriquet of baby No. 2, and the joyful grandame returned it to the bed beside the pale face of its mother, where 'twas quackling off to sleep, when Mr. Salsify came in from the store, his features glowing, as if he had some

startling intelligence to convey.

"My sakes! what is it, Mr. Mumbles?" asked the fond wife quickly marking her husband's excited manner.

"I guess folks will have something to talk about besides my getting gagged at the Woman's Convention," said Mr. Salsify, rather maliciously, drawing a chair before the grate and placing his feet on the fender.

"Why, what has happened?" inquired his wife, eagerly.

"Enough has happened," returned he, "if all Martha Pinkerton has just been telling me is true."

"Where did you see her?" asked Mrs. Salsify.

"She came into the store to-night to buy a chunk of cheese; so I asked her what was the news? when she told me of the awfulest tragedy that occurred at Col. Malcome's the night they undertook to get Florence Howard married to the colonel's son."

"O, mercy, who was killed?" exclaimed Mrs. S., with uplifted hands.

"Nobody as I know of," returned Mr. Mumbles, whose ideas of a tragedy were different from those of his good wife; "but then the whole company might have been, for they had a murderer amongst them."

"Mercy to me, how awful!" said Mrs. Salsify. "What was his name and how did he get there?"

"His name was Col. Malcome, and he got there by his own wickedness."

"You don't mean to tell me that handsome Col. Malcome is a murderer!" exclaimed Mrs. Salsify, with terror depicted on her features.

"Yes I do, and worse than that; he burned Major Howard's house, and tried to get his pretty daughter married to her own brother."

"How can Rufus Malcome be a brother to Florence Howard?" asked Mrs. Mumbles, in amaze. "You are talking nonsense to me, I fear."

"O, no," returned her husband. "I tell you this Colonel Malcome has turned out the strangest. He is Major Howard's mother, and Dilly Danforth's aunt, and that old hermit's sister, and the Lord knows who and what else; but they have carried him off to jail, so there'll be no chance for him to burn any more houses."

Here Mr. Mumbles drew a long breath and rested a while.

"I am glad I didn't marry him," said a feeble voice from the bed.

"So am I, my daughter," said the father quickly; "and you may thank me for having saved you from a fate so deplorable. Your mother was mightily taken with this colonel when he came fawning round us, and she was pretty cross when I told her it would not do to let him marry you. I knew that great black head was full of wickedness, and so it has proved."

Mrs. Salsify sat rather uneasily while her husband vaunted his superior knowledge of human nature, but the gentle Goslina began to quackle from the bed, and she soon forgot all else in care for the dear little creature.

While this conversation was passing at the home of the Mumbles, the Hermit of the Cedars sat before the glowing fire which brightened the rough walls of Dilly Danforth's humble abode. He had acknowledged himself as her long-absent brother, and great was her joy at beholding him again, though she grieved to know how one deep sorrow had blasted his early promise and made him a wretched, solitary recluse.

"I fear," said she, at length, "you must still feel bitterly toward me for the low connection I was so unfortunate as to form, which biased the mind of your fair lady's brother against your suit."

"No, my sister," returned the hermit, in a tone of tender sadness; "I deeply regret the harshness and wrong I visited upon you in the wild fury of that early disappointment, for I have learned no act of yours influenced Major Howard against my suit. It was the wily artfulness of my rival, who breathed specious tales of my unworthiness in the ear of the brother, and caused her, the fair, unsuspecting girl, to turn from me and give her hand to Mervale."

The hermit's voice trembled as he pronounced these latter words, and he bowed his head in silence. The sister pitied the sorrow which she knew not how to soothe.

At length Willie entered, his face all bright with smiles.

"What makes you look so glad?" asked his mother, gazing with fond admiration on the tall, handsome boy; for she still regarded him as a child, though he was nearly grown to man's estate.

"I have got something for Uncle Ralph," said he, looking cunningly in the hermit's face.

"What is it, William?" inquired he, with a solemn smile.

The youth drew a letter from his pocket and placed it in his uncle's hand.

"It is from Edgar," said he, eagerly breaking the seal.

All were silent while he was occupied in the perusal.

"Edgar has received the disclosures in regard to the pretended Col. Malcome with unaffected astonishment," remarked the hermit, as he refolded the letter and placed it in his bosom. "He appears delighted to learn that Willie Danforth, of whom he has heard me speak so regardfully, is his cousin, and sends much love to him and also to his new-found aunt."

Mrs. Danforth looked gratified at these words, as did also Willie.

"I am sure I want to see him very much," said the latter. "When is he coming home, uncle?"

"In summer, when the woods are green, he says," returned the hermit; "he is now taking sketches in the vicinity of Richmond, Va."

"Was his father an artist?" asked Mrs. D.

"Yes," answered the recluse. "I well remember where sister Fanny first met him, and how quick a wild, deep love grew out of the romantic adventure. It was a few months after we left this country—I to forget in travel my cankering sorrows, she to companion my wanderings. How it affects me now to think that we left you in suffering poverty without even a kind good-by! Our shares in the estate of our deceased parents furnished us with funds for travel, while yours had been squandered by a dissolute man. But we should have given you of ours to alleviate your wants and distresses. Fanny often told me so; but my worst passions were roused by the misfortune I conceived you had helped to bring upon me, and I would not hear her pleadings in your behalf. What a hard-hearted wretch I have been!"

The hermit paused and covered his face.

Willie looked from his uncle to his mother, and at length approached him. "Do not fall into one of your gloomy reveries," said he; "tell us more of Edgar's mother."

"Ay, yes," said the hermit, rousing himself; "I was speaking of her first meeting with her future husband. It was among the ruins of the Eternal City. She had wandered forth by herself one day, and, intoxicated by the scenes that met her eye on every hand, roamed so far that when the shades of night began to fall, she discovered herself in the midst of gloomy, crumbling walls and tottering columns, without knowing whither to direct her steps. While she stood indeterminate, a gentleman approached, and kindly inquired if she had lost her way. She answered in the affirmative, and he offered to escort her home. I remember how glowing bright was her face that night, as she came bounding up the steps of our habitation, and presented the 'young artist she had found beneath the walls of Rome,' as she termed her companion, and laughingly recounted her adventure. I believe our family are predisposed to strong feelings, for I never witnessed a love more engrossing than was hers for the young Lindenwood; nor was his devotion to her less remarkable. They were married, and I left them to pursue my wanderings alone.

"When, after a lapse of several years, I returned, it was to stand over their death-beds, and receive their boy under my protection. His father was rich, and a large fortune was left to his only child. A few more years I roamed, and then with the young Edgar sought my native shores.

"You know the rest. It is a long yarn I have spun you," said he, rising, "and I marvel you are not both asleep."

"Are you going back to the forest to-night?" asked Mrs. Danforth, as he wrapped the long coat about his thin form, and placed the broad-brimmed hat over his gray locks.

"Yes, Delia," answered he. "I sleep best with the roar of the cedars in my ears."

"I will go with you," said Willie, springing for his cap.

The twain set forth together, while the lonely woman sought her couch and thought mournfully of long-past days and years.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"She is a bustling, stalwart dame, and one
That well might fright a timid, modest man.
Look how she swings her arms, and treads the floor
With direful strides!"

It was a bright, sunny spring morning, and Wimbledon was beautiful in budding foliage, singing blue-birds and placid little river, with the sunbeams silvering its ripply surface.

The windows of Mr. Pimble's kitchen were raised and therein Peggy Nonce moved vigorously to and fro, with rolled-up sleeves and glowing face, stirring a great fire which roared and crackled in the jaws of a huge oven, and then back to the pantry, where she wielded the sceptre of an immense rolling-pin triumphantly over whole trays of revolting pie-crust, marched forth long files of submissive pies, and lodged them in the red-hot prison.

While the stalwart house-keeper was thus occupied, Mr. Pimble, with a yellow silk handkerchief tied over his straggling locks, and his pale, palm-figured wrapper drawn closely around him, scraped the stubbed claw of a worn-out corn broom over the kitchen floor, clapping his heelless slippers after him as he moved slowly along. Peggy never heeded him at all, but rushed to and fro, as if there had been no presence in the kitchen save her own, often dragging the dirt away, on her trailing skirts, just as the indefatigable sweeper had collected it in a pile.

All at once, pert little Susey Pimble opened the parlor door and swinging herself outward, said, "I want the dining-room castors and tea-cups, and mamma says I am to have them and you are to come and give them to me."

The father rested his arms on the broom handle, and turning his face toward his hopeful daughter, who was a "scion of the old stock," said, "I will come soon as I have swept the floor."

"I cannot wait," returned Susey, sharply, "I must have them this moment."

The father laid down his broom passively, and saying, "What an impatient little miss you are!" clappered off to the dining-room, and brought forth the desired articles on a waiter.

Miss Susey, all atilt with delight, danced forward and caught it from her father's hands; but its weight proved too much for her little arms, and down it went to the floor with a fearful crash! Susey sprang back with a frightened aspect at the mischief she had done, and Peggy Nonce, dropping her rolling-pin, rushed out of the pantry and beheld the fragments of broken china scattered over the floor. Her face crimsoned with anger.

"What a destructive little minx!" she exclaimed, glaring on the offending Susey. "How dared you meddle with those dishes?"

"Mamma said I might have them to play house with," answered Susey, with flashing eyes.

"Who ever heard of such a thing as giving a child a china tea set to play with?" said Peggy, holding up her bare, brawny arms in amazement.

"My mother has heard of such a thing; and she knows more than fifteen women like you, old aunt Peggy Nonce," returned Miss Susey, with the air of a tragedy queen.

The unusual sounds aroused Mrs. Pimble, who appeared at the parlor door with a goose-quill behind her ear, and a written scroll in her hand. When her eyes fell on the spectacle in the centre of the kitchen, she stamped violently, and exclaimed, in a tempestuous tone, "What does this mean?" Mr. Pimble slunk away into a corner, while Peggy pursed up her lips with a defiant expression, and Susey grew suddenly very meek and blushing-faced.

Mrs. Pimble's eyes followed her husband. "You crawling, contemptible thing," she exclaimed, "have you grown so stupid and insensate that you cannot comprehend a simple question? Again I demand of you, what does this mean?" and she pointed her finger sternly to the broken fragments which strewed the floor.

"Susey said you told her she might have the castors and tea things, and that I was to give them to her," said Mr. Pimble, without lifting his eyes from the hearth he was contemplating.

"Very well, I did tell Susey she might have the articles mentioned to amuse herself with, and it was fitting she should have them, or I had not given my consent. But why do I find them dashed to the floor and rendered useless? Answer me that, you slip-shod sloven?"

With an awful air, Mrs. Pimble folded her arms and looked down upon her husband, who cringed away before her ireful presence, and said, "Susey dropped the waiter."

"Dropped the waiter!" repeated Mrs. Pimble, her anger freshening to a gale. "And could you not prevent her from dropping it? or had you no more sense than to load an avalanche of china on the arms of a little child?"

"She took the waiter from me," said Pimble, in a dogged tone, his eyes still studying the tiles in the hearth.

Mrs. Pimble darted upon him one glance of the most withering contempt, and taking Susey by the hand led her from the room, without deigning to utter another word.

Soon as she disappeared Peggy set about clearing up the broken crockery, and Mr. Pimble crawled

off into the recess of a window where the sun might shine on his shivering frame, and at length fell asleep. He had hardly concluded his first dream of fragmentary tea-cups, ere a violent pulling at his draggling coat-tails, which hung over the sill, caused him to wake with a start, when he beheld Peggy Nonce at his side, saying, "Dilly Danforth was come to see him." With a hopeless yawn he crawled out of his sunny nook, and, turning his dull, sleepy eyes toward the disturber of his quiet, demanded, in a surly tone, "what she wanted with him."

"I have come to pay my quarter's rent," said Mrs. Danforth, placing a bank note in his grimy hand. He closed his skinny fingers on it with an eager clutch, and looked in the woman's face with a vague expression of wonder.

"I am glad to get a shilling from you at last," said he, fondling the note; "but this will not quite pay up the last quarter's rent. There's about half a dollar more my due. You can come and do the spring cleaning, and then I'll call matters square between us."

"I thought ten dollars was the sum specified, for three months' rent," remarked Mrs. Danforth.

"It was," returned he, "but you know you had the pig's feet and ears at the fall butchering, and Mrs. Pimble gave you a petticoat in the winter. These things would amount to more than fifty cents, if I put their real value upon them; but as you have cashed this payment, I will, as I said before, call all square with a few days' light work from you."

Mrs. Danforth drew another note from her pocket, and, placing it in his hand, asked him to satisfy himself of his claims upon her, as she could not favor him with her services as he desired, having work of her own to do. Mr. Pimble looked still more astonished when he felt the second note between his fingers. He put it in his pocket and returned her a silver piece. She took it, and, turning to depart, said, "I shall not want your house any longer, Mr. Pimble. I am going to move away to-day."

"Where are you going?" he asked, opening his sleepy eyes very wide.

"I have hired a room in Deacon Allen's cottage," answered she. "It is near the seminary, where William attends school."

Mr. Pimble continued to stare on the woman, with distended eyeballs.

"You have been a very peaceable tenant," he said at length; "I would rent my house cheaper, if you would remain another year."

"I have made my arrangements to move, and would prefer to do so," returned Mrs. Danforth, bidding him good-morning.

He looked very much disconcerted after she was gone, and muttered, he "did not see what had set Dilly Danforth up so, all at once."

CHAPTER XLVII.

"'Tis silent all!—but on my ear
  The well-remembered echoes thrill;
I hear a voice I should not hear,
  A voice that now might well be still.
Yet oft my doubting soul 't will shake;
  Even slumber owns its gentle tone,
Till consciousness will vainly wake,
  To listen though the dream be flown."

"O, it is ever the wildest storms that lull to the sweetest calms!" wrote Florence Howard, on a new-turned leaf of her well-treasured journal. "My heart is singing grateful anthems to the all-wise Father, who stretched forth his friendly arm to save me from the 'snare of the spoiler.' As I sit here to-night, with a young May moon gleaming down through the far depths of liquid ether, like a sweet, angel face of pity and love, how dimly o'er my memory come the stormy scenes of sin and passion which conspired to render terrible the winter that has passed away! My soul, long torn and rent by grief and wild-contending emotions, grows tranquil in the calm and quiet which have succeeded the furious storm, and settles to peaceful rest.

"It is enough for me to know my father's wrongs are righted and I am still his own, and only his. The clown, from whose polluting arms kind Providence rescued me, has never shown his hateful form among us since the day that witnessed the disclosure of his father's baseness. His vile mother has also disappeared, in search of her son. Great Heaven! to think I was so near becoming the wife of that woman's child of sin; and, but for that strange, wild hermit, who lifted the black curls that veiled the monster who sought our destruction, O, where had we all been now? And was it not a striking instance of Jehovah's righteous retributions, that the man who was once the betrothed of my aunt, should be the

instrument selected by Heaven to disclose the villany and wickedness of the wretch who seduced her affections by artful falsehoods, and made her his wife, but to steal her fortune and blast her life? Poor, dear aunt Mary! I mourn not nor pine to find she is not my mother, for surely the fragile Edith, so rudely shocked by the disclosures of her father's crimes, would have drooped and died, had she not found a mother's fond affection to comfort and sustain her in the trial hour. It is a beautiful sight, this reünion of parent and child. How trustingly they cling to each other, and how their wan aspects brighten in the warmth of their mutual affection! But I think there's a love in the mother's heart yet stronger than that she feels for her child. I watch her emotional excitement when the name of the hermit is mentioned, and I think that early devotion has survived all disappointments and afflictions. What a romantic thing it would be for them to meet in the evening of life and renew the promises of their youth! But it may not be, for the conviction steals coldly o'er me that my dear aunt has been too deeply tried to long survive her sorrows. Even the joy of discovering a daughter may not save her from the tomb which opens to receive her weary form in its oblivious arms. Father looks on the thin, wasted form, following Edith closely as her shadow, with a fond, earnest gaze fixed on the gentle girl, and turns to hide a tear. O, would the blow might be a while averted! All is so bright and sunny around us now. I even try to nurse the belief that I *could* not be happier, but my heart will rebel against the specious falsehood. Still, still it wears the fetters love so enduringly fastened. Still I remember that double dawn which rose on me as I stood on the cloud-veiled summit of old, hoary-headed Mount Washington.

> 'And I saw it with such feeling, joy in blood and heart and brain,
> I would give, to call the affluence of that moment back again,
> Europe, with her cities, rivers, hills of prey, sheep-sprinkled downs,
> Ay, an hundred sheaves of sceptres, ay, a planet's gathered crowns,'

"But I must not write thus, lest I grow ungrateful for the mercies of a gracious Providence. Let me thank my God for his remembrance in the hour of sorest need, and lie down to slumber."

She closed her book, and, dropping softly on her knees before the low curtained couch, leaned her young head, with its dark, clustering curls, against the white cushions, and remained several moments in silent prayer. Then rising, she closed the casements and retired to rest.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

> "Come rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer,
> Though the herd should fly from thee, thy home is still here.
>
> ---
>
> I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in thy heart;
> I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art!"

A graceful form bent over a printed page, and by the light of a waxen taper, devoured its startling contents. Ah, how awfully startling to the reader! for it was Louise Edson poreing over the disclosures of Col. Malcome's wickedness and crime. But, as she drew toward the close, a sudden ray of light struggled through the anguish and misery which had cast her features into utter darkness, when her eye first lighted on the glaring capitals of the criminal's name. Concealing the paper which contained the fearful tale of his guilt, she hastened to her own apartment.

As the shades of the following evening drew on, a female figure, wrapped in a large shawl, with her features closely veiled, stood at the iron door of the huge, black jail, and besought an entrance.

"Who do you wish to see?" demanded the jailer, in a coarse, rough tone, seeking to penetrate the veil with his impertinent eyes.

She breathed a low word in his ear. The man started.

"Is it possible you wish to behold a wretch like him?" exclaimed he.

The lady drew up her slight form with an air of dignity, and said, "Deliver my message, and bring me his answer!"

Awed by her manner, the jailer hastened his steps to obey her command.

The door of a gloomy cell on the second floor of the huge building opened with a harsh, grating sound, and the man stepped in and secured the door behind him. The prisoner, who was sitting beside a table, with pen and paper before him, turned round and fixed his eyes upon the intruder. "What do you want?" asked he. "When you use double bolts and bars to secure me, is it necessary to come every hour to see if I have not escaped?"

"I have not come to satisfy myself of your safety," returned the jailer, scowling on the speaker. "There's a woman at the outer door who wants to know if you will grant her a brief interview."

The prisoner started abruptly at these words. "What is her name?" demanded he, quickly.

"I do not know," answered the man. "She did not tell me; but she seemed mighty impatient for an answer to her request."

The prisoner bowed his head and sat in silence several moments. At length he said, "Bring her in! I have a curiosity to know what woman would penetrate these walls to seek an interview with me."

The jailer disappeared. In a few moments footsteps were heard along the dark passage, a female form was ushered into the cheerless apartment, and the lock turned harshly upon her. Then a white hand was laid lightly on the bright curling locks of the bowed head, and a low voice whispered in the ear of the incarcerated man, "It is a pitiful heart that forgets a friend in adversity."

"Louise!" said the prisoner, shrinking away with evident pain from her touch. "Why are you here?"

"To cheer you,—to comfort you," said she, earnestly regarding his pale, handsome features.

But he turned away from her gaze, shaking his head mournfully. "This is the deepest humiliation I have yet endured," he said, while a creeping shudder convulsed his frame. "To feel those clear eyes fastened upon me, piercing through and through my soul, and reading all the guilt and crime that's written there. O, Louise! was it not enough to drive me, by your unrelenting scorn and bitterness, to commit the act which has brought me here, without seeking to torment your victim by penetrating his dungeon to mock at the misfortune your own cruelty occasioned?"

He raised his pale, distressed face imploringly to hers as he ceased to speak; but she started back from her position at his side, and with an angry accent said, "I do not understand how any fell influence of mine should cause you to break the heart of an innocent woman by your guilty conduct with another."

"I did not seek to refer the blame of those early sins to any influence of yours," he answered. "How could I, when they were committed before your birth? In the very dust I acknowledge those deeds of villany and vileness. But too late is my grief and repentance. The blow has fallen, and my doom is fixed."

He leaned his arms forward upon the table, and, sinking his head upon them, uttered a low groan of hopeless, despairing misery.

Tears sprang to Louise's eyes, and, approaching, she dropped on her knees at his side, and laid her hand on his arm, "Do you remember a promise I gave you long ago?" she asked softly. "If I have seemed forgetful, let me renew it now."

He still retained his attitude of dejection, and seemed regardless of her pleading tones.

"You will not hear me," she said at length, in a voice broken with grief, "when I kneel at your feet and ask your pardon."

"*You* kneel to *me*!" said he, suddenly grasping her arm and striving to raise her from the humble position. "Rise, I entreat, if you would not drive me mad!"

She stood before him, with tears falling fast from her beautiful eyes. "Who is the cruel one now?" she asked. "Who throws me aside and refuses forgiveness when it is repentantly implored?"

"What signifies the pardon of a wretch like me?" said he, in a tone of agony. "What is he? what can he be to you?"

Turning her head aside, she said in a soft, trembling voice, "He is what he has ever been, and still may be,—my world of love and happiness!" Her cheeks flushed, as, lifting her eyes, she encountered his earnest gaze. She sought to move away, but he was by her side. "Louise! Louise!" said he, in a tone of thrilling emotion, "Dare I hope that you love me still?"

There was no word; but she put her arm round his neck and sank weeping on his bosom. He pressed her again and again to his heart. "Ah, indeed!" said he, at length, "this is the luxury of woe. To know at last this love is mine, and be separated forever from its dear embraces by the cold walls of a prison. Stern justice can inflict no pang like this."

"Talk not of separation," said she, lifting her head, and revealing a face redolent with happiness. "No hand shall take me from you save the hand of death!"

He gazed with unspeakable tenderness on her glowing features, and said sorrowfully, "My wickedness does not deserve this angel-comforter. Why did you withhold this blessed consolation when the world smiled brightly on me?"

"To bestow it when the world had cast you off," said she; "to think of you at your best, when it had made your name a by-word and reproach."

He pressed his lips tenderly to the white, upturned brow, and drew her to a seat. A half-hour passed

in low, earnest conversation, when the grating of the iron key aroused them, and Louise had only time to draw her veil over her features when the jailer entered. "I am ready to follow you," she said, advancing toward him.

He held the heavy door asunder, and, with one lingering glance on the form of the prisoner, she went forth and followed her guide through the dark passages, and down the steep flights of stairs. He unlocked the street-door, and she stepped lightly forth beneath the light of the stars.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"They loved;—and were beloved. O happiness.
I have said all that can be said of bliss
In saying that they loved. The young heart has
Such store of wealth in its own fresh, wild pulse,
And it is love that works the mind, and brings
Its treasure to the light. I did love once,
Loved as youth, woman, genius loves; though now
My heart is chilled and seared, and taught to wear
The falsest of false things—a mask of smiles;
Yet every pulse throbs at the memory
Of that which has been."

Summer showered her wealth of roses over the gardens and grassy paths of Wimbledon. Day after day the sound of the busy hammer rang out on the scented air, and crowds of workmen were seen at eventide hurrying to their separate places of abode. Great teams, loaded with fancy and ornamental wood and iron work, labored through the streets, and "Summer Home" was rising from its ruins in all its former magnificence and splendor.

Major Howard decided he could not use the confiscated wealth of the pretended Col. Malcome for a better purpose than to rebuild the mansion his wickedness had destroyed.

Florence was delighted at the prospect of regaining the beautiful home she had lost; for, elegant and luxurious as was her present abode, she was disquieted by too frequent remembrance of the terrible scenes she had witnessed beneath its roof. Still, the Howards were for the most part very happy. Edith's bright head was again covered with its golden wealth of curls, and her merry laughter echoed joyously through the halls and parlors of the proud mansion. It seemed her greatest delight to bring a smile to the wan cheek of her mother, who was failing slowly, even beneath the genial influence of a summer sun.

As Florence stood on the vine-curtained terrace one balmy August morning, inhaling the sweet air, and listening to the thrilling warblings of Edith's pet canaries, as they swung in their wire-wrought cages from the roof above, she beheld Willie Danforth coming up the garden path, holding a letter toward her in his cunning, tempting way. She extended her hand to receive it.

"No," said he, suddenly drawing it back. "I don't think I'll let you have this tiny little missive, unless you will first promise to tell me who is the writer."

"Why, how can I tell you till I know myself?" said she, still reaching for the letter, which he continued to withhold, smiling at her eager, impatient aspect.

His frolicsome habit of teasing gently any one he loved always reminded her of Edgar Lindenwood, and he was very like his cousin in personal appearance. So thought Florence; and he and his mother, who lived in a room of Dea. Allen's cottage, just across the garden, became marked favorites of hers.

At length Willie gave her the letter. She broke the seal quickly, and hurried through the contents.

"I'll tell you who 'tis from, gladly," said she, with a bright smile; "for I fancy it will afford you pleasure to know. Do you remember a little girl, named Ellen Williams, who used to trip over the piazza we stand on now?"

The young man's face brightened and blushed as he replied eagerly,

"That do I, and her brother Neddie."

"Well, they are both coming here to make me a nice, long visit," said she, in a delighted tone. "Is not this happy news?"

"It is, indeed," answered Willie; "but where did you make their acquaintance, Florence?"

"During the period of my travels they were my constant companions. I recollect how eagerly Ellen inquired for you, when we first met at Niagara; but I was then almost ignorant of your existence, and

could give her no satisfactory information. I told her there was a youth I had heard called Willie Greyson, who lived with a hermit; and she said Greyson was your mother's maiden name; but so dutiful and affectionate a son as you would never leave a lonely, widowed parent to dwell with a solitary hermit. So she would believe you were dead."

"And did that belief appear to cause her any regret?" asked William, who had been listening with an earnest expression to Florence's words.

"Yes, indeed," returned she; "the pretty, gentle girl has a strong regard for you, Willie. You must renew acquaintance when she and her brother come to pay me their long-meditated visit."

"I don't know," said the young man, rather sadly.

"I believe you will be a second Hermit of the Cedars, or the Hemlocks, or the Pines," said she, laughing; "for you are already half as melancholy as your uncle, at times."

"Do you consider him so very gloomy, then?" asked Willie.

"He has the most mournful expression I ever saw," answered Florence; "but he is an entertaining companion for all that. I always sit apart, and listen in silence, when he relates some tale or adventure of his extensive travels. He was with us yesterday evening, and I never saw him so animated and lively before. Even Aunt Mary's pale, grief-worn countenance assumed a cheerful expression while listening to his sprightly, intelligent conversation."

"Did you not know the cause of his unusual exhilaration?" inquired William.

"No," said Florence, looking innocently in the face of the questioner.

"Edgar is at home."

"Why did he not inform us of his nephew's return?" asked Florence, growing suddenly very pale, and finding it convenient to lean against a pillar near by.

"Perhaps he did not think the intelligence would interest your family," returned Willie; "he is very modest in his confidences."

The seminary bell now commenced to ring, and the youth hastened away with a pleasant good-morning.

Florence stood there a long time, behind the thickly-interwoven woodbines and honeysuckles, supporting herself against the marble column, forgetful of all save the blissful thought that the man she loved was once more near her. He was, indeed, nearer than she supposed, for there came a light footstep on the vine-shrouded terrace, and she felt an arm stealing softly around her, while a voice, whose briefest tone she could never mistake, whispered in her ear:

"Again we have met, and O, Florence! say, in mercy say, it shall be to part no more!"

There is nothing so natural, to a woman that loves, as the presence of the beloved object; and Florence turned toward Edgar with no amazement or surprise; but love unspeakable lighted her features as she placed her hand in his, tenderly, trustfully, and with a manner that convinced him she would never withdraw it again.

Then she led him into the drawing-room, where the family soon assembled, and were presented to the young artist.

Aunt Mary was delighted with his appearance, and soon engaged him in a conversation which grew very brilliant and animated on his part, and was joined in by Florence and Edith, till Major Howard entered, whose joy at again beholding his former travelling companion knew no bounds, and the mirth and merriment increased four-fold. Evening had fallen ere they were aware, when Edgar rose and said he must return to the hermit's habitation.

All regretted to lose his presence, and Major Howard strongly invited him to regard his mansion as a home while he should remain in the vicinity.

Edgar thanked him for his generous offer, and gracefully bowed a good-evening.

Florence accompanied him to the hall door, and he drew her forth on the terrace, which was now glinted over by the silvery moonbeams.

"Come soon again," said she.

"Yes, dearest," he answered. A long, sweet kiss and gentle adieu, in which there was love enough to feast even her long-famishing soul, and he was gone.

She skipped lightly into the parlor, kissed her father, Aunt Mary, Edith, Sylva, and Fido, the little Spanish poodle that was nestled in her arms, and then bounded up the stairs to her own apartment, singing as she went.

"There goes the happiest heart in Wimbledon, to-night," said her father, as he caught the sound of

her musical voice ringing through the spacious hall above.

"Save one," said Aunt Mary, with a sad smile.

"He is beyond its precincts," returned Major Howard. "Edith, did you ever love?" said he, quickly turning his discourse toward the gentle girl, who stood, regarding attentively the faces of the speakers, as if she hardly comprehended their words.

"No," answered she, innocently.

"Heaven grant you never may," said her mother, fervently; "come, my child, let us seek the quiet of our own apartment."

Edith threw her arm affectionately round the wasted form.

"Good-night, uncle," said she, and they all disappeared.

CHAPTER L.

"We leave them at the portal
  Of earthly happiness;
We pray the power immortal
  May hover o'er to bless;
And strew their future pathway
  With flowers of peace and love,
Till death shall call their spirits
  To Eden realms above."

When "Summer Home" rose complete in its beautiful architectural design, with its wealth of foliage and flowers all in wildest, richest profusion, a young bride walked under the trailing vines which overhung the marble-supported terrace, and a manly form at her side opened the hall door and ushered her into the magnificent drawing-rooms. It was Florence Lindenwood.

Then a carriage came rolling up the long avenue of cedars, conveying Major Howard, his sister, Edith, and Sylva, with the lap-dog and pet canaries in her care, to the newly-completed mansion. What a regal home they entered, and how proud and happy were their beaming faces!

The day was passed with a social group of friends, among whom Ned Williams, his sister Ellen, and young Willie Danforth, were the most lively and mirthful. At night-fall the hermit appeared, and was warmly received. He sat down by aunt Mary, and conversed calmly, as was his wont.

Florence glanced about the apartment in search of her husband, wondering that he did not come forward to welcome his uncle, but he had disappeared. She flew up stairs to their apartment, and beheld him sitting before a table, apparently absorbed in the contents of some volume. Stepping softly forward, she leaned over his shoulder. He was reading her journal.

"Thief!" she exclaimed, covering the page with her little white hands, "where did you find this?"

"It attracted my notice this morning when I was packing your books for removal," returned he. "I did not know I was so well loved before, Florence," he added, with a provoking smile.

"Look out that I do not cease to love you altogether," said she, shaking her tiny finger playfully in his face, "if you steal into my private affairs in this way. But come below now," she continued, taking his hand; "uncle Ralph has arrived and waits to see you."

They descended to the parlor, and after the pleasant evening was passed and the guests severally departed, the hermit presented to his nephew the fortune left him by his long-deceased father. It was much larger than Edgar had ever supposed. He amply remunerated the care and protection of his kind guardian, and besought him to forsake the forest-hut and dwell beneath his grateful roof. But the recluse waived the entreaties of the young, happy couple.

He "could not desert his home in the cedars. It was the spot where the most placid years of his life had been passed. He would frequently visit the abode of Edgar, and also that of his lately-recovered sister, but still chose to retain the wild-wood habitation as a retreat when melancholy moods rendered him unfit for all society, and he could only find consolation in the lone solitude of nature."

So, with a fervent blessing on their bright young heads, he departed on his solitary way to the distant forest.

And the starry night stole on, while all was quiet and peaceful above and around the mansion of "Summer Home."

THE LAST CHAPTER.

"Let's part in friendship,
And say good-night."

Shadowy-vested romance, that whilom roamed the grassy paths and flower-strewn ways of Wimbledon, is wrapping the heavy folds of her dew-moistened mantle around her, and stealing silently away. Yet for a moment let her turn a parting glance toward the motley groups which have companioned her midnight rambles, and are seen passing in the distance with their eyes fixed steadily on her receding form.

Foremost in the crowding phalanx we mark the firm, upright figure of Mr. Salsify Mumbles, and his commanding aspect and majestic tread assure us that he has "risen in his profession" to the airy summit of his most ambitious aspirations. We fancy another story has crowned his mansion, and a second piazza stretched its snowy palings around its painted walls. Beside him is his amiable wife, with the sweet baby Goslina, in a robe of dimity, pressed close to her affectionate shoulder, quackling softly as they pass along.

Close behind is Mary Madeline and her tender spouse, a hand of each given to their hopeful son, who, ever and anon, turns his mites of eyes up to his parents' faces and utters a piercing squeal.

Then Miss Martha Pinkerton comes primly on, with Mrs. Stanhope at her side, who turns often with a friendly glance toward a happy-seeming couple that walk apart, as if their chief enjoyment was in each other's society.

"You have rescued and redeemed me," whispered a manly voice in the ear of the graceful figure which leaned so confidingly on his arm.

"Let us forget the past and be happy," said his companion, lifting her clear eyes to his eloquent face.

Their forms faded from our vision, and the pleasant reverie into which we were sinking to weave fair garlands, to crown their future years, was rudely broken by a ranting bustle and confusion. Philanthropy was sweeping past.

Mrs. Pimble, in nankin bloomers, with pert Susey clinging to the hem of her brief skirt, stalked on with angry stride, vociferating at the top of her voice.

Mrs. Lawson towered indignantly at her side, joining in wrathful denunciations of the tyrant man; and fair, persecuted Dr. Simcoe's assenting voice was faintly heard amid the fiendish shrieks of those pestiferous younglings, Simcoe's children.

We knew by their ireful aspects some dreadful peril had menaced the cause of Woman's Rights, and while we gazed, their clamor increased to furious yells of rage and defiance, and a dark, descending cloud hung threateningly over their wrathful heads as they passed along.

On their vanishing shadows Mr. Pimble clappered his heelless slippers, with the long skirts of his palm-figured wrapper streaming on the air behind him; like the grim ghost of manhood pursuing its flying aggressors.

Then Florence, like a beam of light, danced past on the arm of Edgar, and a merry, laughing group followed quickly in their rear, among which we recognized the tall, portly form of Major Howard, smiling benignly on the happy faces around him.

But we looked in vain for the thin, bowed figure of his grief-stricken sister. There were two willow-shaded graves in the grass-grown church-yard, and o'er them bent the spectre-like form of the Hermit of the Cedars, his gray locks moistened by the falling night-dews, and his pale face turned upward to the midnight stars with an expression of mournful resignation.

As the clock in the ivy-hung steeple tower rang forth its echoing chimes on the odorous air, we cast one glance toward the swiftly-vanishing groups, and silently turned away.

Cold and bitter on our long-wrapped senses strike the harsh, blunt-edged realities of every-day existence. The multiplied images which but yesterday peopled our brain and thronged on our notice, have "departed thence, to return no more."

The last sound of their multitudinous voices has died in the distance, and Wimbledon is to us as if it had never been.

SCRAGGIEWOOD;
A
TALE OF AMERICAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"Sweetly wild
Were the scenes that charmed me when a child;
Rocks, gray rocks, with their caverns dark,
Leaping rills, like the diamond spark;
Torrent voices thundering by,
When the pride of the vernal floods swelled high,
And a quiet roof, like the hanging-nest,
'Mid cliffs, by the feathery foliage drest."

October's harvest-moon hung in the blue ether. Brightly fell her golden beams on the tall, old forest trees, that pointed spar-like toward the starry heaven, and down, through their interlacing branches, upon gray, mossy rocks and uprooted trunks, over which wild vines wreathed in untrained exuberance; and dim, star-eyed flowers reared their slender heads among the rank undergrowth of bush and shrub.

And here, in this primeval wildness, her silver beams revealed a low, thatched cottage standing in a narrow opening. Its walls were built of rough stones, piled one upon another in a rude, unartistical manner; and the heavy turf roof, which projected far over the sides, was sunken and overgrown with moss and lichens.

From this rough dwelling proceeded tones of mirth and hilarity. How strangely they sounded in the lone solitude of nature! Through an open window might be seen a group, seated round a small table, consisting of two young men, and an old woman in a high starched cap, with a huge pair of iron-bowed spectacles mounted on her Roman nose. A child was sleeping on a pallet in a corner of the room, and one of the young men passed the candle a moment over the low cot, and, gazing intently on the sleeper, asked in a lively, careless tone,

"Sacri, Aunt Patty! is that your baby, or the fair spirit that unrolls the destinies of mortals to your inspired vision?"

"She is neither one nor t'other," answered the old woman. "Now please to hold that candle up here close to my eyes."

"But I want to know who that is asleep there; for I've a notion she is more concerned in my destiny than anything you'll find in that old teacup."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the woman musingly, as she continued to peer, with a mystic expression of countenance, into a small and apparently empty teacup, which she turned slowly round and round in her skinny hand, muttering at intervals in an ominous undertone.

"Well, Aunt Patty, out with it!" said the youth at length, tired of her long silence. "Isn't it clear yet? Here's another bit of silver; toss that in, and stir up again;" and he threw a shining half-eagle down on the table. The woman's face brightened as she clutched it eagerly.

"Come, now let's hear," continued the young man, "what's to be Mr. Lawrence Hardin's destiny."

"May be, if you saw all I see in this cup, you would not be so eager to know its contents," said the crone in a boding voice.

"What! Whew, old woman! croaking of evil when I've twice crossed your palm with silver! This is too bad."

"But don't you know the decrees of fate are unalterable?" said the woman, solemnly.

"O, law, yes! but I didn't know an old cracked saucer was so formidable."

"It is no saucer, sir; it is a cup, and your destiny is in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the other young man; "pretty well wound up, Hardin, if your destiny is contained in a teacup."

"Hush!" exclaimed the crone in an angry tone. "More than his or yours, you noisy chatterer! The whole world's, I may say, is in the cup."

"In the *pot*, you mean," said the youth, knocking with his bamboo stick on the side of a small, black

teapot, that stood at the old woman's right hand.

"Well, yes; in the pot, I should say, perhaps," added she in a softened tone.

"The world's destiny is in a teapot, and Aunt Patty Belcher pours it forth at her pleasure; that's it;" and here they all joined in a hearty laugh.

"That will do," said Hardin at length; "now read off, good Dame Belcher. Sumpter is digesting his fortune. Give me a more palatable one than his."

The old woman rubbed her long, peaked nose violently, and then raising her eyes slowly to the young man's face, said, "Thou art ambitious, Lawrence Hardin!"

"Wrong there, most reverend sorceress!" exclaimed the one called Sumpter.

"Now, hark ye!" exclaimed the old crone; "I won't be interrupted. I guess I know my own cups."

"Be quiet, be quiet, Jack!" said Hardin. "Why will you be so presumptuous as to gainsay a prophet's assertions! Go on, Aunt Patty; he will not disturb you again."

"Well, I tell you again," said the woman, casting a disdainful glance on Sumpter, who had withdrawn to a chair at the foot of the cot-bed, and was regarding attentively the tiny form lying there wrapped in tranquil sleep, "I tell you *again*, you are ambitious. You want to be thought great. You want to be first. You thirst for power for the sake of bowing others to your will. You have rich parents *now*, and are surrounded by all that heart could wish; but, mind ye, there's a dark cloud in the rear. It threatens tempest and desolation. Soon your parents will be dead, and you hurrying from your rich, splendid home to seek your fortune in a distant country. You will seem to prosper for a while, and then it blackens again. You can see yourself," she added, holding the cup before the young man's face, "that black clump in the bottom."

"I see only a few tea-grounds your turnings and shakings have settled together," remarked he, carelessly.

"Destiny placed them as they are, young men," said the hag, solemnly.

"May be so," he added; "but tell me, how long shall I live? Shall I be successful in love, and will my lady be handsome?"

"Thou wilt live longer than thou wilt wish; ay, drag on many years when thou wouldst fain be sleeping in the earth's cold bed! Thou wilt love,—thou wilt marry, and thy lady will be beautiful as the day-star."

"Enough, enough!" exclaimed the youth, starting to his feet. "Do you hear, Jack? Is not mine a brave fortune? I shall love, marry, and my wife will be a goddess of beauty."

"Yes," said the crone; "but mark, she will not love you."

"Whew! How is that? Not love me? And wherefore not, old woman?"

"Because she will love another," repeated the hag in a low, but firm, decided tone.

"But you are spoiling your fair pictures, Aunt Patty," said Hardin.

"Destiny is destiny," said she with a solemn look.

"Ay, yes; I forgot!" he exclaimed, laughing gayly. "Come, Sumpter, let's be off. I am afraid our good seeress will discover you and I fighting a duel in that ominous cup, or brewing a tempest in her teapot."

"Ha, ha, ha! it is not impossible," ejaculated Sumpter. "Now I believe she did say I would go out of the world in a terrible uproar, shooting somebody or getting shot myself. Which was it, dame?"

"Time will tell you soon enough, young man," returned the woman, in an angry, scornful tone.

"O, don't be cross, good Aunt Patty!" he said, noticing her dark looks; "don't mind my balderdash. Here's another piece of silver for you. Now, good-night, and long live Scraggiewood and the seeress, Madam Belcher!"

"Good-night, young men, and God bless ye, I say!" exclaimed the crone, her eye brightening at sight of the silver.

"Just tell me the name of the little sleeper," said Sumpter, lingering a moment, while Hardin turned the carriage which had brought them to the forest-cottage.

"What do you want to know her name for?" asked Aunt Patty.

"O, because she resembles a sister I lost," returned Sumpter after a brief hesitation.

"Well, it is my niece, Annie Evalyn."

"Ah! she lives with you?"

"Yes; ever since she was born a'most. Her father and mother died when she was a baby."

"Hillo, Sumpter!" said Hardin, from without, "trying to coax a prettier sequel to your fortune? Come on!"

Sumpter hurried forth, and the carriage rattled away over the rough road of Scraggiewood.

CHAPTER II.

"A holy smile was on her lip,
  Whenever sleep was there;
She slept as sleep the blossoms hushed
  Amid the silent air."

The sun was peeping through the crevices of the rock-built cottage when old Dame Belcher, the fortune-teller, awoke on the following morning.

"Well, about time for me to be stirring these old bones," she murmured. "Good fees last night;" and here she drew a leather bag from beneath her pillow, and chuckled over its contents; "these little siller pieces will buy plenty of ribbons and gewgaws for hinny, so she can flaunt with the best of them at Parson Grey's school. She was asleep here last night when the young city chaps came, and don't know a word about their visit; I carried her off in my arms to her own little cot, after they were gone, and I'll creep into her room a moment now to see if she still sleeps."

Thus saying, the old woman slipped on her clothes, and, crossing a rude entry, lightly lifted a latch and entered a small, poor, though very tidy apartment. A broken table, propped against the rough, unplastered wall, contained a bouquet of wild flowers tastefully arranged, and placed in a bowl of clear water, some writing materials, and a few books piled neatly together. A fragrant woodbine formed a beautiful lattice-work over the rough-cut hole in the wall which answered for a window. Two chairs covered with faded chintz, and a small cot-bed dressed in white, completed the furnishing. On this latter, breathing softly in her quiet sleep, lay a lovely child, on whose fair, open brow eleven summers might have shed their roses. The old woman approached, and with her wrinkled palms smoothed away the heavy masses of chestnut hair that curled around her childish face.

"Bless it, how it sleeps this morning!" she said, in a low whisper; "but it must not have its little hands up here;" and she parted the tiny fingers that were locked above the graceful head, and laid them softly on the sleeper's breast. "I may as well go, while she sleeps so quietly, and gather a dish of the crimson berries she loves so well, for her breakfast; they will be nice with a dish of old Crummie's sweet milk;" and, pinning a green blanket over her head, the old woman went forth on her errand.

Meantime the child awoke, and, seeing the sunbeams stealing through the net-work of vines, and streaming so warm and bright over the rough, stone floor, started quickly from her couch, and, robing herself in a pink muslin frock, issued from her room, carolling a happy morning song. She sat down on a bench before the door of the cottage, and in a few moments her aunt appeared, bearing in one hand a white bowl filled with purple berries, and in the other a bucket of milk, all warm and frothing to the brim.

"O, then you are up, hinny!" she said, on seeing the child; "just look at what aunty has got for your breakfast. Now, you come in and pick over the berries with your little, nice, quick fingers, and I'll spread the table, strain the milk, and bake a bit of oaten cake, and we'll have a meal fit for a king."

The child obeyed readily, and soon the humble tenants of the rocky cottage were seated at their simple repast.

"I've some good news to tell you, Annie," said the woman, as she cut open a light, oaten cake, and spread a slice of rich, yellow butter over its smoking surface.

"What is it, aunty?" asked the child.

"There was two gentlemen here last night, after you fell asleep on my bed here, and they gave me lots o' siller for reading their fortunes. I've got it all here in the leather bag for you, hinny; 'twill buy plenty of gay ribbons to tie your pretty hair."

"O, I would not use it for that, aunty!" said Annie, quickly.

"What then, child?"

"For something useful."

"And what so useful as to make my Annie look gayest of all the village lasses?"

"Why, that's no use at all, aunty; I shan't have one more pretty thought in my head for having a gay ribbon on my hair. Use it, aunty, please, to buy me some new books, so I can enter the highest class in school when George Wild does. Mr. Grey says I can read and cipher as well as he, though I am not so old by two years."

"Well, well, hinny, it shall be as you wish; just like your father,—all for books and learning,—though your mother leaned that way too. Yes, of all our family she was always called the lady; and lady she was, indeed, as fine as the richest of them; but poverty, Annie,—O, 'tis a sad thing to be poor!"

"We are not poor, aunty," said the child, pouring the sweet milk over her berries; "only see what nice things we have! this rich milk old Crummie gives us, and this golden butter, and these light, sweet cakes! O, aunty! if you would only—only"—and she paused.

"Only what, child?" asked the fond old woman.

"But you won't be angry if I say it?" said the child, a conscious blush suffusing her lovely features.

"Angry with my darling! no."

"Only not tell any more fortunes, aunty; then we should be so happy."

"Not tell any more fortunes! What ails the child? Why, that's the way half our living comes; and an easy way to earn it, too; much easier than to sit and spin on the little linen wheel from morning till night."

"Easier, but not so honorable, is it, aunty?"

"Honorable! Yes, child; what put it into your pretty, curly head that it was not honorable to read future events and take fees for it?"

"Why, sometimes the girls and boys at school laugh and scorn at me, and call me the old witch's brat, or the young Scraggiewood seeress, or some such name," said the child, in a tone of sorrowful regret; "and I've often wished you would not tell fortunes any more. Learn me how to use the small wheel, aunty, and all the hours when I'm out of school, I'll spin fast as I can. I know we could get a very good living without your telling fortunes; don't you think so, aunty?"

"Why, child, I never thought a word about it," said the old woman, gazing on the beautiful face upturned to hers, and grown so earnest in its pleading.

"But you will think to-day, while I'm at school, won't you, aunty? I see George coming for me, now;" and, moving her chair from the table, she sprang for her satchel and sun-bonnet as her little play-fellow came over the stile, calling her name.

"You must have on your shoes this morning, hinny," said her aunt; "there was a heavy dew last night, and the path is wet."

"Yes," said George, "have them on, Annie, for I want you to go with me by the brook to get some pretty eglantines I saw last night, nearly bloomed; they are all out this morning, I know."

Annie was soon equipped, and, with a hearty blessing from Aunt Patty, they took their way hand in hand toward the village school.

CHAPTER III.

"On sped the seasons, and the forest child
Was rounded to the symmetry of youth;
While o'er her features stole, serenely wild,
The trembling sanctity of woman's truth,
Her modesty and simpleness and grace;
Yet those who deeper scan the human face,
Amid the trial hour of fear or ruth,
Might clearly read upon its Heaven-writ scroll,
That high and firm resolve that nerved the Roman soul."

Through three bright summers had George Wild led Annie Evalyn over the rough forest path to the village school. They were the only children residing in Scraggiewood, and, therefore almost constantly together. How they roamed through the dim old woods in search of moss and wild flowers, and, in the autumn time, to gather the brown nuts of the chestnut and beech trees; how many favorite nooks and dells they had, in which to rest from their ramblings, and talk and tell each other of their thoughts and dreamings of the life to come! But George would often say he could not understand all Annie's wild words; he thought her whimsical and visionary, and it pained him to find her ambitious and aspiring as

her years increased; he would fain have her always a child, rapt in the enjoyment of the present hour, content and satisfied with his companionship and aunt Patty's purple berries and oaten cakes, believing the heaven that closed round Scraggiewood bounded the universe; for something whispered to his heart, if she went forth into the wide world, she would not return to him; and he loved her as well as his indolent nature was capable of loving, and indeed would do a great deal for her sake. She possessed more power to rouse him to action than any other person, and she loved him, too, very well,—but very coolly, very calmly, with a love that sought the good of its object at the expense of self entirely, for she could bear to think of parting with him forever, and putting the world's width between them, so he was benefited and his usefulness increased by the proceeding. And he had always been her companion and protector. Next to her aunty she ought to love him; but his mind was not of a cast with hers; he could not appreciate her dreamy thoughts and aspirations. He was content to fold his arms, and be floated through life by the tide of circumstances, the thing he was; but she could not be so; she must trim her sails and stem the current; within her breast was a spirit that would not be lulled to slumber, but impelled her incessantly to action; there was a quenchless thirst for knowledge, unappeased, and it must be slaked.

Mr. Grey, the kind village pastor, who had become deeply interested in his young pupil during her attendance at the village school, offered to take her under his charge, and afford her the privilege of pursuing a course of study with his own daughter, Netta, with whom Annie had formed a close friendship at school. Aunt Patty said she should be lost without her "hinny," and George Wild remonstrated half angrily with her, for going off to leave him alone; but all to no effect—Annie must go.

"But why won't you go with me, George?" she asked, turning her liquid blue eyes upon his sullen face. "Don't you want to gain knowledge, and fame, and honor, in the great world, and perhaps some day behold multitudes bowing in reverence at your feet?"

"No, I want nothing of all this. I've knowledge enough now, and so have you, if you would only think so. And, as for fame and honor, I believe I'm happier without them, for I've often heard it remarked, 'increase of knowledge is increase of misery.'"

"Well, it is not the misery of ignorance," said Annie, proudly. "I am astonished to hear such sentiments from you, George Wild. I had thought you possessed a nobler, braver heart than to sit down here beneath the oaks of Scraggiewood, and waste the best years of your life in sloth and inaction."

"Why, I've not been sitting alone, have I, Annie?" he asked with an insinuating smile.

"But you will sit here alone henceforth, if you choose to continue this indolent life; childhood does not last forever; my child-life is over, and I am going to work now, hard and earnest."

"For what?"

"*For something noble*; to gain some lofty end."

"Well, I hope you'll succeed in your high-wrought schemes; but for my part, I see no use in fretting and toiling through this life, to secure some transitory fame and honor. Better pass its hours away as easily and quietly as we can."

"We should not live shrunk away in ourselves, but strive to do something for the benefit and happiness of our species."

"O, well, Annie! if to render others happy is your wish and aim, you have but to remain here in your humble cottage home, and I'll promise you you'll do that."

"Why, George," said she, noticing his rueful countenance, "what makes you look so woe-begone? As if I were about to fly to the ends of the earth, when I'm only going two little miles to Parson Grey's Rectory, and promise to walk to Scraggiewood every Saturday evening with you."

"But I feel as if I was going to lose you, Annie, for all that; the times that are past will never return."

"No; but there may be brighter ones ahead," she answered, hopefully.

George shook his head. None of her lofty aspirations found response in his bosom; the present moment occupied his thoughts. So the common wants of life were supplied, and he free from pain and anxiety, he was content, nor wished or thought of aught beyond. The great world of the future he never longed to scan, nor penetrate its misty-veiled depths, and leave a name for lofty deeds and noble actions, that should vibrate on the ear of time when he was no more.

And thus drifted asunder on the great ocean of life the barks that had floated on calmly side by side through a few years of quiet pleasure. They might never spread their sails together again; wider and wider would the distance grow between them; higher and higher would swell the waves as they sped on their separate courses; the one light and buoyant with her freight of noble hopes and dauntless steersman at the helm, the other without sail or ballast, drifted about at the mercy of winds and waves.

CHAPTER IV.

"A gentle heritage is mine,
  A life of quiet pleasure;
My heaviest cares are but to twine
Fresh votive garlands for the shrine
  Where 'bides my bosom's treasure.
I am not merry, nor yet sad,
My thoughts are more serene than glad."

It was a lovely spot, that peaceful vicarage. Tall elms shaded the sloping roof, and roses and jessamines poured their rich perfume on the morning and evening air. Here two years of calm, tranquil enjoyment glided over Annie Evalyn, as she, with unremitting assiduity, pursued the path of science under the guidance of the good parson. Each day fresh joys were opening before her, in the forms of newly-discovered truths. Her faculties developed so rapidly as to astonish her tutor, wise as he was in experience, and well-taught in ancient and modern lore.

"Annie," said he, one evening, as they sat together in the family parlor, "what do you intend to do with all this store of knowledge you are treasuring up with such eager application?"

She looked up quickly in his face, and a flush for a moment passed over her usually pale features.

"I know what you would say," he added; "that you think no one can have *too much* knowledge—is it not?"

"Do you think one can?" she asked.

"Perhaps not too much well-regulated knowledge; knowledge adapted to an efficient end and purpose."

Again Annie turned her dark blue, expressive eye full upon his face.

"I mean to put my little store of learning to good use," she said, thoughtfully.

"Well, so I supposed, Annie. What do you intend to do?"

"Something great and good," she answered, her eye kindling with the lofty thought within.

"And could you accomplish but one, which should it be?"

"Will not a great thing be a good one also?" she inquired.

He shook his head.

"That does not necessarily follow," he said; "that which is great may not be good, but remember, Annie, what is *good* will surely be *great*."

"I shall consider your words, dear sir," said Annie. "I am much indebted to you for the privileges your kindness has afforded me, and hope some day to be able to make a grateful recompense."

"What I do is done freely, my child, and from a sense of duty. Do not speak of recompense. Has not the companionship you have afforded my little Netta, to say nothing of myself and sister Rachel, amply repaid the small trouble your instruction has caused?"

"But you forget in all this I am as much or more the recipient as the giver. If Netta has found me a tolerable companion, I have found her a charming one; and all yours and aunt Rachel's teachings—ah! I fear I'm much the debtor after all," she said, shaking her head, doubtfully, and smiling in her listener's face with artless simplicity and gratitude.

"No, no, not a debtor, Annie," he said, stroking her bright curls; "I cannot admit that. Let the benefits be mutual, if you will, nothing more. I see Netta in the garden gathering flowers. She is a good little girl, and loves you dearly, though she has none of the brilliancies that characterize your mind. I do not intend to flatter; go now and join your friend. I expect a party of western people to visit me to-morrow, and have some preparations to make for their reception."

Annie bowed, and glided down the gravelled path of the garden. In a shady bower she found Netta, arranging a bouquet of laurel leaves and snow-white jessamines.

"O!" she exclaimed, looking up as Annie approached; "there you are, sis. Now I'll twine you a wreath of these fragrant flowers."

"And I'll twine one for you, Netta," said Annie. "Of what shall it be?"

"Simple primroses or violets; these will best adorn my lowly brow; but Annie, bright Annie Evalyn, shall wear naught but the proud laurel and queenly jessamine;" and, giving a twirl to her pretty wreath, she tossed it over her friend's high, marble-like brow, bestowing a playful kiss on either cheek as she did so.

"Does it sit lightly, Annie?" she asked.

"Yes, Netta, and now bend in turn to receive my wreath of innocence, not more pure and lovely than the brow on which it rests."

Netta knelt, and the garland was thrown over her flaxen curls. Thus adorned, the lovely maidens strolled up the avenue, arm in arm, and made their way to the study-room, as it was called; a large, airy chamber fronting the east, situated in a retired portion of the house, to be removed from noise and intrusion.

"Now you shan't study or write to-night, for who knows when we may have another quiet evening together? These western friends of father's are coming to-morrow, and our time and attention will be occupied with them. I want to hear you talk to-night, Annie. Tell me some of your eloquent thoughts, your glowing fancies. I'm your poor, little, foolish Netta, you know."

"You are my dear, dear friend," said Annie, throwing her arms impulsively round the slender, graceful neck, and kissing the soft young cheek. "I'm feeling sad and gloomy this evening, and fear I cannot entertain you with conversation or lively chit-chat."

"Tell me what makes you sad."

"I don't know. Are you never sad without knowing the cause of your gloomy feelings?"

"No, I think not."

"Well, I am. Often a shadow seems thrown across my spirit's heaven, but I cannot tell whence it comes; the substance which casts the shade is invisible. Who are these friends of your father's that are to visit us?"

"O, they are a wealthy family with whom father became acquainted in the circuit of his travels last season."

"Their name?"

"Prague, Dr. Prague, wife and daughter; also two young children, for whom they are seeking a governess here in the east, as good teachers are obtained with difficulty in their section of the country."

"Ah!" said Annie, in a tone of voice so peculiar that Netta turned involuntarily toward her.

"O, Annie, Annie!" she exclaimed, and threw her arms round her friend's neck.

"What has so suddenly alarmed you?" asked Annie, endeavoring to soothe her.

"You won't go off with these strangers and leave us, will you, dear Annie?"

"Why, who is a visionary now, Netta?" she asked, laughing merrily; "what put the thought of my going away into this pretty head, lying here all feverish with excited visions? Pshaw, Netta, you are a whimsie!"

"Then you won't go?" she said, her face brightening. "No thought of becoming the governess this western family are seeking, and going away with them, has entered your brain?"

"Why should there, Netta?"

"But would you say nay should you receive the offer?"

"I can tell better when the moment arrives. But there, Netta, don't cloud that fair brow again. I feel well assured no such moment will come."

"I'm not so sure, Annie."

"Well, well, let us kiss, and retire to be ready to receive the visitors on the morrow."

And with a sisterly embrace they sought their private apartments.

CHAPTER V.

"O, show me a place like the wild-wood home,
  Where the air is fragrant and free,
And the first pure breathings of morning come
  In a gush of melody.
When day steals away, with a young bride's blush,
  To the soft green couch of night,
And the moon throws o'er, with a holy hush,
  Her curtain of gossamer light."

Alone Annie Evalyn was walking in the summer twilight over the rough road toward Scraggiewood.

Near two months had elapsed since she last visited her Aunt Patty at the rock-built cottage, and she pictured in her mind, as she walked on, the surprise and good-natured chiding which would mark her old aunt's reception. She gazed upward at the tall forest trees swaying to and fro in the light evening breeze, and far into its dim, mazy depths, where gray rocks lay clad in soft, green moss, and gnarled, uprooted trunks overgrown with clinging vines, and pale, delicate flowers springing beautiful from their decay. She listened to the murmuring of the brook in its rocky bed, and a thousand memories of other years rushed on her soul. The strange, fast-coming fancies that thronged her brain when she in early childhood roamed those dark, solemn woods, or sat at night on the lowly cottage stile, gazing on the wild, grotesque shadows cast by the moonbeams from the huge, forest trees; or how she listened to the solemn hootings of the lonesome owl, the monotonous cuckoo, and sudden whippoorwill; or laughed at the glowworm's light in the dark swamps, and asked her aunty if they were not a group of stars come down to play bo-peep in the meadows.

And then she thought of George Wild, her early playfellow. He was away now, in a distant part of the country, whither he had been sent by his father to learn the carpenter's trade. He had come to bid her good-by with tears in his eyes, not so much at parting from *her*, she fancied, as from dread of the active life before him. It would be hard to tell whether Annie felt most pity or contempt for his weakness. He was the only friend of her early childhood, and, *as* such, she had still a warm, tender feeling at her heart for him; and, had he possessed a becoming energy and manliness of character, this childish feeling might have deepened into strong, enduring affection as years advanced. But Annie Evalyn could never love George Wild as he *was*; and thus she thought as she brushed away a tear that had unconsciously started during her meditations, and found herself at the door of her aunt's cottage. She bounded over the threshold and into the old lady's arms, bestowing a shower of kisses ere poor Aunt Patty could sufficiently collect herself and recover from the surprise to return her darling's lavish caresses.

"Ah, yes, you naughty little witch! here you are at last, pretending to be mighty glad to see your old aunty, though for two long months you've never come near her. But, bless it, how pretty it grows! and how red its cheeks are, and how bright its eyes!" she exclaimed, brushing away the curling locks and gazing into her darling's face.

"But you'll forgive me, aunty, won't you?" said Annie, coaxingly. "Indeed, I meant to have come long before; but if you only knew how much I have had to occupy my time,—so many things to learn, and such hard, hard lessons."

"O, yes! always at your books, studying life away."

"Why, aunty! you just exclaimed how fresh and blooming I was grown, and I've something so nice to tell you. There are some wealthy people from the west visiting at Parson Grey's, and they were in search of a governess for their little children. Would you think it, aunty, their choice has fallen upon me? and I am to accompany them on their return home. They have a daughter about my own age, sweet Kate Prague. She will be a fine companion—I love her so dearly now."

Aunt Patty dropped her arms by her side, and remained silent after Annie had ceased speaking.

"What is the matter, aunty?" asked she, eagerly.

"And so you, young, silly thing, are going to leave your friends and go off with these strangers, that will treat you nobody knows how. Annie! Annie! does Parson Grey approve of this?"

"Yes, aunty; he thinks it will be a fine opportunity for me to see something of the world, and learn the arts and graces of polite society."

"Ah! but these great, rich folks are often unkind and overbearing, and oppress and treat with slight and scorn their dependents."

"O, Mr. Grey knows this family well, and recommends them in the highest terms."

"Well, for all that, I can't bear the thought of losing you. So young and ignorant."

"Ignorant, aunty? Why, Dr. Prague himself says I know twice as much as his daughter Kate."

"Ah! book-learnin' enough; but I will tell you, Annie, a little experience is better than all your books."

"Well, how am I to obtain experience but by mingling in the world, and learning its manners and customs?"

"Ah, dear! I fear you will find this world, you are so anxious to see and know, is a hard, rough place."

"Well, aunty, don't dishearten me at the outset. See what a nice box of honey I've brought you from Aunt Rachel Grey. Some of it will be delightful on your light batter cakes, with a slice of old Crummie's yellow butter. I must go out and bid the dear old creature good-by. How I used to love to drive her to the brook for water!"

"Ah, those were happy days for me, Annie!" said the old woman, sorrowfully. "I shall never see the

like again."

"Don't say so, aunty," said Annie, her own heart experiencing a thrill of anguish at the prospect of leaving her old forest-home, and kind, loving protector. "I shall return some day, may be rich and famous, and *good*, too, I hope; for Parson Grey says 'tis better to be good than great."

"God grant all your bright visions may be realized, Annie!" said the aunt fervently.

"Now, while you prepare our evening meal, I'll run out and look at some of my old haunts," said Annie, forcing back a tear, and trying to assume a cheerful countenance.

So she wandered forth, while the grief-stricken woman spread the simple board; but she could not relish the clear, dripping honey-comb sent by the kind Aunt Rachel, and long after Annie slept in her little cot-bed, did the old lady kneel over her sleeping form, weeping and praying for her darling child. Annie spent the ensuing day with her aunt at the cottage, and toward evening took a tearful leave, and bade adieu to Scraggiewood.

CHAPTER VI.

"And there was envy in her look,
And envy in her tone,
As if her spirit might not brook,
A rival near the throne."

"But don't you see, Dr. Prague, it won't do at all to admit her into society on the same footing with our Catherine? For my part I don't see how you could, for a moment, harbor so low an idea."

In a far away period of time, the present honorable Mrs. Dr. Prague had—shall we write it?—cut shoe-strings in her father's shop, and why should not she be a competent judge of the low and common, since experience is regarded as the "best teacher" in *almost* all matters beneath the sun?

"I say," she reiterated, finding her remark elicited no response from her worthy husband, "Annie Evalyn is not to be compared to our Catherine."

"I'm aware of that," was the answer in a dry tone.

"And don't you notice how the minx tries to put on the lady?"

"Not at all, madam; why should she strive to assume what is her natural garb?"

"Now really, Hippe, you are getting incorrigible."

"Hippe" was a term of endearment, Mrs. Dr. Prague was accustomed to apply to her husband when she wished to be very killing and condescending, his Christian name being Hippocrates.

To this winning speech, however, the insensate Dr. vouchsafed no reply; so his lovely wife tacked about and said, "Well, Dr., to come to the point, this governess is a dangerous rival for your daughter."

"I know it," responded the good man, cutting up an orange, and passing a silver plate containing several slices to his fair lady; "here, Mrs. Prague, do regale yourself on this luscious fruit. It is the finest I have tasted this season."

"Dr. Prague, when I am discussing matters of importance, I do not wish to be insulted by such frivolities."

"Indeed, madam," said the doctor, withdrawing the plate, and proceeding leisurely to the gratification of his own palate.

There was a silence of some minutes, and then the lady, after fidgeting and arranging the folds of her brocade silk, resumed the conversation by saying, in a huffy tone, "May I inquire what you intend to do about it, sir?"

"Begging your pardon, madam," said the doctor, looking up from his orange, "of what were you speaking?"

The lady frowned frightfully at this fresh instance of his inattention to her discourse.

"I only wished to know if you thought of marrying Frank Sheldon to Annie Evalyn, in preference to your own daughter," she exclaimed, in a biting, sarcastic tone. The *matter* but not the *manner* of this speech seemed to rouse the doctor's attention.

"Frank Sheldon! Frank Sheldon!" he said quickly; "has he arrived from his travels then?"

"No, but he *will* arrive some time."

"O, yes, I trust so! But speaking of Annie,—*our* Annie you know, for I'm proud that we have such a treasure beneath our roof——"

"Dr. Prague! are you mad? A paltry governess a treasure! I consider it a shame and disgrace to our house, that a poor, low, dependent, is allowed an equality in the family, and admitted through our influence to the first classes in society. And I'm not the only one that marks the shocking impropriety. My son-in-law, Lawrence Hardin, is possessed of a discerning eye. He sees Kate loses wherever that girl is admitted."

This speech was accompanied by immoderate vehemence, and energetic gestures, but it failed to produce the slightest effect upon the phlegmatic doctor, who, having finished his orange, settled himself comfortably in his easy-chair, and took a cigar and the morning paper to assist his digestion.

"Thirteen increase from last week. I declare, our city is growing sickly," he said, as his wife closed her oratorical harangue; "but, speaking of Annie again, she has a poetical gem in one of our popular magazines this week, which I find accompanied by a complimentary note from the editor. She writes under a *nom de plume*, but I discovered her. Have you read any of her writings, Mrs. Prague?"

"*Her* writings! the bold, impertinent hussy! No, nor do I wish to. But if I'm to be entertained with this sort of conversation, I'll go down to my son-in-law, Esq. Hardin's; and there I'm sure to pass an agreeable day. Nothing low ever tarnishes his discourse."

"Do so, madam," said the imperturbable husband; "undoubtedly they will appreciate the honor of your presence."

And with a disdainful toss the lady flouted out of the room, leaving the good doctor to the undisturbed enjoyment of his cigar and papers.

Annie Evalyn had been nine months an inmate of Dr. Prague's mansion, when the preceding scene was enacted. Some of that experience which Aunt Patty had pronounced "better than book learnin'," had fallen to her share. So far from her beauty and accomplishments winning friends and good-will, they had only seemed to provoke the sneers and invidious remarks of those who envied her superior attractions. She had seen the contemptuous curl of the lip, and heard the epithet, "low-born creature." She had bitterly learned that genius and beauty are not the current coins of society; and she sometimes thought the old adage, "Knowledge is power," would read truer, "Money is power." But though she had dark hours, her young heart's courage had not failed. Still the unalterable purpose was firm, to be active, to be striving for fame, honor and good repute. Latterly she had turned her attention to literary subjects, and produced several pieces that received warm commendation from the press.

Annie had been but a few weeks in her new residence, ere her quick eye discerned that Mrs. Prague looked upon her with envy and jealousy, and she endeavored to conciliate the lady's esteem by gentleness and condescension; but all efforts were vain. She persisted in her coldness and perversity. This was so unpleasant to Annie that she several times signified her readiness to leave when her presence was no longer desired; but the old doctor, who was her most zealous advocate, declared he should go distracted if she left them. Kate cried and the children howled in terror at the prospect of such a calamity. Mrs. Prague looked lofty and said, "Miss Evalyn was a trusty governess, and they might increase her salary if she thought it insufficient."

"Double it, if she says so," said the doctor; "but money can't reward services like hers. How could you pay the sun for illuminating your drawing-rooms, Mrs. Prague?"

And Mrs. Prague darted an angry glance, and said she would go down to her son-in-law's.

CHAPTER VII.

"To love's sweet tones my heart shall never thrill;
Nor, as the tardy years their circles roll,
Shall they the ardor of its pulses chill."

Reclining on a silken sofa, in a luxurious apartment, was a lady in the prime of youth and beauty. She was robed in a white, wrought-muslin gown, and her glossy ringlets lay in dark relief on its snowy folds. She was reading at intervals from a small gilt volume, but with a wandering listlessness of manner, as though it were a weary effort to fix her attention upon its contents.

This was the wife of Lawrence Hardin, Esq., one of the most wealthy, influential men in that part of the country. He arrived there from the east a few years before, bringing a large fortune, which he came in possession of by the sudden death of his parents. He embarked largely in speculations, and was very successful; in consequence of which, the mercantile class in their most critical junctures looked up to him as a superior and safeguard. He soon grew to be a man of great power and influence, and in the

full tide of prosperity bore away the beautiful Marion Prague, the reigning belle of the city, as his bride. There was a rumor afloat that the match afforded the fair lady but meagre satisfaction, and that her taste and wishes were not much consulted in the matter; but the angry importunities of her proud, self-willed mother at length induced her to marry a man she did not love. But this idle report was hushed after their marriage, and the devotion of the young couple loudly descanted on in fashionable circles throughout the city; for was not Hardin all attention, and how could she avoid loving so fine a fellow? So the world called it a nice match, and passed on. Let us pause for a glance behind the scenes.

A slight tap at the door of that elegant boudoir, and then it swung softly on its gilded hinges, and a gentleman, richly dressed, with shining hat, dark broadcloth over-coat, and a light bamboo stick in his neatly-gloved hand, entered and approached the couch on which the lady reclined. He was rather above the medium height, of commanding figure, with jetty hair and mustaches and deep-set, piercing black eyes. Laying aside hat and gloves, he sat down by the sofa, and commenced playfully poking the long, wavy ringlets that lay on the crimson damask pillow with the gold tip of his tiny walking-cane. She had resumed her book on his first appearance, and continued to peruse its pages. She did not look toward him, or speak, and it was evident, from a slightly-clouded brow, that his presence rather annoyed than pleased her.

This was Lawrence Hardin and lady in the privacy of their own apartment.

"Why don't you speak to me, Marion?" he asked, at length.

No answer, and the brow grew darker. He bent over her, and endeavored to take the book from her hand. She tightened her grasp for a moment to resist his efforts, and then, suddenly relaxing her hold, turned toward the wall.

He gazed on her several moments with a mingled expression of anger and wounded tenderness, and then turned away.

Half an hour later the young wife met her husband in the breakfast-room, and presided with benign and gracious dignity over his well-laid table; inquired "if Esq. Hardin found the chocolate and sardines to his relish;" and he extolled Mrs. Hardin's excellent superintendence of domestic affairs; said business in his office would detain him from her till the dinner hour, and, expressing a hope that she might pass the morning agreeably, bowed himself out of the presence of his lovely wife, who replied to his civilities courteously, and even smiled brightly at his parting nod at the hall door. And the servants in attendance saw and listened; and reported, and enlarged on the "wonderful love" and happiness of their young master and mistress. So this *nice match* was noised abroad over the whole city, and a hundred families envied the domestic felicity of Esq. Hardin and wife. O, the endless masquerade of life!

Several weeks later the unloved husband entered his young lady's apartment. She stood before the dressing-table, arranging her hair for the evening. She cast a brief glance toward him, and then proceeded quietly with her toilet. The chilling indifference wounded him acutely, and he addressed her rather hastily: "Marion, do you think I shall always have patience?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," she answered, carelessly; "but of what do you complain? Do I not perform the duties of your mansion in a manner to satisfy your fastidious tastes?"

"Don't mock or trifle," he said, bitterly. "I'm not a machine, or an automaton, and I want something more than my servants, my drawing-room and table well attended, to satisfy my heart."

"You knew I did not love you when you married me."

"Yes, but I did *not* know that you hated me."

"Nor did I."

"And what have I done since to incur your detestation?"

"Nothing."

"Well, then, will you treat me with a little less of this freezing coldness and scorn when we are alone together?"

Tears started in those beautiful eyes, and he advanced to embrace her, but she motioned him away. No, they were not there for him. She struggled a few moments, and then, uncovering her face, said calmly:

"Sit down, Lawrence; I will endeavor to comply with your wishes."

He drew a damask fauteuil opposite the one on which she was reclining, and sank among its downy cushions. The rays of the setting sun streamed into the richly-furnished apartment and fell upon the two occupants.

"What news in the city, to-day?" inquired Marion, at length.

"Nothing particularly interesting, I believe," he answered. "I was at your father's to-night; they are making preparations for a large party next week, given in honor of Frank Sheldon's arrival."

Some noise in the street at this moment attracted his attention, and he rose to look forth. When he turned again, he beheld his wife lying on the carpet pale and cold as marble.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Strange scenes will often follow on abrupt surprise."

Annie Evalyn was alone in her apartment. A servant had just left a small package, and she was now occupied with its contents. First was a letter from the good parson, full of fatherly advice and admonition; then one from Netta, a sheet written full, in a neat, delicate hand, describing a visit to Aunt Patty's cottage, and a score of messages enumerated which the old lady had desired transmitted to her "dear hinny," as she still called Annie. "Tell her I don't tell fortunes now, for I know she will like to hear that; because once I remember she said, 'I wouldn't tell fortunes, aunty, for I don't think it is respectable.' So tell her I earn a good living by spinning on my little wheel, and try to be happy thinking she is so. But, sometimes, when the wind howls through the deep woods, I can't help feeling lonesome, and think, if Annie were only here to sing some of her pretty songs, how cheery the old walls would look! And tell her, if she should ever grow tired and heart-sick in the midst of the world's fashions and splendors, the old thatched roof in Scraggiewood will joy to shelter her; and the old heart here will warm and love her into life and happiness again."

Annie felt the tears come as she read, for she had often of late experienced a longing wish for a gentle friend in whom to confide and trust.

Now Netta spoke of their home at the vicarage. "It was lonesome yet," she said, "and the old study had never worn a cheerful aspect since its good genius departed. Father and Aunt Rachel spoke of bright-faced Annie every day; but most of all *she* missed the dear, loving companion when she retired to her chamber at night." And then she wrote, "Your old friend George Wild, has returned quite a changed being, I assure you. I think you must have infused some of your energy and action into his nature, for he has become an active business man. He works at his trade in the village, and I see him frequently. We have long, cosey chats about you, Annie." Annie laughed as she read.

"Dear little Netta!" she exclaimed, "I see through it all; it is clear as day. But I'm willing you should use my name, darling, to subserve your timidity. I'll answer this sweet letter this morning. I'm alone, and now is a good time."

She looked about for her writing-materials, and suddenly remembered she had left them in the school-room the evening previous. As she lightly descended the stairs, the bell rang, and the hall door being open, she came in full view of a gentleman standing on the marble steps e'er she was aware, and in another moment he was at her side, exclaiming,

"Astonishing! Is it possible? Can this be Kate Prague?"

Annie blushed as she perceived his mistake, and hastened to rectify it.

"I am not Miss Prague," she said, "but a member of the family at present. I think I have the honor of addressing Mr. Sheldon." He bowed gracefully.

"The ladies are gone out for a short drive this morning. Will you be pleased to wait their return in the drawing-room?"

He accepted the invitation and entered the apartment, offering, as he did so, an apology for his mistake, which she acknowledged with another rising blush.

"I think Dr. Prague received intelligence last evening that you would not arrive till next week," she remarked, as they were seated in the parlor. "Had they expected you sooner, I'm sure they would have been at home to receive you."

"I did send a letter to that effect," he said; "but the improved facilities of travelling have enabled me to reach the city sooner than I anticipated."

A silence ensued. Annie felt ill at ease. She had received many hints of the lofty, aristocratic notions of Frank Sheldon. She knew him to be wealthy, and the prospective lover of Kate Prague; that is, Kate had informed her that "Marion had been first designed for him; but by some means that plan failed, and then mother married her to Hardin, and Sheldon was left for her. She supposed she should marry him some time, though she did not care a fig for him, he was so grave, and always talking on literary subjects which she could not understand and therefore mortally abhorred."

All this passed quickly through Annie's mind, and, rising, she said she "thought the ladies would soon return; perhaps he could amuse himself with the contents of the centre-table a brief while."

"O, yes!" he said politely. "I can ever pass time agreeably with books and paintings." She courtesied

and retired to her own apartment. "What a vision of loveliness!" he mentally exclaimed when left alone. "I wonder if Kate Prague is half so beautiful. Who can this lady be?"

A carriage now rattled up to the door, and the ladies came bundling into the apartment. He suddenly recollected he was there unannounced, but what could he do?

"Bless me! Mercy! Why, Mr. Sheldon here, and nobody to receive him! What must he think?" exclaimed Mrs. Prague, in a tone of astonishment.

"I'm most concerned, my good madam," said he, advancing, for what you must think to find me so unceremoniously ensconced in your drawing-room."

"Don't say a word about that," was the answer. "Was not this once your home? I hope you will still regard it in that light. Kate, come forward; here is Mr. Sheldon. I declare, what a delightful surprise!" The old doctor now entered, and burst into a torrent of welcome on beholding Sheldon.

"How did you get here, my boy," he asked, "to steal upon us so slyly, when I received a letter only yesterday saying you would not reach us before next week?"

Sheldon explained briefly. When he mentioned that a young lady had escorted him to the parlor, and invited him to await the family's return, a visible frown lowered over Mrs. Prague's before smiling countenance, and she and Catherine soon excused themselves to prepare for dinner.

CHAPTER IX.

"But, ah! if thou hadst loved me—had I been
All to thy dreams that to mine own thou art."

On a dim, gray morning in early winter, Lawrence Hardin sat by the couch of his wife, her thin, wasted hand lying unconsciously in his, and her quick, heavy breathings moving the dark locks of his hair, as he bent low over her sleeping form. Three months had passed since that fainting scene, and the young wife had encountered a long, severe stroke of illness. The husband watched incessantly by her bed-side, for he would not suffer her wild, fevered ravings to be heard by other ears than his own.

It was all revealed to him. He knew he had married a woman whose heart was another's, and that she had been compelled to the step by the threats and vehemence of her mother.

O, how the strong man writhed in his agony! To know Marion did not love him, was enough to endure; but to know she loved another, ah! that was madness. His passions were roused to fury, yet not on *her* should they wreak their vengeance. No; on the man that had stolen her love from him, or rather the man on whom she had bestowed her love, Frank Sheldon. On his devoted head should the vengeance fall.

Thus he resolved, but kept his fell design buried in his own breast, and, by an engaging exterior, sought to lure his victim into his toils.

Sheldon was a brave, generous fellow. Left early an orphan, he had been reared in the family of Dr. Prague, who was instituted guardian of the large fortune left by his parents. He was endowed by nature with fine intellectual abilities, and an exquisite taste for the grand and beautiful in nature and art, and, during three years' travel in foreign parts, had so improved upon these natural advantages, as to stand acknowledged one of the most elegant and accomplished young men of his country. But it often happens that such high-wrought natures are but poorly versed in the plodding concerns of this nether world. And thus it was with him. Alive to every lofty feeling and generous impulse, he fancied others like himself. Low cunning and artifice were unknown to his bosom, and consequently he would fall the easier victim to Hardin's scheme of revenge.

And now there came another fact to this base man's knowledge. Sheldon had not only robbed him of Marion's affections, but had won and slighted Kate Prague, to fall in love with Annie Evalyn. Worse still, the passion was mutual. That *he* saw and knew long before the parties themselves had acknowledged the growing love in the still depths of their own beating hearts, much more given voice to the feeling in words.

Love is so blind, and shy, and unbelieving, the poets tell us. Had Sheldon's love met no response, then Hardin's revenge had been in part gratified; but now it was only whetted to a keener edge, for he saw, or fancied he saw, not only his rival's happiness, but the sister of the woman he loved pining from an unrequited affection.

As he revolved these dark thoughts in his vile breast, the hand he held moved suddenly, and the sleeper murmured in her dreams. He bent his ear eagerly to catch the sound, but it was gone. He smoothed the damp, dark locks away from the pale brow, and gazed on her thin, attenuated features—yet more beautiful, they seemed to him, than in the ruddy glow of health. O that she would open her

eyes and gaze up tenderly into his! And when she was able to sit in a soft-cushioned chair, robed in a snowy dressing-gown, and propped with pillows, receiving his attentions with such a pretty shyness and distrust; or a few weeks later, when, still more recovered, leaning so coyly on his arm to wander over her splendid mansion again, and looking so timidly in his face, as if, now her secret was known, she had no right to claim or expect tenderness from him;—all this reserve made her so much dearer, and he thought, if she would but give him one little look of love, he would even forget his meditated revenge on Sheldon.

But, ah! he looked in vain for lurking love in those cold, beautiful eyes. There was submission,—there was gratitude; but what were those?

Again the fashionable world said, "Esq. Hardin and lady are more devoted than ever;" and they congratulated Mrs. Dr. Prague on the *nice match* she had secured for her daughter Marion. And the haughty, vain mother exulted, for she was a superficial observer of human nature, and could not, or *would* not, see the wasting woe that was preying on her daughter's health and beauty.

It was a gay season at the doctor's mansion. Sheldon's arrival was the signal for a round of entertainments among the élite of the city; for, be it known, there were others than good Mrs. Prague anxious to secure so eligible a match for their daughters, as the handsome, rich and gifted Frank Sheldon. A manœuvring mother! reader, hast ever seen one? And if so, dost know of another so contemptible thing in the whole broad realm of the low, sordid and despicable?

The good old doctor, with his usual obstinacy, insisted that Annie Evalyn should make one of all the parties of amusement; and, in truth, Sheldon was quite as anxious to secure her society as was the doctor to "set her forward," as Mrs. Prague expressed it. That lady was exceedingly vexed and mortified at the turn matters were taking; but Kate, partaking largely of her father's easy nature, seemed as merry and well-pleased as though Sheldon had fallen in love with her, instead of Annie Evalyn; for it began to be whispered in the upper circles that "Dr. Prague's pretty governess had captivated the fascinating Sheldon." Many ugly grimaces distorted the proper faces of marriageable daughters; and captious, ill-natured remarks were indulged in by disappointed maidens, who had beggared their fathers' pockets to purchase silks and satins, jewels and diamonds, to carry by storm the heart of the elegant, accomplished Frank Sheldon.

Alas for human hopes and expectations! And what a perverse, capricious, wilful little fellow is this god of love, whom we all worship and make offerings to in one form or another! Why, he never goes where he should; that is, you may hang him a dome, with golden draperies, stud the walls with pearls and rubies, put a divinity there, beautiful as the fabled houris, and robed in eastern magnificence, with discretion's self to open the portal and invite his entrance; still, he goes not in. A humming-bird around a rose has caught his vagrant eye, and he is off to follow its roamings from flower to flower. Was ever such an improvident, self-willed creature as this boy, Cupid?

CHAPTER X.

"It is an era strange, yet sweet,
  Which every woman's heart hath known,
When first her bosom learns to beat
  To the soft music of a tone;
That era, when she first begins
  To know what love alone can teach,
That there are hidden depths within
  Which friendship never yet could reach."

Annie Evalyn was alone in her room, a second time, sitting down to answer her friend Netta's letter. It was the first leisure she had known in several weeks, and she would hardly have commanded it now, but that Sheldon was gone to conclude an extensive land contract, into which he was entering with Lawrence Hardin; allured by flattering representations of the immense emolument sure to result from these speculations, when emigration should raise to an untold value the worth of those extensive tracts, then lying wild and uncultivated through those western countries.

Dr. Prague had also advised him to the course, regarding it as the easiest method of keeping good the fortune of Sheldon, whose choice of literature as a profession tended rather to diminish than increase his coffers. And so he embarked his all with Hardin; and all thought him sure to succeed in the enterprise, with so far-seeing and judicious a partner to counsel and direct.

We return to Annie. She had opened her portfolio, and placed before her a pure, virgin page. Twirling the enamelled top from her inkstand, and fastening a gold pen to a pearl-wrought handle, she commenced her task.

"I scarcely know what to say, dear Netta; there are so many thoughts crowded on my brain for utterance, that I can scarcely decide what it is best to say, and what leave

unsaid. One thing I feel sure of, that whatever is imparted in confidence, will remain safe in your trusty bosom; and O, how blessed am I, in the possession of such a friend! Would you were here beside me this evening, your arm clasped tenderly about my neck, your dear, earnest eyes looking in mine. But, alas! we are far asunder. Your sweet letter brought many vivid pictures before my mind of the happy hours passed in that study room, and, still further back, that childhood in the rocky cottage of Scraggiewood. Tell aunty, I still love to call her as in my childish days, and hope the time is not very far distant when I may run into her arms for a hearty kissing.

"But, Netta, I know you are all eagerness to hear what I'm doing here; how I speed on my aspiring way, and what is my progress toward the temple of fame it was e'er my proudest wish to enter.

"Alas, Netta! I'm ashamed to say the indefatigable Annie Evalyn has relapsed her energies, has faltered in her pursuit of glory, and surrendered herself to the enjoyment of the passing hour. And yet I was never so happy as now; no, never in my life. To love and to be loved; dear sis, do you know what it is? If not, no words of mine can tell you. Frank Sheldon has never told me his heart was mine, but it is a poor love that needs words to express it, I fancy. He is rich, handsome and honored; yet it is not for these I love him, but because his tastes and feelings are in unison with mine.

"But, Netta, I have to endure some ill will, and cold looks, which detract from my happiness. A share of that experience aunty declared 'better than books,' has been taught my hopeful nature, and often do I think of your kind father's tender admonitions.

"Adieu, dearest; I've told my tale in brief. I need not say, guard it well.

"You have seen some of my simple productions in the magazines, and are pleased to think well of them, for which I thank you kindly. I'm writing none at present. With love to all, I am,

"Truly,

"ANNIE."

The letter was folded and directed as she heard a voice in the hall calling her name. It was Sheldon's; and a bright smile irradiated her features, as, throwing aside the writing materials, she prepared to go down. He met her on the stairs.

"I couldn't find you anywhere," he said, "and the parlors were dark and cold as midnight. Where have you been and how occupied all the while I've been away winding up that tiresome contract with Hardin?"

"In my room, writing a letter to a friend," she answered, with a pleasant smile, as he was leading her through the several parlors, to fix on one exactly suited to his taste.

"Writing?" said he, reproachfully; "O, Annie!"

"Why, what of that?" she asked.

"O, nothing, I suppose; but I can't endure to think you can sit down, cold and calm, when I'm away, and indite your thoughts on paper. I can neither read, write, nor think, without you, Annie."

She blushed at these words.

"Come," he continued, drawing her close to his side; "I need not tell you I love you, Annie, for that you know already; but you can render me very happy, by speaking one little word in answer to a question I want to ask."

Still blushing and turning away her eyes, and he gazing so eloquently upon her downcast features.

"Will you speak it, Annie?"

"Let me hear the question," she said.

He inclined his head and whispered in her ear. She placed her hand in his, and he looked most happily answered as he wound his arm round her waist and pressed the little hand close to his heart.

There was a band of wandering musicians playing in the street, and he led her to the casement. She leaned lightly against his shoulder, and thus they stood there listening to the music. It was rough enough, and could hardly have pleased at any other time; but it sounded like the symphonies of angels to them now. O, what divine strains! But the melody was all in their own hearts. The screeching wheels of a dirt cart would have failed to strike a dissonance upon their ears; for all nature rolled on in linked harmony to them; they fancied they were very near heaven, and so they were; they thought they could not be much happier if they were really there, and it is doubtful if they could.

Thus wrapped in their new-found happiness, let us leave with prophetic good-night.

CHAPTER XI.

"So fails, so languishes, grows dim and dies,
All that this world is proud of. From their spheres
The stars of human glory are cast down.
Perish the roses and the flowers of kings,
Princes and emperors, and the crowns and palms
Of all the mighty, withered and consumed.
Nor is power long given to lowliest innocence
Long to protect her own."

"Hardin, don't you remember the old fortune-telling hag that used to keep office in a heap of rocks in that deuced rough hole called Scraggiewood?" asked a gay, reckless-looking young man, as he lighted a cigar, and settled himself in a comfortable armchair with feet elevated on the fender.

"Indeed I do," responded Hardin, quickly. "You and I made her a visit one evening, you know, and she drew forth rather ominous fortunes for both of us from her teapot of destiny. Ha, ha! what was it the hag told me, Sumpter?"

"That you would be a wicked fellow, marry a lovely woman, who wouldn't care a picayune for you, and live after you wished you were dead, I believe, or something to that import, wasn't it?"

"Well, I reckon 'twas some talk of this sort; but what brought this incident to your mind now, Jack?"

"It was recalled by sight of that young lady at your father-in-law's. Don't you remember, that night we were at the rock den in Scraggiewood, there was a child, a little girl, sleeping on a pallet in the room?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, that child and this young lady are one and the same."

"It cannot be!" exclaimed Hardin, quickly.

"It is so, I'm positive. But stop; what is this girl's name?"

"Annie Evalyn."

"Exactly. I asked the old crone that night what was her child's name, and she told me the one you have just repeated."

"Is it possible?" ejaculated Hardin in a ruminating manner.

"It is easy to convince your doubts. Just engage her in conversation and allude to her early life. She'll betray herself, my word for it. Besides I've heard of her since you left the east. She had a beau there at Scraggiewood, one George Wild; and after picking up some education at a country parson's, came west as governess in a wealthy family. These several things have recurred to my memory since beholding her at Dr. Prague's last evening; for, depend upon it, this fine lady, who captivates all hearts, is the old Scraggiewood witch's daughter."

After this speech from Sumpter a silence ensued. Hardin was revolving in his mind whether to divulge his plan of revenge to his companion, and enlist him as a co-worker to assist in the completion of his schemes. He saw this accidental information would aid in furthering his plans. How should he use it? He rose and paced the floor.

"Jack," he said at length, giving him a slap on the shoulder, "can I trust you?"

"Always, Hardin," was the ready response. "I am yours to command."

Another pause, and Hardin continued to pace the floor with nervous, uneven steps. At length, as he passed the large, oval window, he caught a glimpse of his wife walking in the conservatory. Approaching, he tapped slightly on the glass to arrest her attention. She turned, and a frown gathered on her features as she met his earnest, affectionate gaze. O, Marion! why couldn't you have smiled then? What might not one genial look from your sweet eyes have averted?

Hardin turned away, his heart cold and callous.

"Fool am I to hesitate!" he muttered; "who cares for me, and whom should I care for?"

Drawing a chair close to Sumpter's, they conferred in whispers for the space of an hour. Then both arose.

"Now make yourself presentable, Jack," said Hardin, "and we'll proceed forthwith to put our scheme afoot."

"I shall be ready in due season," was the answer.

There was a select company assembled at Dr. Prague's mansion, enjoying the evening in music and conversation. Annie had just sung a song that elicited much applause, and Sheldon had contrived to draw her aside to whisper some word of tenderness in her ear.

"Frank," said she, "I feel strangely to-night."

"Why, Annie, are you not happy?"

"Yes, but I tremble; I'm frightened. I feel as if some awful danger were impending."

As she Spoke thus, the door opened, and Esq. Hardin, and his friend, Mr. Sumpter, were announced. They mingled with the company and soon approached the group in which Sheldon and Annie had chosen a place. Hardin presented his friend to the several ladies and gentlemen composing the circle, and passed on, leaving Sumpter sitting opposite Annie. Glancing casually toward him, she found his gaze riveted on her face.

"May I ask, miss," he said, "if you are not from the eastern country?"

She replied in the affirmative.

"Well, I thought I could not be so much mistaken. How are you contented away out here?"

"Very well, sir," she answered.

"Ay, indeed. I've heard say old loves were hard to forget; but I suppose new ones will obliterate them if anything will."

By this time the attention of the group was drawn to them.

"Do you ever hear from your old Aunt Patty, now?" he continued, in the same bold, familiar manner.

Annie was startled to hear these words from one who was a stranger to her; but as so many eyes were on them, she thought best to answer courteously, and said, "I do sir, frequently."

"Does she live there in the old rock heap at Scraggiewood, and tell fortunes and bewitch sitting hens yet?"

"Sir!" exclaimed Sheldon, "how dare you thus insult a lady in company?"

"O, be cool, my good fellow! I never yet heard it was an insult to inquire after one's honest relations, and I've done nothing more, as this lady I'm sure will admit. I can perhaps give you some information respecting your former lover, George Wild, Miss Evalyn," he continued; "he is good and true yet."

A scream from Annie arrested his words. She had fainted. Sheldon bore her from the room amidst a buzz of voices, in which Sumpter's was loudest, declaring he "did not mean to embarrass the young lady. He did not know but what they were all acquainted with her early history."

Sheldon did not rejoin the company, and during the remainder of the evening Sumpter disseminated an exaggerated account of Annie's low birth and disgraceful parentage among the guests. The tale found too many willing ears; and Annie was pronounced a vile, artful deceiver, by those who envied her talents and beauty.

CHAPTER XII.

"Alas, the joys that fortune brings
  Are trifling and decay!
And those who prize the paltry things,
  More trifling still than they.
And what is friendship but a name,
  A charm that lulls to sleep;
A shade that follows wealth and fame,
  But leaves the wretch to weep?"

When Annie Evalyn recovered consciousness, Sheldon was bending over her, bathing her temples with cologne. As the memory of the recent scene rushed over her, her cheeks flushed, and she glanced timidly in his face. It was cold—stern, she fancied.

"Annie," said he, in a measured tone, "you are better now. I will leave you for to-night, and to-morrow shall hope for an explanation of what, I must confess, seems strange and mysterious to me at present. Good-night!" and he turned to leave the room.

"Good-night!" she faintly articulated, her eyes following his retreating figure till the door closed and

excluded him from view. "Yes, and a long good-night too, Frank Sheldon!" she continued, when she was alone; "if you can thus coldly turn from me,—thus lightly suspect me of artifice and deceit. O, my God, what a blow! and to fall at such a moment, when I believed myself almost at the pinnacle of happiness! Surely, the arch-fiend directed the hand. Such words to be spoken in a fashionable circle; and they'll all accredit it, for they have,—Heaven knows why!—long been seeking something to my dispraise. And besides, I cannot contradict the man's words, for are they not too true? and yet, O must I be blamed for my humble parentage? O aunty, aunty, I'll not cast a single reflection! You say you've left off fortune-telling for *my* sake—but it is too late now; and perhaps you'll need resort to it again to support your poor, unfortunate Annie. I'm going to you, aunty; the rough roof of old Scraggiewood will be above me in a few weeks. Would I had never wandered from beneath its homely shelter! Truly, the world *is* a hard, cold place, aunty, as you forewarned; but I could not believe it then."

Annie rose and proceeded mechanically to place a few necessary articles of clothing in a small satchel; this done, she sat down by the window to wait till all was quiet below. The rich clothing, the wages and presents she had received during her two years' residence beneath that roof,—she would leave them all behind; they were bestowed when she was deemed a worthy object, and *now* they would consider it was a vile, artful deceiver that had sought to ingratiate herself into their favor to accomplish her own low, selfish designs. She was a fool for going abroad in the great world; a fool to think she could ever become respected and loved. *Love!* There was no such thing! Had not Frank Sheldon, thirty-six hours after he vowed to love her forever, turned coldly away at a moment when she most needed his comforting attentions? And, as she thus thought, a groan of agony escaped her breast. There came a light tap on the door, and Kate entered hurriedly.

"O, Annie, Annie!" she exclaimed, embracing the suffering girl warmly, "I don't believe a word that man said, nor does father either. He says if you are Satan's daughter, you are better and prettier, and wiser, than the best of them. As for Frank, he has not spoken since the company left, and I believe he is struck dumb. I was going to follow him when he brought you out, but mother prevented me."

"She is enraged at me, of course," said Annie.

"O, she is hasty, you know!" returned Kate. "I dare say all will be right in a day or two; so dry your eyes and go to sleep, and wake up as merry as if that ugly Mr. Sumpter had never come here with his impudent stories. For my part, I wonder Lawrence should bring such a monster into genteel society;" and with a kiss they parted.

Annie sat motionless another hour, and then, cautiously opening the door, listened breathlessly a few moments. All was still; and, taking her satchel, she glided noiselessly down the stairs and into the street. Her heart sank within her as the cold wind struck her cheek; but she moved rapidly forward, eager to place a distance between her and the scene of her abasement. Soon she was on the broad, rough prairie road, over which a waning moon cast pale, sickly beams. By daylight she reached a settler's cabin, and learned that a stage-coach would pass there in a few moments, bound eastward. She requested the privilege of waiting its arrival, which was readily granted, and also such refreshments placed before her as the cabin afforded; but she could not eat. The coach soon appeared, and she rejoiced to find herself the only passenger. The door was closed, and the hard, jolting vehicle rumbled on its way. And here was Annie Evalyn, the beautiful, the gifted, the admired Annie Evalyn of yesterday, flying like a guilty outcast from the scenes amid which she had been so happy.

Great was the surprise at Dr. Prague's mansion, on the following morning, when Annie's flight became known. No token was left by which a clue to her course might be discovered. Sheldon carried himself like a crazy one. The old doctor bustled about, and said he would search the world over to bring her back. Kate cried, and the children loudly bewailed the loss of their dear governess. Mrs. Prague seemed the only calm and rational one in the household; she declared herself glad to get rid of the baggage, and considered her flight proof positive of her guilt.

This view seemed rather plausible certainly. If innocent, why did she not remain and boldly refute the tale Sumpter had told?

When the news of her flight was made known to Esquire Hardin, he laughed heartily, and called up Sumpter to join him. The latter expressed himself "sorry if he had unwittingly been the cause of an unpleasant occurrence in Dr. Prague's family."

"What, the deuce!" said Hardin, "do you suppose they wish to harbor a young witch?"

"Why, no,—but this gentleman, Mr. Sheldon."

"Give yourself no uneasiness in regard to me, sir!" said Sheldon, sternly. "I will manage and control my own affairs."

"Bravely spoken, Frank!" remarked Hardin, "Now let us adjourn to the dinner-saloon and drink a merry bout over fortunate denouement."

CHAPTER XIII.

"It was a bitter pain
That pierced her gentle heart;
For barbed by malice was the dart,
And sped by treachery's deadliest art,
The shaft ne'er sped in vain."

The wild winds wailed wofully over the lonesome prairie, smiting sadly upon poor Annie's heavy heart as she sat in the hard, jolting coach, which, owing to the bad state of the roads, made but sorry progress. It was already dark, and the driver said they had yet ten miles to ride in order to reach the nearest post town. They entered a dense timber land, and the wheels struck deep into a loose, gravelly sand, so the poor horses could scarcely drag on at a slow walk. The coachman hallooed and cracked his whip about their ears, but all to no effect; the animals were worn down by a hard day's travel; and Annie, annoyed by his boisterous vociferations, at last put her head out the window and begged him not to beat the jaded animals, but let them proceed at their own pace.

"All one to me, miss," was the answer; "did it to please you; thought you mought be a hungry, or mebbe sort o' tired, a settin' in there all alone so. Whoa, Johnny! take it easy since it is the lady's wish. We shall be just as well off a hundred years hence, I dare say, and supper will be sweeter, the longer delayed."

With this philosophical reflection, he relapsed into silence, and for two hours they continued to drag through the heavy sand, with nothing to relieve the monotony, save the shrill bark of the wolf, far in the deep forest, answered by the deep growl of the bear, or piercing cry of the ferocious catamount.

Annie shivered with nervous terror at these wild, savage sounds; and when at last, as they reached the open prairie, and struck a harder bottom, the horses mended their paces, she felt sensibly relieved. At length they entered a small, new town, and drew up before a large, awkward building. The steps were lowered and Annie alighted, and soon found herself in a long, dingy apartment, with a bright pine-wood fire blazing and crackling in a huge, yawning fire-place at its farthest extremity. She was chilled, and sat down before the glowing hearth to warm her benumbed fingers. Presently a tall woman, in a short-sleeved frock and large deer-skin moccasins, strode into the room, and with a deep, ungainly courtesy asked, "What the lady would be thinking to take for a bit of supper?"

Annie answered she would take a biscuit and cup of tea, if she pleased, and then retire to her apartment, as she was much fatigued.

"And won't you have a chunk o' venison, or cold 'possum, to make your biscuit relish, miss?" asked the woman.

"No, I thank you," said Annie; "I don't feel much hungry to-night."

"Why, I reckoned you must be well-nigh starved, a ridin' all day long, and nothing to lay your jaws to; but, howsomever, you know your own wants best."

The woman went out, and soon returned with Annie's supper spread on a pine board. Annie could hardly repress a smile at sight of the novel tea-table. Her meal was quickly despatched, and she again signified her wish to retire. It was a rough, dismal apartment into which she was ushered, but, tired and jaded, she threw herself on the hard couch, and, despite the trouble at her heart, slept soundly till morning.

On rising, her first thought was to examine her little stock of money, and she found it amounted to only seventeen dollars and a half, out of which she must pay her coach and tavern fare. It was evident that she must seek some employment to assist in defraying her travelling expenses. The question was, whether she should remain where she was, or go on as far as her scanty means would carry her. She went out to make some inquiries of the woman who had waited on her the night previous.

"Get some work to do, miss!" said she in a tone of surprise. "What can you do? Can you cut fodder, or cradle rye, or catch 'possums?"

Annie smiled, and said, "No, but I can teach school, do sewing, or housework."

"Wall, I don't know; you look a mighty fine lady to be asking for work; but then it is none o' my business to be pryin' into other folks' concerns. We are new settlers here, and have to get along as close as we can. I don't reckon you'll find anybody rich enough to hire ye in these diggins. You'll do better along further east, where folks are richer and more 'fined."

Matters looked unpromising, and Annie concluded to follow the woman's suggestion, and travel on as far as the small funds would carry her. But in the two years she had been at the west, the facilities for travelling had improved, and prices were also reduced, so that her little purse carried her much further on her route than she had expected. When it finally gave out, she with great joy found she was but fifty miles from her destination, and with a courageous heart resolved to perform the remainder of the journey on foot.

Accordingly, she set forward. The weather was fine, and she did not doubt her ability to accomplish the distance in two days, at farthest. Every mile passed inspired her with fresh courage, for was she not so much nearer a heart that loved her? O, how she longed to be clasped to that warm, beating bosom,

and weep her sorrows forth to one she knew would pity, sympathize, and strive to heal!

CHAPTER XIV.

"Do you come with the heart of your childhood back,
The free, the pure, the kind?
Thus murmured the trees in the homeward track,
As they played at the sport of the wind."

The autumn evening stole calmly, sweetly on. Again October's harvest moon rode through the liquid ether, and poured her silvery beams over the wild, old forest of Scraggiewood, as we saw it long ago when Annie Evalyn's years were calm and golden-hued as Luna's gentle rays. She was coming now to the low, cottage home. With weary, languid step, she threaded the old, familiar path, and it seemed to have grown rougher, and the forest looked wilder and darker than in the days gone by. Poor Annie! the darkness and gloom were in thy weary, world-tossed heart. That heart beat wildly as she drew nearer the wished-for spot. What if she should see no light gleaming through the aperture in the rocky walls? What if the door should be fallen away, and no aunty there to welcome the wanderer's return? She quickened her pace, and a few moments banished all fears. The cottage came in view, and a bright light streamed through the rough-cut window. Now Annie clasped her hands, and thanked God that her journey was well-nigh ended. She saw her aunt bending over the embers on the hearth, as she paused a moment on the threshold. Then, entering softly, she stole to the side of the old lady, and, passing an arm round her neck, whispered in a low, trembling tone: "Here's Annie, come home to love and you, dear aunty."

The old woman sprang so suddenly from her kneeling posture as nearly to throw the slender form upon the floor, and gazed wildly in the speaker's face.

"Why aunty, don't you know me?"

"Bless me, it is her voice! but how could she rise up here on my hearth-stone to-night, like a witch or fairy?"

"No, aunty; I am no witch or fairy that has risen on your hearth. I walked all the way through the dim old forest to reach you, and it looks just as it used to, only darker and more frightful."

"Come here, darling, 'tis you! I know that voice. O how many times I've dreamed I heard it in the long, lonesome nights!" and she wept, laughed, and kissed her recovered child in a perfect abandonment of joy. "And so you have come home at last to see your old aunty? I've had awful feelings about you lately, hinney, and boding dreams; and ofttimes I've been sorry I let you go into the evil world; 'for if it should use her hard, would it not break both our hearts?' I said to myself. 'But, then, Annie is so pretty and good, and has got so much book-learnin' and so many accomplishments,' something would say. 'Ay, that's the mischief of it. Such things always make bad folks envy those that possess them, and Annie is so tender-hearted and shrinking, I'm afeard, I'm afeard for her.'"

Annie sunk her head on her aunt's shoulder while she was speaking thus, and the tears, she had been striving to suppress since her entrance, began to roll over her cheeks thick and fast. The excitement and anxiety of the journey had in a measure diverted her mind from the events which caused it; but now that she had gained the wished-for haven, her aunty's words brought the past before her vision; that mortifying humiliation—all she had enjoyed, all she had hoped for, and O, all she had lost!—rushed upon her recollection, and she sobbed aloud.

"O, mercy, mercy, it is as I feared!" exclaimed the old woman, in an agonized tone; "something has hurt my darling, and now I mark how pale and thin she is grown. Annie, Annie, tell your aunty what's the matter."

Annie made a strong effort to calm her emotion.

"I am fatigued and overcome," she said.

"Ah! it is something more than that, child—I can tell; but you shall rest till to-morrow. I'll make you a nice cup of tea, and then you shall lie in your little cot-bed once more. I've always kept it dressed white and clean, and often been in there nights before I laid my old bones down to rest, and wished I could see my darling there, breathing long and sweet, as she used to, in happy dreams."

Annie was glad to retire, for she was indeed fatigued. Her aunt tucked the counterpane snugly around her, and hung a shawl before the window, "for hinney looked too pale and slender to bear the cold air now," she said. Then she insisted on sitting by the cot till her darling slept; but Annie begged she would not.

"Go to bed, aunty, and get a good sleep, so as to be rested and fresh to hear a long tale of my adventures to-morrow," and the kind old soul, after kissing the white brow, bade Annie good-night, and

sought her pillow.

It was long ere Annie slept, and when at last she did so, hideous shapes and direful omens floated through her dreams. Once she awoke, when all was dark and still, to find a burning fever on her cheek, and dull, throbbing pain in her temples. At peep of dawn the old woman rose and stole into the apartment. She wanted to see her little pet sleeping in her cot-bed, as she used to years before. There she lay, her arms thrown above her head as when a child, and the rich chestnut curls lying in dark relief on the snowy pillow. But the deep, sweet respirations, and the healthful glow of childhood were not there. A blue circle surrounded the closed lids, and a fever-flush burned in the centre of each cheek. The aunt saw her darling was ill. She took one thin, hot hand in hers, and felt the pulse fluttering fast and wild. The sleeper woke and started up, turning her eyes quickly round the apartment.

"Don't you know where you are, Annie?" asked the aunt. "This is your old room at Scraggiewood, and I'm your aunty."

"O, yes! I remember now; but I think I'm sick, my poor head aches and throbs so badly. You used to cure all my pains, aunty."

"I hope I can cure you now, hinney. I'll go and prepare you a cooling drink of herbs. You must be very quiet, and I trust you will be well in a few days."

Annie submitted patiently. A week passed by ere she was able to make her aunt fully acquainted with her woful tale. The poor woman seemed as much afflicted as Annie, but she strove by every means in her power to soothe and comfort the suffering heart. Netta Gray had been married to George Wild a few weeks before her return, and was now absent on a visiting tour, and Annie's health continued feeble. It could hardly be otherwise with a mind so heavy and depressed. For several months she remained in seclusion at the lowly cot in Scraggiewood.

CHAPTER XV.

"For the weak heart that vainly yearned
  For human love its life to cheer,
Baffled and bleeding has returned,
  To stifle down its crying here."

"Thou shalt go forth in prouder might
  And firmer strength e'er long."

Up to the clear blue sky, when the sun was gone down on the silent earth, clad in the pure white snow-mantle, and away over the tops of the forest-pines, at the diamond stars hung in the far-off heaven, gazed Annie Evalyn through that long, dreary winter, from the window of that rude hut in the solitary depths of Scraggiewood. How she mourned o'er her shattered idols, all fallen and wasted on their shrines! What a blow had been dealt her sensitive nature! "O, it was so bitter cruel!" she thought; "and what had she done that she should suffer thus?"

In vain her aunt tried to soothe and solace, by telling her time would bring better hopes. Parson Grey would sometimes drop in of a Saturday evening to coax and encourage his former pupil, and bring some nice tit-bit to tempt Annie's delicate relish.

"You will regain your health and spirits when the spring opens, my child," he would say. "Netta will come home, and we shall have you over to the Parsonage, and all will seem like old times again. Then you must resume that pen of yours, Annie, and let it write down those speaking thoughts that lie in your inventive brain. You know my old doctrine; it is a glorious thing to do good, and you can exert a happy and extensive influence upon society. I know you will not abuse the noble faculties given you by the great Creator."

"Ah, he does not know all!" Annie would think. "I once was vain enough to suppose I possessed faculties and powers to act a brave part in life; but they've been bruised and broken in the very outset. I've no energy, no aspirations; because there's nothing in the future to beckon me on. Wherever I turn is desolation; and I despise my weakness as much as I lament my misfortune. But I'll no more of a world that has dealt me my death-blow. Here, in this solitude of nature, let me die and sink to oblivion."

Thus she ruminated, while the shadowy wintry days sped on; and reason, weak and powerless in the headlong tide of passion that swept and swayed in her breast, was buffeted and submerged in the furious waves; and yet, when the storm had spent its fury, should it not arise clear and brilliant, and over the subsiding tumult be heard to utter a calm, proud jubilate of triumph and redemption?

Spring came at last. The snows disappeared; buds swelled on the tall trees, and burst forth into canopies of leafy-green, and the feathered songsters came hieing from southern bowers, with wings of light and songs of gladness. Annie began to brighten; slowly, and almost imperceptibly at first, and without her own knowledge or consent. Those faculties she had fancied killed were only stunned.

When she found herself, one sunny April day, at her little, rude table, inditing her beautiful thoughts on paper, she grew angry at her folly, as she termed it, and tore the sheet. "And was she again seeking what had once blasted her happiness? Let the desolation of the past deter her from all intercourse with the heartless world again."

But the sunny gleams from the beauty-fraught robes of the spring-queen had fallen on the chilled fountains, and they began to melt and flow again. And their music *would* be heard. As the brook down in the forest seemed to send sweeter, more joyous echoings on the ear after its winter sleep, so Annie's soul poured softer, holier strains of melody from its deep well-spring of chastened, purified feeling. Yet the struggle was not all over. Some tears, some regrets, some rebellious thoughts, yet lingered. The wildest storm oft passes the soonest by; but traces of its effects may remain to the end of time.

Netta returned from her travels, and the two friends, so long parted, sat together in the old study again, and with clasped hands poured out their hearts to each other.

Annie could not avoid saying, "My life-happiness is wrecked, Netta!" as she completed a rehearsal of her misfortunes, "O, that I had been less confident and aspiring! Then I had not suffered thus."

"Do not speak thus, Annie!" returned Netta, tenderly. "Your happiness is not lost. With a mind so brilliant as yours, you must not yield to despondency. I will do all in my power to render your life pleasant, and so will George. He says your influence made him all he is. You rebuked his slothful habits and urged him to activity. He felt the truth of your words, though it wounded him deeply to have them come from you. I know all, Annie. George loved you once, but I've forgiven him, and love you all the better for having made me so good a husband." Here Netta laughed and kissed her friend's cheek.

Annie returned the caress. "If I've unwittingly done you any good, Netta," she said, "it is no greater pleasure to have done it than to hear it acknowledged so prettily."

"But don't you think it very singular you have never received your property from Dr. Prague?" asked Netta, turning the conversation back to her friend's affairs. "I should have thought it but common honesty in them to have forwarded your clothes and wages."

"O, why should they trouble themselves to give a thought to so vile and artful a wretch?" responded Annie, bitterly.

"There, there, Annie, hush!" said Netta. "Vengeance will overtake them for thus treating worth and innocence. And Sheldon, have you never heard from him?"

"Never!" answered Annie, and a tear fell as she spoke.

"Not once!" said Netta. "He who could thus shamefully neglect one, so lovely and beautiful, is not worthy of one precious drop from these eyes."

"And yet he seemed so noble and good, it is hard to cast blame on his conduct. O, Netta, I cannot forget him!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

Ah, the love was there yet!—a little chastened and subdued, yet wanting but a kindly touch to rouse it to all its early strength and power. A bitter chastisement had tamed, but not conquered or expelled, the coy truant from her breast. Should it aye sleep on, or one day know an awakening?

CHAPTER XVI.

"Go on, go on: you think me quite a fool;
Woman, my eyes are open."

In their sumptuous drawing-room, before a sparkling grate, sat Dr. Prague and his amiable lady, in genial after-dinner mood; he burly, and easy-natured, enjoying his oranges; she, majestic and oratorical in her rustling brocades.

"Doctor," said she, after a brief silence, "I wish to call your attention to an important subject."

"Ah! what may it be?" he inquired, in a careless tone.

"Why, our Catherine's approaching union with Mr. Sumpter."

"Is the girl going to marry Sumpter? I don't like it, madam, I don't like it;" and the usually placid

doctor displayed considerable impatience in his tone and manner.

"Why not? he is a wealthy, accomplished gentleman."

"Humph! a conceited, tricksy villain, you mean."

"Dr. Prague, is he not the friend and partner of my son-in-law, Esq. Hardin?"

"What of it?"

"Why, a good deal of it, I should say. Is not Esq. Hardin one of the first men in the city? I made the match between him and Marion, and I'm proud of the alliance. You cannot say that it was not a wise and judicious one."

"Whew! I don't know. Marion as melancholy as a mummy, and a child that shrieks in terror whenever its father approaches. Perhaps a wise match, but far enough from a happy one, I should say."

"The world calls it a nice match."

"Indeed."

At this point of the conversation Kate entered the room.

"Come hither, child," said her father; "do you love this Mr. Sumpter?"

"Why, no, father. I've never been able to conquer my aversion toward him, since he vilified Annie's character, and caused her flight," said she, wondering at her father's question.

"Then you do not wish to marry him?"

"Heavens! no."

"All right then. I'll see that you don't. Now run away, child."

"Dr. Prague, I'm astonished at you," exclaimed Mrs. Prague, in her most towering style, as the door closed after Kate, "thus to pamper to the follies of your offspring. Young people never know what is for their interest. They should be held in perfect subjection to their parents' wishes, and taught to obey their slightest commands."

"Very pretty, Mrs. Prague," remarked the doctor, carelessly, as his wife paused for breath.

Whether he alluded to her logic or her face, we cannot say.

"Had Sheldon been discreet and saved his fortune," she resumed, "he would have been the proper man for our Catherine."

"But he blundered and fell in love with Annie Evalyn."

"Faugh! don't mention that minx to me," said Mrs. Prague, with a sneer; "but it must be confessed, Sheldon has very limited knowledge of business, or he might have saved a part of his fortune at least. My son-in-law, Esq. Hardin, by his alacrity and far-seeing judgment, secured himself from material loss in the great land crash."

"Humph! quite as likely by his cunning and artful machinations."

"Dr. Prague, I'm astonished to hear you detract from the worth and honesty of your son-in-law, even in our private conversation."

"I may repeat here what I've of late heard broached in public places, that Hardin involved Sheldon in the speculations with the intention to effect his ruin."

"Such groundless insinuations are worthy their originators," said Mrs. Prague, in an angry, vehement tone.

"May be time will render us all wiser than we are now, madam."

"I hope it will," she answered, significantly, as with a lofty air she rose from the luxurious sofa, and remarked, "I will now go down to Marion's, and pass an hour in conversation with my son-in-law."

"Do so, madam," said the doctor, "and as you pass the office door, send Kate up here with my cigar-case, if you please. It lies on the table there."

And the majestic Mrs. Dr. Prague rustled her brocades into the private parlor of her daughter Marion, just as the latter was hushing the shrieks of a chubby little boy, who seemed nearly frantic with affright.

"What is the matter of him, Marion?" asked she.

"His father kissed him in his sleep and woke him. You know he always screams at sight of Lawrence."

"Strange he should be afraid of his father; but he will doubtless get over it as he grows older."

"I think it increases upon him."

"Is not Lawrence at home?" inquired Mrs. Prague.

"He is in the office with Mr. Sumpter, I believe," was the reply.

"Would you think it, Marion? Your father is opposed to our Catherine's marrying Mr. Sumpter."

"Indeed, I do not wonder. I do not consider him a proper person for any young lady of taste and refinement to marry."

"Why so? Lawrence extols him."

"Does he?"

The child had grown quiet, and now slept in its mother's arms. As her son-in-law did not appear, Mrs. Prague soon retired.

Hardin was having a stormy scene with Sumpter. The latter had of late grown bold and impetuous. Admitted in confidence to all Hardin's nefarious schemes and plottings, he gained a power over the wicked man, and began to exercise it with arbitrary sway. He was a reckless, unprincipled gambler, and, having recently encountered heavy losses, came with a bold demand on Hardin's purse.

"You are getting to use me shabbily," he exclaimed, angrily; "with all Sheldon's fortune tucked away in your pocket, to say nothing of—you know what—you refuse me so small a favor as a cool thousand. Come, hand over, or, by Heaven, I'll inform against you!"

"You can hardly do that, without marring your own good fame," said Hardin, ironically; "and I know you would shrink from doing that."

"None of your sneers, Hardin," growled Sumpter, fiercely; "will you give me the money?"

"No!" thundered Hardin, with an oath; "you shall not ride rough-shod over me in this way. Now begone from my sight!"

"Very well; good-evening, Esq. Hardin," said Sumpter, with a savage, revengeful leer on his countenance, as he went out, slamming the door spitefully behind him.

Hardin was alarmed, after the wretch was gone, as he reflected how far he was in the monster's power, and in what ruin he might involve him if he chose.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Now mark him in the tempest hour,
  Will he be calm, or will he quail
Before the fury of its power?
  ——Read ye the tale."

There are those that know not the extent of their powers till they are called forth and tasked to the utmost by trial and misfortune. Such an one was Frank Sheldon. Disposed to ease and quiet in the hour of prosperity, when adversity came, it aroused him at once to vigorous, decisive action. Though bereft of love and fortune at a blow, as it were, his manly spirit did not cower and sink beneath the strokes; that he suffered is true, but he bore up bravely under the adverse fortune. He was proud, as all great minds are, and the blight so publicly cast on Annie Evalyn's good repute, cut him to the quick; but he hoped she might be able to refute the aspersions cast on her by Sumpter, for he was loth to think ill of a being that had appeared so amiable and exalted in her nature, so lofty in soul and intellect, and was beautiful as an angel in person. But, instead of this, she fled by night from the scene of her confusion, leaving behind all her effects, and no clue to her intended course. Did not this wear the appearance of guilt? Still he did not condemn her, but learned from Dr. Prague the place of her former residence, and wrote a letter, assuring her of a continuance of affection, and asking an explanation of Sumpter's strange tale. No answer was returned,—indeed, the letter never reached its destination; but this Sheldon did not know, and was forced to regard the silence as another proof of her cupidity.

With this view of the matter he found it less difficult to subdue his passion. He could not, *would* not love a guilty, artful thing.

And now fell another blow in quick succession; his land investment proved worthless, and at a sweep his fortune went past power to recover. Hardin expressed much regret, but Sheldon could not avoid noticing that he clutched at every opportunity to save his own affairs, and exposed him to the most

uncertain hazards.

Old Dr. Prague loudly bewailed Sheldon's ill luck, and declared he would never forgive himself for having advised the young man to embark in the cursed speculations. But Sheldon begged him not to be unnecessarily distressed, as it was no fault of his that the schemes proved abortive; and the good doctor finally coincided, and settled down to his oranges with tolerable serenity.

Sheldon did not long remain inactive; he left those scenes amid which misfortune had overtaken him, and repaired to the eastern cities, where he readily found employ in an extensive printing establishment, and applied himself assiduously to his duties. In a short time he was admitted to the firm, and became assistant editor of a popular magazine. This was an occupation congenial to his tastes, as it afforded him not only an opportunity of writing, but of reading, and becoming intimately acquainted with the polite literature of the day.

He was one day in the editorial sanctum, examining a quantity of manuscripts lately received, when one, in a clear, delicate female hand, attracted his eye. There was something in the light, fairy tracery which instantly riveted his attention. He read it through; "Woodland Winne," was the signature,—a *nomme de plume*, of course. He wondered who could be the fair authoress of this beautiful production.

While thus occupied in conjectures, a gentleman entered the apartment.

"Here, Wilberforce, do you know this MS.?" said Sheldon, holding it toward him.

"O, yes!" answered the gentleman, glancing it over; "beautiful hand, is it not?"

"Yes; but who is the writer?"

"O, I don't know that! I have had several communications from the same pen in the last three months, all exquisite in their style and diction, and eliciting warm commendation from the literary press."

"And cannot you discover the fair unknown?"

"No, I have addressed her under her *nomme de plume*, and desired her true name remitted, in confidence, if she objected to publicity; but she has never seen fit to gratify my curiosity."

"Strange one so deserving should shun notoriety," remarked Sheldon.

"So it seems to me," said Wilberforce, who was the senior editor; "but I came in to call you to the Literary Association; it meets at three o'clock. Come, let's be off, or we shall be too late;—these MSS. we can look over to-morrow."

They closed the office and went out in company. But Sheldon forgot himself several times in the debate, as a semblance of that delicate manuscript, enwrit with those clear, sparkling fancies, rose often before his mental vision.

There seemed to be a spell about it, to charm and lead captive his imagination.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The hour of vengeance strikes,—hark to the gale!
As it bursts hollow through the rolling clouds.
Such is the hand of Heaven!"

It came at length, swift, avenging justice; awful in might, and none could resist its angry hand.

The "pestilence that walketh at noonday," swept over the fair, young cities of the west, and thousands fell victims to the remorseless destroyer.

O, Cholera! great be the name of him, who, from the mazes of scientific lore, shall call a power to rob thee of thy terrors, thou scourge of mankind!

Lawrence Hardin returned from a southern trip to find his house left desolate; wife and child both in their hastily-covered graves. He shook with agony, and scarce was the first frantic burst of grief subsided, ere the officers of justice entered his mansion and declared him their prisoner. He glared at them wildly.

"What mean you," he asked, "by this untimely intrusion in the house of death?"

"Prepare to accompany us to the court-room immediately," was the answer, "to answer to a charge of swindling and forgery preferred by one John Sumpter, who is also arrested and undergoing examination."

Hardin grew ashy-pale at these words.

"The villain!" he muttered; "so he has betrayed me. Carry me where you will, Mr. Officer. Life is a curse to me henceforth."

Thus speaking, he resigned himself passively to the custody of the sheriffs. They conducted him instantly to the court-house, and placed him in the prisoner's box beside Sumpter, who cowered and moved away at his approach. Hardin threw a look of envenomed hatred on the wretch, and sat down. When the charges were read he merely bowed; and when asked what he had to plead, replied: "Nothing, only that they would hang him up as soon as convenient, and thus end his misery." He was placed in jail with Sumpter, and several other defaulters, to await a final trial at the autumn sessions.

And the pestilence swept on; young and old, rich and poor, all fell before its blasting power. In the brief space of twenty-four hours, Dr. Prague was bereft of wife and children, and left a poor, lone man, in his solitary mansion. Where should the mourner turn for consolation? At this crisis, he thought of his old friend, Parson Grey, and determined to quit the city for a few weeks, till the epidemic should have subsided, and make him a visit. He was just the calm, holy spirit he needed to solace his afflictions; and accordingly a letter was despatched, which brought a speedy reply, sympathizing in his distress, and urgently inviting him to join them as soon as possible.

He visited Hardin before departing, informed him of the death of all his family, and kindly inquired if he could be of any service to the imprisoned man.

"No!" was the answer; "and I don't know what you came here at all for. What do I care if your wife and brats *are* dead? So is *my* wife dead, and *my* child, and I hope soon to be. The greatest favor you can bestow is to get out of my sight."

The doctor gazed on the hardened wretch with pity, and turned away. He left the city in July, and the first of September the trials came on. The large court-house was densely thronged to hear the pleas and decision in the case of the extensive forgeries and bank frauds of Hardin and Sumpter. There could be little doubt of the verdict, as the evidence against the parties was powerful and conclusive, and none seemed so regardless of the issue as the prisoners themselves. With hard, stoical faces, they confronted the jury, as they returned from their deliberations and resumed their seats on the platform.

Without, the elements were raging in their wildest, most terrific fury. Broad flashes of lightning at intervals illuminated the crowded hall, and glared on the sea of upturned human faces, marked with every variety and shade of passion and feeling. The thunder roared and reverberated through the heavens with tremendous crashings, as the judge arose, and, turning toward the jury, asked, in solemn accents, if they had agreed upon a verdict.

They had.

"Are the prisoners at the bar guilty, or not guilty?"

There came a blinding flash, followed by a deafening thunder-bolt, as the foreman rose and pronounced the word, "*Guilty*."

Smothered screams at this moment issued from various parts of the assembly. The building was struck and on fire. Terrible confusion ensued. Frantic cries and shrieks mingled with the bellowings of the storm without, rendering the scene awful beyond description. All rushed pell-mell for the street. The crackling flames burst through the broad windows on the side of the judges' platform, rolling a dense volume of smoke and stifling heat into the interior of the building. In the wild excitement and terror, the prisoners were forgotten. They stood in the box where they had received sentence. The flames were rapidly approaching them. Sumpter turned a glance full of hatred and vengeance on Hardin. "You swore revenge on Sheldon," said he, "and I helped you accomplish your iniquitous designs. You refused a paltry sum when I asked it, and then I swore revenge on you, and this is the way I finish it."

Hardin drew a revolver from his breast; "And this is the way I finish mine," he said; and, taking aim, lodged a ball in the heart of Sumpter. Then, springing quick as lightning over the box, he rushed among the crowd and gained the street. The intense darkness favored his flight, and, hurrying on, he gained the levees, secreted himself in the hold of a boat, and had the good fortune to find himself floating down the river in the morning.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Go forth, thou spirit proud and high,
Upon thy soaring way;
Plume all thy pinions for the sky,
And sing a glorious lay."

As the young sapling of the forest bends and sways in the fury of the blast, and, when it is passed, rises and shakes the weight of rain-drops from its pliant boughs, and stands stronger, higher, more beautiful than before, so Annie Evalyn, when the passion-storm had spent its fury, rose a purer, loftier being, with a heart firm and free, and a soul elevated and sublime in its aspirations. There might be traces to tell the tempest had been a wild one; a paleness on the brow; the lips thinned and slightly compressed; the eyelids sometimes drooping their long lashes over the dark, liquid eyes, and a tear stealing silently over the marble cheek; or a slight shudder for a moment convulsing the slender frame, as if memory painted a picture the soul shrank from contemplating. Yet these light tokens of what *had* been, heightened the sublime beauty of what was *now*. Annie was no longer a child in the world's lore of experience. Sorrow and suffering are swift teachers. They unfold and perfect the powers with astonishing rapidity. Annie Evalyn was a woman; with a quick eye and ready judgment to detect and discern the workings of that great mystery, the human heart, yet simple and child-like in her manners, as of old.

"Bless it, but this is an agreeable surprise!" exclaimed Aunt Patty, as Annie entered the little, rock-built cottage, on a clear, cool evening in early autumn, with a bright smile beaming on her lovely features; "why, I didn't once think of your comin' to-night, hinney, bein' as you were here last Saturday. But it does my old heart good to know you remember your poor, ignorant aunty, when you are among your little scholars and so many kind friends at the Parsonage."

"O, I never forget you, aunty!" said Annie, returning the old lady's embrace; "this humble cot and these old Scraggiewood oaks are very dear to my heart."

"I'm glad to hear it, dear; it is a homely spot, to be sure, but it has sheltered us well. But what is doing at the parson's, love? All well and happy?"

"Yes, and Aunt Rachel sent you this little box of wax-candles. She said you loved to read evenings, sometimes, and these gave such a clear, steady light, it would do your old eyes good to behold it."

"The dear, kind-hearted creature!" said Aunt Patty, receiving the package and brushing away a grateful tear. "Sure she is a perfect Christian if there is one on earth."

"O, we have some news at the vicarage, aunty! The old gentleman, in whose family I resided during my stay in the western country, has sent a letter to Parson Grey, narrating a sad tale of misfortunes, and expressing a desire to visit him ere long. It seems the cholera has been committing frightful ravages through those sections, and his entire family have been swept away in the brief space of one week. And, O, aunty, I dread to go on!"

"Let me hear, child."

"You recollect the man, Sumpter, who spoke those dreadful words in a social company?"

"Yes, yes, didn't I have him here, in this very room, on a night long ago—and Hardin too? Ay, dark, wicked schemes, and worse than those, showed in their cups. But go on, love."

"Well, they have been arrested for forgery and found guilty. The sequel of the affair Mr. Grey received last evening, in an extra sent him by Dr. Prague. It appears the verdict was rendered during a violent storm, which struck the court-house, and, in the confusion that followed, Hardin shot Sumpter and escaped."

"O, shocking!" exclaimed Aunt Patty, with horror depicted on her countenance. "Ay, God's vengeance is sure to overtake the wicked sooner or later."

"We look for the arrival of Dr. Prague every day. How do you think he will meet me, aunty?"

"How should he meet you, child, but with shame and confusion of face?"

"But he was always kind to me, aunty."

"Well, he didn't do right never to send a letter to inquire after your fate, or forward your clothes and wages."

"He might have been prevented by his wife. I know she was a violent woman and had ever a dislike to me."

"Nothing should prevent a man from doing what is just and right, Annie," said Aunt Patty, in an inflexible tone; "but it is like you to think the best of people's failings, and I acknowledge it is a good way. Now, hinney, I'll make a dish of tea, and we'll have a brimming bowl of Crummie's sweet milk, with some of your favorite berries. I'm so glad! It seems a Providence that I gathered some this mornin'. I'll slab up some batter cakes; you know I'm pretty good at them; and just you light one of Rachel's candles—though it is hardly dark yet, it will make the table look so cheerful-like."

Annie did as directed, and they soon sat down to the simple meal. Aunt Patty's face was redolent with good-humor and cheerfulness, as she dished out the largest, ripest berries, and nicest browned cakes for her darling.

"Do you write your pretty stories and poetries for that city magazine now, hinney?" she asked, as they discussed their meal.

"Yes, aunty, and I have brought several numbers for your perusal. I still want to be famous, aunty, though I once thought I didn't care for anything more in this world; but that was in a foolish time, and is past by now. Mr. Grey says it is better to be good than great; but if one can be both, why, better still, I fancy. And I know I feel happy when I'm teaching those poor little children to read and love each other, and grow up to be blessings to their parents. This is doing good, Mr. Grey says; but this restless heart of mine is not filled, is not content. It feels there are other faculties, lying dormant and unemployed. The editors of this magazine have offered two prizes,—one for the best tale, the other for the best poem,—and I'm going to strive to win them. The money would make you very comfortable for life, aunty; and you have done so much for me I want to repay some of your kindness if I can."

"Dear heart!" said the old woman, tearfully, "what have I ever done for you that is not already ten-fold repaid by seeing your bright eyes, and feeling that you love your old aunty?"

"But I'm not wholly disinterested, aunty; don't you see I covet the fame that would follow should I succeed? That's for me; the money for you. Now kiss me good-night, and I'll to my cot to dream a subject for my labor."

"God bless and prosper you, my darling!" said the fond aunt.

CHAPTER XX.

"It was a face one loved to gaze upon,
For calm serenity of thought was there.
The eyes were soft and gentle in their glance,
And looked with trusting artlessness in yours.
Placid her mien, like that of lofty souls
That after storm sink down in tranquil rest."

Once more is winding on the spring-time of the year, and once more is Annie Evalyn away from the old forest home. Her soft, bird-like tones echo through the sumptuous drawing-rooms of Dr. Prague's stately mansion, in that fair western city. During his visit to the east the preceding summer, he had succeeded in coaxing her away from Mr. Grey and her aunt, to pass a few months with him, and cheer and enliven his lonesome abode.

"No one could do this so well as Annie," he said, "always his pet and darling; though his foolish, yielding old heart had been overruled by others to treat her with wicked neglect, for which he now cursed himself, and wanted opportunity to make amends."

So Annie kissed them all round, and went with him to pass a few months. She had completed her prizes, and was now waiting to hear of their reception. She had also contributed to the literary publications of the city, and received a large share of flattery and applause; and, though writing under a fictitious signature, her identity was well known in private circles. Sumpter's villany and disgraceful end had effectually destroyed his tale of her duplicity and artifice, and the highest classes sought her friendship and society. The memory of former trial and suffering stole over her sometimes, as she mingled again 'mid the scenes of its enacting; but she was too wise and good to allow it to rankle, or stir bitter feelings in her bosom. Let the past be forgotten in the felicity of the present. Heaven had visited devouring vengeance on the guilty ones. Let her bow in silence and adore!

It was evening. Annie sat on a low ottoman at the side of the infirm, good-natured old Dr. Prague. A bright gas-light sparkled through a wrought-glass shade above them, and a silver salver, containing some golden oranges and pearl-handled knives, stood on a walnut stand near by. A servant entered, bearing a package of papers.

"Here they are, dear uncle!" exclaimed Annie, springing forward to receive them from the waiter's hand. "Now our evening's amusement can commence;" and she passed him the dish of fruit, twirled the light a little higher, and, drawing a stool close to his side, said, "Now what shall I read first? The price of stocks, the list of deaths——"

"No, little babbler," said he, patting her curls playfully; "you know what comes first of all. 'Woodland Winnie,' of course."

"Woodland Winnie is a silly little thing," remarked Annie.

"I'll be my own judge as to that, Miss Annie; please to read on."

"O, here is something from 'Alastor!'" she said, turning over the pages of a new eastern magazine. "I do so love his writings; please let me read this first, uncle. Do you know his real name?"

"No; but I sometimes fancy it may be my old ward, Frank Sheldon, as he has always had a turn for writing, and is one of the editors of this periodical."

"One of the editors of this magazine!" repeated Annie, in a quick, excited tone; "I never knew that before."

"Why, I thought I told you last fall, at Parson Grey's, in some of our talks about former days."

"No; you said he was employed in some printing establishment at the east, that was all."

"Well, I intended to have mentioned the rest; but what makes you look so earnest and rosy, Annie?"

"O, nothing!" she answered; "I was only thinking."

"Frank has written to me, recently, a letter of sympathy and condolence, and says he will visit the west this summer," the old man continued, paring an orange. "I was going to make him my sole heir, but now I've found you, I believe I shall curtail him and take you in for a share."

"O, you had better not!" she exclaimed quickly.

"And why better not, child?"

"Because he is more deserving your generosity than I."

"More deserving? No, indeed, Annie. But see how nicely I have peeled this orange for you," passing it to her.

"For me, uncle! You had better eat it yourself."

"Why, what ails the girl? She won't even accept an orange from my hand."

"Yes I will, uncle; but after you had prepared it so nicely, I thought you ought to enjoy it yourself," she answered, accepting the luscious fruit. He gazed on her affectionately while she ate the juicy slices, with grateful relish, and when she had finished, said, "Now will Annie read to me awhile?"

"With the greatest pleasure, uncle," she answered, returning to the package of books, from which she read till he was satisfied.

"Your voice reminds me of those wild, bright birds I used to hear singing in that old wilderness of Scraggiewood, when I called on a quiet evening at that rocky cottage where you were nursed into being; a spot fit to adorn a fairy tale. No wonder you are such a pure-souled, imaginative creature, reared in that pristine solitude of nature. Now you may retire, darling, and don't fail to be down in the morning to pour the old man's coffee, because it is never so sweet as when coming from Annie's little hands." Thus speaking, he bestowed a fatherly kiss upon her soft cheek, and she glided away to her own apartment. A long time on her downy couch she lay gazing on the moonbeams that glinted over the rich flowers of the Persian carpet, while crowding thoughts and fancies thronged upon her brain. Most prominent were those of Sheldon, and his connection with the magazine for which she had written her prizes. Amid wonderings and fancyings she fell asleep, to follow them up in dreams, with every variation of hue and coloring. She was roaming through the gravelled avenues of an extensive flower-garden, when a rainbow of surpassing brilliancy spanned a circle in the air above her, and wherever she turned her steps, it followed, hovering just above her head; and the delicate colors seemed to strike a warm, heart-thrilling joy down to the inmost recesses of her soul. She woke, with a delicious sense of happiness, to find the morning sun throwing his golden beams into her apartment.

CHAPTER XXI.

"And I did love thee, when so oft we met
  In the sweet evenings of that summer-time,
Whose pleasant memory lingers with me yet,
  As the remembrance of a better clime
Might haunt a fallen angel. And O, thou—
  Thou who didst turn away and seek to bind
Thy heart from breaking—thou hast felt e'er now
  A heart like thine o'ermastereth the mind;
Affection's power is stronger than thy will.
  Ah, thou didst love me, and thou lovst me still!"

Annie's foot was on the stairs to descend to the drawing-room, on the following evening, when she heard the old doctor's voice in the hall, exclaiming, in tones of loud, hearty welcome,

"Why, bless my eyes! Frank Sheldon, my boy, do I behold you at last? And to come upon me in this unexpected manner! I've a mind to throw this orange at your head."

"Do so, sir, if you choose; but first hear my apology for this unceremonious surprise. Business

brought me——"

"I won't hear a word about an apology," interrupted the doctor, bestowing a hearty slap on his young friend's shoulder. "Come in, boy, come in;" and the doors of the drawing-room opened and closed after them.

Annie ran back to her apartment in a flutter of emotion. "Sheldon there! and he came from *that office*! Business brought him,—what would come of it all?" She dared not hope or anticipate. She dared not think at all; and, throwing her graceful form on a sofa, she commenced tearing some water-color paintings she had lately been executing, into strips, and twisting them into gas-lighters.

Meantime Sheldon was snugly bestowed in a cushioned seat beside his good friend, the doctor, who was plying him with a thousand questions concerning his affairs, prospects, etc. After he had become satisfied on these points, he recollected Sheldon had mentioned some business as the cause of his sudden visit.

"What was it you said about business bringing you so unexpectedly?" he inquired. "So, I would not have enjoyed this pleasure had inclination alone biased your feelings!"

"You wrong me, sir," returned Sheldon, "by such an insinuation. I would have visited you in the summer, in any event. I merely intended to say business hurried my arrival. Our magazine, several months ago, issued a set of prizes for the best poem and tale. The articles have been received, and I commissioned to award the authoress, who, it appears, is a resident of your city."

"Indeed!" said the doctor. "Then we've a literary genius among us. What is her name?"

"She writes under a *nomme de plume*."

"And what is that?"

"Woodland Winnie."

The good doctor sprang to his feet with such remarkable quickness as to overturn the tray of oranges on the stand beside him, and they went rolling over the carpet in all directions, while he clapped his hands and roared again and again with convulsing laughter. Sheldon was dumb-founded.

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor, in a tone of gleeful chuckling. "Ha, ha, ha! I declare I shall die a laughing. So cunning, the witch,—never to tell me!"

"Do you know the lady?" asked Sheldon in amaze, gazing on his friend's extravagant demonstrations of mirth and joy.

"Better and better!" roared the doctor. "Do I know her? Yes; she has been an inmate of my mansion for the last *six* months. Why, boy, she is an angel;—as gifted, as beautiful, and as good as all the beauty and genius put together. She has warmed my old heart and filled my house with sunshine."

"You will do me a great favor to introduce your humble servant to this paragon of excellence."

"Exactly! I'll do it all in good time; but take another orange, man!" he said, extending the empty tray to Sheldon. "Zounds! where are they gone?" he exclaimed, perceiving the dish to be vacant. "Have I eaten them all?"

Sheldon could not forbear laughing now, as he informed the doctor of his accident, which called forth another burst of merriment.

"Well, you want to see this lady?" he said, when it had subsided. "I'll bring her to you in a jiffy;" and the gleeful doctor departed on his errand.

Sheldon paced the floor uneasily during his absence; but he was not kept long in waiting. He soon heard steps descending the stairs and, whirling a chair so as to give him but a side view of the entrance, sat down to await their coming. The doors slid open, and he became aware of a light, graceful figure, in a dark, crimson robe, leaning on the doctor's arm, and approaching with fairy-like steps. The setting sun was throwing a flood of radiance through the heavy folds of purple damask, and filling the apartment with soft, dreamy light as they paused before him.

"I have the pleasure of presenting to you 'Woodland Winnie,' Mr. Sheldon," said the doctor.

Sheldon raised his dark eyes slowly to the lady's face, and there, in the genial light of that mild spring evening, stood Annie Evalyn. He started as if an electric shock had shot through his frame. She trembled and blushed, and the old doctor roared and shook with laughter at Sheldon's speechless surprise; but the latter soon recovered himself and greeted Annie with respectful cordiality, offering an apology for his surprise, by saying he was not prepared to behold a former acquaintance in the fair authoress. She returned his salutations with grace and ease, while the doctor continued to laugh immoderately. So pleased was the old gentleman with the part he had enacted in the scene, that he actually consumed twelve oranges, and despatched a servant for a fresh supply. Sheldon could not avoid stealing a glance at Annie as she sat on the sofa before him. The dark chestnut curls were lifted away from the expanding temples, and the delicate marble complexion, relieved by a just perceptible tinge of rose on either cheek; while the beautifully imaginative expression of the full blue eye, the curved lip and nostril speaking the free, dauntless spirit, and the exquisite contour of the light, graceful

figure, yet somewhat taller and thinner than when he had last seen her, all conspired to assure him it was no timid, shrinking girl he beheld, but the lofty, talented, accomplished woman. Back came the old love and admiration ten-fold stronger than ever. The doctor went out to look after his oranges. There was a silence. It was growing oppressive. He rose and approached the sofa.

"I have erred, Annie," he said, in a low, mellow tone, fraught with deep sorrow and contrition.

"We are human, Frank," she answered, very softly.

It was not the words, but the tone, the manner, that convinced him he was forgiven. He sat down beside her, and there, in the deepening twilight of that spring evening, what a holy happiness was rising over the ruins of wickedness and crime! Who shall say how much holier, purer, and more elevated for the trying ordeal to which it had been subjected?

CHAPTER XXII.

"To all and each a fair good-night,
And rosy dreams and slumbers bright."

We are winding to a close. In the delicious coolness of a summer evening, Aunt Patty sat upon her lowly stile, her head drooped pensively on her withered hand, as if absorbed in deep meditation. The sound of approaching footsteps aroused her, and directly a light form was at her side, while a soft voice whispered in her ear: "You are thinking of one from whom I bring tidings."

It was Netta Wild, accompanied by her husband, who carried a small package in his hand.

"Ay, yes! true, Netta, I was thinking of Annie," said the old woman, rising, and beckoning them to enter, while she bustled about and lighted a candle. "So you have brought me news of her?" she continued. "I always know when I'm going to hear from hinny, for I'm thinking and dreaming about her all the time for three or four days before the tidings come."

"You should have had bright visions of late, Aunt Patty, if they are to tally with the truth," said Netta. "Annie has won the prizes."

"Has she? Do tell!" exclaimed the old woman, her face glowing with pleasure.

"Yes, and here are the magazines containing the articles," answered Netta, untying the package; "but this is the smallest part of her good fortune; there's better news yet to be imparted, Aunt Patty. Sit down here close beside me while I read this letter,—it is for both of us, she says."

Aunt Patty hitched her chair close up, remarking, as she did so, that "the best news she could hear of hinny was, that she was coming back to her old aunty."

"Well, she is coming back," said Netta, "but not alone; in brief; she is married, Aunt Patty."

"O dear! O dear!" groaned the old lady in agony; "I have lost her forever, my darling, darling Annie!"

"No you haven't," said Netta; "for she says it was in the bargain that she should never go from her dear old aunty while she lived, but always be near to cheer and console her declining years."

"O, the hinny love!" said Aunt Patty, brightening at these words.

"And she describes her meeting with Sheldon (for he is the bridegroom); of his being one of the editors of the magazine for which her prizes were written; of his surprise at finding to whom he was awarding them, and the explanation, and awakening of the old love, which quickly followed."

"We are married, Netta," she writes, "and are all bound eastward, as soon as Dr. Prague can close up his affairs in this city, as he proposes to accompany us, and spend the remainder of his days near your kind father. He says he has no ties to bind him to the western country. You will take this package, containing my prizes, to aunty, and read this letter to her. Tell her she must use the note enclosed to buy her a smart new dress, and get you to make her a high-crowned cap with an extra pinch in the border, in which to receive her Annie's husband."

The old woman laughed and cried by turns, and said, "'Twas not much use to rig up such an old, withered thing as she was; but then she would do all as hinny wished."

George and Netta stopped awhile to chat upon the expected arrival. Netta said, "The young couple could live in the beautiful stone mansion George had just completed, and which was now wanting a family. It was built in Gothic style, and most romantically situated, only a little distance from the Parsonage, in a delightful grove of maples and elms. She had been wondering who would occupy it, but never dreamed it might be Annie and her noble husband."

Thus they talked and planned; Aunt Patty all the while half wild with excitement and expectation. At length they took leave, Netta promising to come next day, and assist in making the new dress and smart cap.

Onward they came, on the wings of the flying steam-steed. Onward they came, a happy trio; the good old doctor, boisterous in his glee and satisfaction, looking first on Annie, then on Sheldon, and bursting again and again into peals of exuberant laughter; so wonderfully pleased was he with the success of his first attempt at match-making; for he appropriated to himself the whole glory of cementing the union between his two favorites. The only thing that caused anxiety or solicitude during their journey was a fear lest the good old gentleman, in his wild abandonment of joy, should forget himself, and eat so many oranges as to endanger his precious existence. But, happily, their fears proved imaginary. No such catastrophe occurred to mar their felicity, and the little party safely reached the hospitable mansion of Parson Grey, and were received with every demonstration of joy and welcome by the expectant inmates. Aunt Rachel was in her highest cap, and soon commenced preparations for the bridal supper, on which she had expended her utmost, and expected to derive much commendation therefrom; but now, Annie, little whimsie! overturned all her hopes at once. She had set her heart on eating her bridal supper with Aunt Patty at the rock cottage in Scraggiewood, and Sheldon declared it *his* wish too.

Parson Grey was of opinion the young couple should be left to act their own pleasure in the matter, and all finally coincided; Aunt Rachel with some disappointed looks, that Aunt Patty's oaten cakes should gain the preference to her rich, frosted loaves; but she reflected that her sumptuous banquet could be displayed and partaken of some other day; and so she smoothed her brow and joined the rest in wishing Frank and Annie a pleasant walk to Scraggiewood.

As evening closed in, the happy couple, arm in arm, and unattended, took their way over the rough forest path. Annie had so much to tell of her early years passed there, and he was so intent on listening, that they were close upon the cottage, ere they seemed to have passed over one half the distance.

"What a wild, weird spot!" he exclaimed. "No wonder you have such glorious fancies, love."

Annie motioned him to be silent; she had caught a glimpse of her aunt sitting in the porch.

"Come quick," she said, and in a moment they stood before the startled old lady. Annie flung her arm over her neck and said: "Here's Annie and her husband come to Scraggiewood to take their bridal supper with their dear aunty."

The old lady returned her darling's embrace warmly, but looked rather abashed and disconcerted at beholding so fine a gentleman; but when he advanced and shook her heartily by the hand, expressing in eloquent words his gratitude to her for rearing so bright a flower to bless his life, she gradually regained her composure; and with the young couple roaming round the hut, out under the trees, and away into the woods in the clear moonlight to search up Crummie, for Annie said, "Frank must become acquainted with all her friends,"—the joyful dame set about preparing a repast. She managed to get on her new gown and cap while they were out, for their sudden arrival had surprised her in her homespun garb. Annie noticed the change soon as they were seated at the table, and, though Aunt Patty thought she needn't, remarked upon it at once.

"When did you find time to make that fine toilet, aunty?" she asked in a roguish tone.

But Aunt Patty turned the point well. "Why, dear, seeing you were so particular in your letter that I should spruce up to receive you and your husband, I thought I could do no less than respect your wishes."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Sheldon; "you are well answered for your pleasantry, Annie."

Thus they discussed their simple meal with mirth and good-humor. Aunt Patty's batter cakes seemed to have received an extra fine touch, and the cream and butter were such as a king might relish, Sheldon declared.

When the meal was over they sat down on the stile, Aunt Patty, at Annie's request, drawing her chair close beside them. Then they talked, and told her how much they anticipated living in the great mansion so near to Parson Grey; and they would come every week to see her; and a hundred other fine plans Annie formed, laying her head all the while on her husband's arm, as he twined wild flowers among her dark curls, and laughed at her lively sallies. Aunt Patty declared 'twas a sight angels might envy, their love and happiness.

The moon rose high above the tall forest trees, casting a mild, holy radiance over the scene. And thus we leave them;—and thus we say—"Good-night to Scraggiewood!"

ALICE ORVILLE;
OR,
LIFE IN THE SOUTH AND WEST.

CHAPTER I.

"Adown the lovely waters,
  Behold the vessel glide,
While beauty's fairest daughters
  Gaze on the laughing tide."

"She sought no notice, therefore gained it all,
As thus she stood apart from all the throng
Of heartless ones that passed before her eyes."

The Mississippi—river of majestic beauties—with the green, delightful shores, elegant plantations, and dense forests of tall cotton-wood and dark, funereal cypress, overhung with the parasitical moss, gliding panorama-like before the enraptured vision! How proudly the mighty steam-boats cut the turbid water, bearing the wealth and merchandise of those productive lands to the numerous towns and cities that adorn the banks of the majestic river!

It was a lovely night in early June, and the guards of that queenliest of all queenly boats, the "Eclipse," were thronged with ladies and gentlemen just risen from their evening banquet in the sumptuous dining-saloon. They were passing Baton Rouge, and many an exclamation of delight was uttered, not only in admiration of the lovely scenery around them, but that they were so happily near the terminus of a journey, which, despite the splendid appointments of the boat, was fraught with danger, and occasioned more or less uneasiness and anxiety in the bosoms of all the passengers.

Apart from the crowd, leaning over the balustrade, her dark eyes riveted on the lovely prospect passing before her vision, stood a young girl of perhaps fifteen summers. Her form was slight, and a profusion of black, wavy ringlets floated over her small shoulders, while in all her movements was visible that singularly beautiful grace of motion, ever so attractive, and which is noticed only in very finely-constituted organizations. She stood apart from the hilarious groups around her, evidently

"In a shade of thoughts that were not their thoughts."

Her simple grace and self-possession, and the indifference manifested to the flattering attentions bestowed upon her by the gentlemen during the voyage, had rendered her an object of peculiar interest with them, and provoked no small amount of envy and invidious remark from the weaker sex.

"Look there," remarked a freckled-faced lady in blue and yellow, to a counterpart in red and green; "see Miss Pink o' Propriety, as the captain calls her, standing out there alone, to attract some gentleman's notice."

"Of course," returned miss red and green, sneeringly. "I hate that girl, she puts on such airs. And travelling alone, in charge of the captain and clerk, shows what she is plainly. There, look! The bait has taken,—Mr. Gilbert is caught!" and the rainbow ladies joined in a loud laugh, as a fine-looking gentleman approached the fair, abstracted girl, and accosted her.

"Always flying your crowd of admirers," said he, "and hiding in some sly nook. Please tell me some of your pretty thoughts, as we glide past this lovely scenery, Miss Orville."

"The recital of my poor thoughts would not repay you for listening," said the young lady, with a pleasant smile.

"Now I may consider myself dismissed, I suppose," remarked the gentleman; "but if you don't tolerate me, you'll have to some other of my sex; for naught so charms us contradictory human bipeds as indifference to our gracious attentions, and we always pay our most assiduous court where it receives the smallest consideration."

"Well, if you choose to remain and entertain me with your company—" commenced the fair girl.

"I can do so, but you prefer to be alone," interrupted the young man; "is not that what you would say?"

"As you have been pleased to give expression to my unexpressed thoughts, I'll abide by your decision," she remarked quietly.

The gentleman bade her good-evening, and walked away, looking somewhat chagrined by his easy dismissal. On the fore-deck he found the clerk of the boat.

"I've just come from Miss Orville," he said, falling into step with the latter. "You are a lucky fellow, Mr. Clerk, to have such a lovely being entrusted to your care."

"She is a sweet young lady, indeed," said the clerk. "I was never trusted with a charge in which I felt more interest."

"No wonder. Half the gentlemen on the boat are in love with her, and she is so mercilessly indifferent to all their blandishments! Yet she is of an age to love flattery and adulation."

"She appears like one whose heart is preöccupied," remarked the clerk.

"But she is too young for that to be the case, I would suppose."

"Love is restricted to no particular age."

"She is from the north, too, and the maidens of those cold climes are less susceptible to the influence of the tender passion than the daughters of our sunny shores," pursued Gilbert.

"Less susceptible it may be," answered the clerk, "but once enkindled, the flame seldom flickers or grows dim. Northern hearts are slow to wake and hard to change. I was raised in Yankee land, Gilbert, and should know something of Yankee girls."

"True, true; but where do you say this young lady is going?"

"To New Orleans."

"And do you know where she will stop in the city?"

"At the residence of her uncle, Esq. Camford."

"Possible? I know that family well."

"Indeed," remarked the clerk; "then you may have an opportunity to pursue your acquaintance with Miss Orville, in whom you seem to feel more than ordinary interest."

"Why, yes," said Gilbert, "I believe I'm in love with her at present; but then I don't make so serious a matter of a heart affair as many do."

Gilbert was a wealthy southern planter, of rather easy, dissolute habits, yet possessed of some redeeming points.

"With good luck we shall hail the Crescent City to-morrow," remarked the clerk, at length, as he stood regarding the speed of the boat with admiring gaze.

"Say you so?" exclaimed Gilbert. "I must have a last game of euchre to-night, then;" and he hurried into the saloon to make up a party.

"Hilloa, Reams!" said he to a foppish-looking fellow, lying at length on a rosewood sofa, intent on the pages of a yellow-covered volume which he held above his perfumed head; "come, have done with 'Ten Thousand a Year,' and let us have a last game of cards. We shall be in New Orleans to-morrow, so here's our last chance on *la belle* Eclipse."

"O, give over your game!" yawned the indolent Reams. "I'm better employed, as you see."

"No!" returned Gilbert, "I'll not give over; if you won't play, I can find enough that will. You are a cowardly chap, Reams; because you lost a few picayunes last night, you are afraid to try your luck again. Where's that young fellow, Morris?"

"What, the handsome lad from old Tennessee?" said Reams, languidly passing his taper fingers through his lavender-moistened locks; "he will never hear of any cards save wedding ones tied with white satin, for he has been for the last half hour on the guards in earnest conversation with that pretty Miss Orville."

"The deuce he has!" exclaimed Gilbert with a blank expression, as he walked away with a hasty step, leaving Reams to adjust himself to his book again. He soon collected a group of card-players and sat down to his game; while young Wayland Morris and sweet Alice Orville promenaded the hurricane deck, and admired the beautiful scenery through which they were gliding, from the lofty pilot-house, conversing with the ease and freedom of old acquaintances; for thus ever do kindred souls recognize and flow into each other wherever they chance to meet in this fair world of ours.

CHAPTER II.

"My mistress hath most trembling nerves;
The buzz of a musquito doth alarm her so,

It was the dinner hour at the splendid mansion of Esq. Camford, the silver service duly laid on the marble dining-table, the heavy curtains drooped before the broad, oriel windows, and an odor of orange flowers pervading the apartment as the light breeze lifted their silken folds. Colored servants, in snowy jackets and aprons, stood erect and prim in their respective places, awaiting the entrance of their master's family and guests. At length there was a bustle in the hall, and a loud, burly voice heard exclaiming,

"Here, Thisbe, you black wench, run and tell your mistress to come into the drawing-room in all haste. Here's an arrival; her niece, Miss Orville, just in on the Eclipse. I was down on the levee, to see to the consignment of my freight, and run afoul of her. Run, you nigger, and tell her to come here quick."

"Yes, massa," and off patted the woman to impart the summons, while Alice stood indeterminate on her uncle's threshold.

The servant plodded up a long pair of stairs, and tapped thrice at the door of an apartment, e'er she was bid in a peevish voice to "come along in, and not stand there foolin'." The woman entered timidly.

"What do you want with me?" snarled the fine lady from the depths of a cushioned chair, her white fingers playing with a richly-wrought Spanish fan.

"Massa says come down in the drawin'-room to see a nice young lady, Miss Orful, or some sich name, what's just come on the 'Clipse, that signed away all massa's freight," said the woman with a profound courtesy.

"What gibberish is this?" said the lady, in fretful humor; "go and tell your master to come here this moment. I declare, my nerves are all a-tremble, and my life is worried out of me by these stupid niggers. Get out of my sight, and do my bidding!"

The servant disappeared instanter through the door.

"Where is your mistress?" bawled Esq. Camford, when she reäppeared in the hall.

"She says you must come to her this minute, for she is e'en-amost nervousy to death," answered poor Thisbe, in a shaking voice.

"Come to her? Thunder and Mars! didn't you tell her her niece was here waiting a welcome?"

"Yes, massa. I tell her there was a nice young lady here, what come on de 'Clipse."

"O, Lord! these fidgety women!" exclaimed Esq. Camford, impatiently. "I hope you are not one of the sort, are you, Miss Orville? But come into the parlor here, while I go up and rouse your aunt."

"I hope, if she is sick, you will not disturb her on my account," said Alice, somewhat alarmed at the commotion her arrival had occasioned.

"Thunder! she is not sick, I'll wager; that is, no sicker than she deems it necessary to be to produce an effect. I'm anxious you should behold your cousins,—four in all; three youngest at school. They'll be home at dinner, and it is already past the usual hour. Thunder! is dinner ready, Thisbe?"

"Yes, massa, and a waitin' mighty long time too."

"Well, as I was saying, you must see your cousins, Jack, Josephine and Susette. Our oldest daughter is over to Mobile for a few weeks. Pheny is about your age, and you'll be great friends, no doubt; that is, if you can romp and flop about pretty smart; but I must go for your aunt."

Here an exclamation of "Mercy, mercy!" called the esquire's attention, and he beheld his amiable consort sinking aghast, with uplifted hands on a sofa in the hall. "Law, Nabby, what's the matter now?" said he, going toward her leisurely enough, as though he were accustomed to such scenes.

"O, Adolphus Camford! what wench is that you have been sitting beside on my embroidered ottoman? Answer me quick, for the love of Heaven! I will not say for the love you bear me, as it is evident by your conduct that you have ceased to regard me with a spice of affection," exclaimed the fair lady, in a tone of trembling excitement.

"Good, now, Nabby, good! A scene enacted on the arrival of our little up-country cousin, Ally Orville;" and the esquire roared with laughter. Alice heard all, and wondered what she had come among.

The lady, nothing appeased by this explanation, as soon as she had taken breath, burst forth again. "And you dared take the girl, in her dirty, disordered travelling garb, into the drawing-room! Adolphus Camford, I'm horrified beyond expression! Here, Thisbe, run and bundle the thing off to her room before any one sees her. And to come just at our fashionable dinner-hour too!"

"Fuss and feathers, is that the child's fault? She came when the boat did, of course. I was down there after my freight, and found her; she seemed a mighty favorite with all on board, I assure you, and a

handsome young fellow rode up in the carriage with us, to mark her residence, that he might call on her."

"Yes, and our house will be overrun by hoosiers, and all sorts of gawkins, no doubt. But take this girl out of sight, Thisbe. You can carry some dinner to her room if she wishes any."

"Thunder and Mars! She is your own brother's child; ain't you going to let her come to the table with the family?"

"Perhaps so, at a proper time. When I have seen her, and considered whether she is a suitable personage for my jewel daughters to have for a companion."

"Why, didn't she come here more by your invitation than mine? for she was well enough off at home, but, because she was the only child of your deceased brother, you wanted to do something for her, and so sent for her to come here, and finish her education at your expense, where she could receive more fashionable polish than in a country town, away up in Ohio; and as to her looks, just step into the parlor and see for yourself."

"O, where is she?" he exclaimed, finding the room vacant in which Alice had been seated a few moments before.

"I sent Thisbe to take her off," replied Mrs. Camford; "here are the children; my brilliant son, my jewel daughters. I declare my nerves are so shaken I feel quite incapacitated to preside at the dinner-table."

"Pshaw, Nabby," said the blunt husband, "come along. I'll risk you to despatch your usual quantity of lobster salad and roasted steak."

"Adolphus, you shock me," faltered the delicate little lady, of a good two hundred pounds' weight, as she hung to her lord's stalwart arm and entered the dining saloon.

"My darling children, assume your seats at table. Billy and Cato, unfold their napkins. Adolphus, you see we have chops for dinner."

Delivering herself of this flowery speech, the lady sank exhausted into the high-backed chair that was held in readiness by the officious waiter, and was shoved up to her proper place, the head of her sumptuous table.

The meal proceeded in silence, and all, even the delicate lady, did ample justice to the chops, the entrées, and nicely-prepared side dishes, as well as to the elegant dessert that followed in course.

CHAPTER III.

"She wound around her fingers
  Her locks of jetty hair;
And brought them into graceful curl
  About her forehead fair."

Alice remained closeted in her little room, eating but a morsel of the dinner brought her by Thisbe, till night-fall, when the woman again appeared, and said,

"Mistress says, if Miss Alice has made herself presentable, she can attend her in the family sitting-room in half an hour."

Alice bowed to this message, and said she would be pleased to meet her aunt and cousins at the time specified. The woman paused a moment, and then asked timidly,

"Would not Miss Alice like a waitin'-maid sent to 'sist her in dressin'?"

"No, thank you," returned Alice, smiling. "I am accustomed to wait on myself."

The woman opened wide her shiny eyes, and exclaiming, "Massy! who ever heard the like?" retired with a courtesy.

Alice laughed quite heartily after she was gone. "The idea of a black girl to help me put on a plain muslin frock, and twist my ringlets into a little smoother curl!" said she. "I could array myself to meet a queen in ten minutes."

Thus speaking, she took from her trunk a snowy India muslin frock. It fastened low over her finely-formed shoulders, and a chain of red coral round her neck, with bracelets of the same material on her delicate wrists, completed her toilet. With her own rare grace of motion, she glided down the hall stairs, and into the presence of her aunt, who rose from the soft-cushioned chair in which she had been

reclining, with an expression half terror, half anger, distorting her features.

"Mercy, mercy! Another trial to my weak nerves!" she exclaimed. "Thisbe, my nerve-reviver instantly!"

The servant flew from the room, and returned with a small, silver-headed vial, which the lady applied to her nostrils, and soon grew calm.

Alice stood all the while dismayed at the confusion her sudden entrance had occasioned, and the three cousins, perched on cushioned stools, gazed on her with curious eyes. The aunt at length got sufficiently revived to speak.

"Now, Miss Orville, my long-since-departed brother's only child, advance to embrace your affectionate aunt!"

Alice came forward with a gentle, inimitable grace, and, extending her hand, said,

"How do you do, aunt? I am sorry to have made you so ill."

"That is right, Miss Orville! you should be so. My nerves are delicate; the least disturbance sets them all a tremble, and no one understands my nerves; no one appreciates my nerves. Now I will present you to your cousins. I call my daughters my three jewels. The eldest, and belle and beauty, as we call her, is not at home, being in the city of Mobile at present. Her name is Isadora Gabriella Celestina Camford. You will behold her in due time, I trust. My second child is a son. I call him my brilliant among my jewels. Daniel Henry Thomas Lewis John Camford come forward to greet Miss Alice Orville."

The lad thus called on, rose, stretched himself, and coming up to Alice said, "How d'ye do, cous.?"

The young girl received his extended hand kindly, and, after gazing for the space of a full minute straight in her face, he resumed his seat.

"Very well done, my brilliant son!" said the mother. "Next in order comes my second jewel. Now Dulcinea Ophelia Ambrosia Josephine, my adored remembrance of Don Quixote, Shakspeare, the Naiads, and the mighty Napoleon, advance to greet your cousin!"

And this living remembrance of the immortal dead sprang from her stool, and, running to Alice, threw both arms round her neck, and, kissing her on either cheek, exclaimed, "O, Cousin Alice! I'm glad you are come, for now I shall have some one good-natured enough to talk to and go to school with every day; for, by your pretty, angel-face, I know you are a sweet-tempered thing."

During this volubly-uttered harangue, the mother was making helpless gestures to Thisbe for the nerve-reviver; but the graceless wench never heeded one of them, so intently was she gazing with distended eyes and gaping mouth on Miss Pheny's somewhat boisterous, but really warm-hearted greeting of her Cousin Alice. Pheny was a universal favorite among the servants, "for that she was a smilin', good-natured young lady, and not a bit nervousy," as they declared.

At length poor Mrs. Camford uttered a faint cry, which called Thisbe's attention back to the spot from whence it never should have strayed,—her mistress' cushioned chair,—and she rushed in a sort of frenzy for the nerve-reviver, and applied it to the trembling lady's nostrils; whereupon that delicately-constituted specimen of the genus feminine uttered a stentorian shriek and flounced about the room like an irate porcupine, greatly to the terror of Alice, who had never witnessed such a scene before. But neither the brilliant son nor jewel daughters seemed in the least alarmed, and in a few moments the mother regained possession of her chair and senses, when her first act of sanity was to hurl the bottle Thisbe had applied to her nostrils at the poor woman's head with such force, that, had she not dodged the missile, it must have inflicted a severe contusion.

"There, you blundering black brute!" she exclaimed, "see if you'll bring your master's hartshorn headache-dispenser again, when I send for my nerve-reviver. The idea of a delicate woman like me having a bottle of hartshorn bobbed under her nose! The wonder is I am not dead; yes, dead by your hand, you brutal black nigger! But where was I in my presentation? O, I recollect! That mad-cap girl, my second jewel, so horrified me. I dare not yet refer to it lest my nerves become spasmodic again. Pray excuse her, Miss Orville, and I will proceed to my youngest, my infant-jewel! Eldora Adelaide Maria Suzette, greet your cousin, love, as you ought."

The child arose, made a stiff bend of her shoulders, and said, "I hope to see you well, Miss Alice Orville."

Alice returned her salute with a graceful courtesy, and all resumed their seats.

"Now," said Mrs. Camford, "this dreaded ceremony of presentation is over, I hope we may get on well together. I'm desirous, Miss Orville, that you should commence tuition at the seminary immediately. I shall have no pains spared to afford you a fashionable education. As my deceased brother's only child, I would have this much done at my own expense. I always told Ernest, though he married a poor girl from the north, and went off there to live with her, much against the wishes of our parents, that I would never see a child of his suffer."

"I have never suffered, madam!" said Alice, quickly.

"For food and clothes I suppose not, Miss Orville," said Mrs. Camford, loftily; "but my nerves are all shattered by this long confab, and I will now retire, leaving you young people to cultivate each other's acquaintance. Thisbe, carry me to my private apartment!"

And Thisbe lifted her delicate mistress in her arms, and tugged her from the room; an operation that reminded one, not of a "mountain laboring to bring forth a mouse," but of a mouse laboring to bring forth a mountain.

Days and weeks past by, and Alice was not so unhappy as she feared she would be from her first experience. The "belle and beauty" returned from the city of Mobile, under escort of Mr. Gilbert, who proved to be the fair Celestina's *fiancée*. And Wayland Morris was a frequent visitor. He often invited Alice to walk over different portions of the city. There was an old ruinous French chateau to which they were wont to direct their steps almost every Saturday evening when the weather was pleasant; and to walk with Morris, gaze into his deep blue eyes, and listen to his eloquent voice as he recited to her old tales and legends of long ago from his well-stored, imaginative brain, was becoming more than life to Alice. Perhaps she did not quite know it then. Whoever knows the value of a blessing till it is withdrawn? Ah! and when we wake some morning to find our hearts left desolate, how earnestly and tearfully do we beg its return, with fervent promises never to drive it from our bosoms, or scorn and slight it again! But does it ever come? Alas, no!

CHAPTER IV.

"O, know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in her clime,
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melts into sorrow, now maddens to crime;
O, know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine?"

Bright, balmy, beautiful southern land! Alas, that amid all your luxuriance of beauty, where the flowering earth smiles up to the far sparkling azure, and all nature seems chanting delicious harmonies, that man should here, as elsewhere, make the one discordant note! Frail, grovelling, passion-blinded man! The noblest imperfection of God! When will he be elevated to the standard for which the Maker designed him?

It was early spring, and the "floating palace," Eclipse, had made many pleasant trips between New Orleans and Louisville, since Alice Orville stood on her guards and feasted her beauty-loving eyes on the delightful river scenery.

The magnificent boat was now at the levee in New Orleans, advertised to sail on the morrow. All was a scene of confusion in her vicinity. Freight and baggage tumbled over the decks, passengers hurrying on board, carts, hacks and omnibuses rudely jostling one against another, runners loudly vociferating for their respective boats, etc. At length a young man made his way through the crowd to the clerk's office, booked his name, and engaged passage for a small town in Tennessee. The clerk glanced at the name, and, instantly extending a hand to the passenger, exclaimed; "Ah, Mr. Morris, happy to meet you! I look in so many different faces, yours did not strike me as familiar at first. How has been your health, and how have you prospered since I saw you last? Now I recollect you were on the boat when we brought the pretty young lady down; Miss Orville, I think was her name. Is she yet in the city?"

"I believe she is," answered Morris, in a tone meant to be careless.

"Surrounded by enamored admirers, no doubt," remarked the clerk. "So you are bound up the river, Morris?"

"Yes, to visit my widowed mother in Tennessee; she is failing in health, and sent for me to come to her."

"Indeed; 'tis like a dutiful son to obey the summons. Will you return to New Orleans?"

"Such is my intention at present."

"Well, make yourself comfortable here, and the Eclipse will set you off at your stopping-place in two or three days," said the gentlemanly clerk, dismissing his friend, as others thronged around for accommodations.

The sun sank behind the "Father of Waters," as before a small gray cottage on the eastern shore of the mighty river, a young, fair-haired girl stood watching its departing light. At length a boat came in view round a winding curve, and the little maiden leaped up, clapped her hands gleefully, and disappeared within the cottage. Onward came the graceful boat, lashing the waters into foam with its swift-revolving wheels. It neared the shore, made a brief halt, and then glided on its way again. A

young man bounded up the embankment, and the fair girl met him on the lowly sill with open arms. "Dear sister Winnie, how you are grown!" exclaimed he; "but lead me to mother quickly."

"I will, I will, brother Wayland. She has talked of you all day long, and feared you would not arrive in time to see her."

"Ah! is she failing so rapidly, then?" said the young man, while a gloom stole over his features.

"O, not so very fast!" answered the child; "and now you are come, I dare say she will soon be well again."

He patted her cheek, and hurriedly entered his mother's apartment. She was lying on an humble pallet, wan and emaciated to so fearful a degree, that the son could hardly recognize the parent from whom he had parted eight months before.

"O, mother!" said he in sorrowful, reproachful accents; "why had you not sent for me sooner?"

"I have wanted for nothing, my boy," answered the invalid, in a husky voice. "Your letters spoke of success, and hopes for the future; how could I be so selfish as to call you away from prospects so fair, to tend on a sick-bed?"

The son was silent, and after a few moments' pause, she resumed: "Winnie did all that could be done for me. But for a few weeks I've failed faster than usual, and I could not bear to die without beholding my darling boy once more. Besides, what was to become of Winnie, left alone and unprotected?"

"Do not speak so hopelessly, dear mother," said Wayland, tears gathering in his eyes; "I trust with the advancing spring your health may improve."

The poor woman shook her head. Winnie came, and, putting her little arms round her mother's neck, commenced sobbing bitterly.

"Winnie! Winnie! you worry mother doing so," said Wayland, drawing her away; "come now with me; I want to see your pretty fawn and pet kids."

"O, brother! the white spots are all gone from Fanny's neck and sides, and the kiddies' horns are grown so long I'm half afraid of them; but come, I'll find them for you;" and the child, diverted from her tears, seized her brother's hand to lead him forth in search of her playmates. They were soon found, and after admiring and caressing them a few moments, Wayland left his sister to frolic with them on the lawn, and returned to his mother's side.

They had a long, confidential conversation, in which the son imparted to his affectionate parent a brief history of the past eight months. She listened with eager interest to the rehearsal. When he mentioned Alice Orville, she regarded his countenance with a fixed, searching expression, and a faint smile stole over her pale, sad face; but when he breathed the name of Camford, she started convulsively, and demanded his Christian name.

"Adolphus," answered Wayland, in amaze at her emotion. "He is Miss Orville's uncle, and the wealthiest merchant in New Orleans."

"'Tis the same," she murmured; "you were too young, my son, when your father died, to have any recollection of the events which preceded his death; but you have heard from me that he was hurried out of the world by temporal misfortunes too great for his delicate, sensitive temperament to endure. The sudden descent from affluence to poverty bore him to the grave. And I have told you, Wayland, that by the hand of one man, all this woe and suffering was brought upon us."

"And who was that man, dear mother?" asked the youth, in an agitated voice.

"Adolphus Camford," answered she, trembling as she spoke the fatal name.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Wayland, starting to his feet. "Then may the son avenge the father!"

"Stop, my boy," said his mother; "I intended this revelation but as a caution for you against your father's destroyer. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord. Promise that you will remember this, Wayland, or I cannot die in peace."

"I promise, mother," said the young man, bowing at the bed-side, and leaning his head tenderly on her bosom.

CHAPTER V.

"If there is anything I hate on earth,
It is a ranting, tattling, prattling jade,
Who gossips all day long, and fattens on

Her neighbors' foibles, and at night lies down
To dream some ghostly tale, and rises soon
To bawl it through the town as good and true."

Hast ever attended a Ladies' Sewing Circle, reader, and witnessed the benevolent proceedings of the matrons, spinsters, and young maidens, for the poor, benighted heathen on the far-distant shores of Hindostan, or the benighted millions who sit in the "region and shadow of death" on the desert plains of Ethiopia? And while thou hast heard the lady president plead so eloquently for those nations, who, groaning in their self-forged chains, bow to the great Moloch of superstition and idolatry, as to "draw tears of blood," as it were, from the eyes of her rapt and devoted listeners, hast ever marked a pale, trembling child of want totter to the door, and ask for the "crumbs that fall" from this humane society's tea-table, and heard the answer, "Begone! this is a benevolent association for the purpose of evangelizing the heathen, not to feed lazy beggars at our own doors?"

And has thy lips dared e'en to whisper,

"O for the charity that begins at home!"

Well, the "Ladies' Literary Benevolent Combination for Foreign Aid" was duly congregated at Mrs. Jane Rockport's, Pleasant-street, in the town of Bellevue, on the western shore of Lake Erie. It was a rainy day,—as days for the meeting of sewing circles most always are; though why Heaven should strive to thwart benevolence is a point upon which we will not venture an opinion.

About twenty of the most zealous in the course of philanthropy, who no doubt felt the wrongs of the suffering heathen impelling them to brave the wind and rain, had assembled in Mrs. Rockport's parlor, and, after hearing a hymn composed for the occasion by the Misses Gaddies, and performed by the same interesting young ladies, and an appropriate prayer by the president, Mrs. Stebbins, the work designed for the present meeting was laid upon the table, and the several members of the little company selected articles upon which to display their benevolence, and scattered off in groups of two and three to different parts of the room, while a low, incessant hum of voices struck the ear from all quarters. It appeared the devoted ladies were exerting their tongues as well as fingers in the good cause.

"Now, do you suppose it is true?" asked Miss Jerusha Sharpwell, at length, in a raised voice, with horror and amazement depicted on her sharp-featured face.

"Why, Susan Simpson told me that Dilly Hootaway told her that little Nanny Dutton told her, 'Pa had got a nice lamb shut up in a pen, and they were going to have it killed for Christmas,'" said Mrs. Dorothy Sykes, in reply to her companion's startled exclamation.

"Enough said," returned Miss Jerusha, with a toss of her tall head; "now such things ought not to pass unnoticed, I say."

This was uttered in so loud a tone that the attention of all in the room was roused, and several voices demanded what was the matter.

"Matter enough," said Miss Sharpwell; "that thievish Oliver Dutton has stolen a sheep from the widow Orville."

"La! have you just heard of it, sister Sharpwell?" exclaimed Mrs. Fleetwood; "I knew it a week ago."

"You did, did you?" said Mrs. Sykes; "why, it was only stolen last night."

"Perhaps Mr. Dutton has stolen two sheep," suggested Mrs. Aidy.

"No doubt, no doubt," put in Miss Jerusha, much excited.

"Well, ladies," observed Mrs. Milder, "as I am perfectly sure, I may safely affirm that Mr. Dutton has stolen no sheep from Mrs. Orville."

"How do you know he has not?" demanded Sykes and Sharpwell in a breath.

"Because Mrs. Orville has no sheep," returned Mrs. Milder, quietly.

"Well, now, was there ever such a place as this is coming to be? No one can believe a thing unless they see it with their own eyes," exclaimed Mrs. Sykes, in an indignant tone. "I'm sure I heard Dutton had got a lamb for Christmas; and how could the poor critter come by it unless he stole it somewhere; and as Mrs. Orville lives alone, I thought likely he would take advantage of that, and steal it from her, for I didn't know but what she kept sheep."

"Very natural, Mrs. Sykes, that you should thus suppose," chimed in Miss Jerusha. "No one questions your honor or veracity. But what were you saying, Miss Gaddie? I thought you were speaking of Mrs. Orville's daughter that went off south a year or two ago."

"I was merely remarking that Mrs. Orville received a letter from Alice last week, and sis, who used to be acquainted with her, called to inquire after her welfare."

"Well, what did she hear?" asked Miss Sharpwell.

"Not much, did you, sis?" asked the elder Miss Gaddie of her younger sister.

"No, I didn't *hear* much, but I *see* enough," answered that interesting miss.

"Lord bless us, child!" exclaimed Miss Jerusha. "What did you see?"

"Why, Mrs. Orville was blubbering like a baby when I entered, but she tried to hush up after a while."

"Mercy to me!" exclaimed Mrs. Sykes; "her daughter must be dead or come to some awful disgrace away off there."

"No, she is not dead," said Miss Gaddie, "for her mother said she was well, and spoke of returning home next spring or summer."

"O, dear! these young girls sent off alone in the world most always come to some harm," said Miss Sharpwell, with a rueful expression of countenance.

"True, true, sister Jerusha," returned Mrs. Sykes, "what should I think of sending my Henrietta off so?"

"Sure enough, sister Sykes," said Miss Sharpwell. "We ought not, however, to forsake our friends in adversity. Let us call on Mrs. Orville, and sympathize in her affliction."

"With all my heart, sister Jerusha. I am a mother, and can appreciate a mother's feelings over a beloved child's downfall and disgrace," said Mrs. Sykes, with a distressful expression of pity distorting her countenance.

And thus in the mint of the Ladies' Benevolent Society was cast, coined and made ready for current circulation, the tale of poor Alice Orville's imaginary shame and ruin. Yet faster flew those Christian ladies' Christian fingers for the poor heathen, while they thus discussed the slang and gossip of the village.

At length the president arose, and said the hour for adjournment had arrived. She complimented the ladies on their prompt attendance and enthusiastic devotion to the good cause. "Who can tell the results that may follow from this little gathering of Christian sisters on this dark, rainy evening?" she exclaimed. "What mind can conceive the mighty influence these seemingly insignificant articles your ready tact and skill have put together, may exert on the heathen world? Even this scarlet pin-cushion may save some soul from death 'mid the spicy groves of Ceylon's isle." [Tremendous sensation, as the lady president waved the pin-ball to and fro.] "But language would fail me to enumerate the benefits this holy organization of Christians is destined to bestow on benighted Pagandom. We will now listen to a hymn from the sisters Gaddies, and adjourn to Wednesday next, at 2 o'clock, P.M., at the house of Mrs. Huldah Fleetfoot."

The hymn was sung, and the "Ladies' Literary Benevolent Combination for Foreign Aid" duly adjourned to the time and place aforementioned.

We have seen that Miss Jerusha Sharpwell and Mrs. Dorothy Sykes had agreed to call on Mrs. Orville, and condole with her on her daughter's disgrace; but those benevolently-disposed ladies deemed it expedient to call first at sundry places in the village and repeat the lamentable tale, probably to increase the stock of sympathy; so Mrs. Orville heard the sad story of her daughter's shame from several different sources, ere these good ladies, their hearts overflowing with the "milk of human kindness," came to sympathize in her affliction.

She received them with her accustomed urbanity and politeness, while they cast wondering glances toward each other; probably that they had not found Mrs. Orville in hysterical tears. But Miss Sharpwell, nothing daunted, and determined to sympathize, readily expressed her admiration of Mrs. Orville's fortitude of mind, that she could support herself with so much calmness, under so great an affliction.

"I do not know as I quite understand you, Miss Sharpwell," remarked Mrs. Orville, in a calm tone, and fixing her clear eyes steadily on her visitor's face. "I have experienced no severe affliction of late. I have lost no sheep, as I had none to lose."

"La! then that was all a flyin' story about Dutton's stealing your lamb," broke in Mrs. Sykes. "Well, I'm glad to find it so; but I wonder where the poor critter *did* get it?"

"I can enlighten you on that point," said Mrs. Orville; "Mrs. Milder presented him with it for a Christmas dinner."

"*She* did?" exclaimed Miss Sharpwell. "Why couldn't she have said so at the sewing society, the other day, then, when we were talking about it, and thus settled the matter in all our minds? I hate this sly, underhanded work. But we must not forget our errand, sister Sykes."

"By no means," observed the latter. "Dear Mrs. Orville, we are come to sympathize with you in a far greater affliction than the loss of a sheep would prove—the loss of a daughter's fair fame."

"You grow more and more enigmatical," said Mrs. Orville, smiling; "my daughter has lost neither her

health nor fair fame, as you express it. I received a letter from her last week. She was well, and purposes to return home the coming summer."

"Why, goodness, is it so?" exclaimed Sykes; "we heard as how you had awful news of Alice, and were well-nigh distracted about her."

"I heard a report to that effect," said Mrs. Orville; "but whence it originated I cannot say. It has no foundation in truth."

"Well, what an awful wicked place this is getting to be! I declare it makes my blood run cold to think of it," said Miss Jerusha, with a pious horror depicted on her countenance.

"And religious prayer-meetings kept up, and a Christian sewing circle in the place too," added Mrs. Sykes. "I declare wickedness is increasing to a fearful extent. We must be going, sister Jerusha. I declare I can hardly sit still, I feel so for the sinners of this village."

"Mrs. Orville, I am glad the stories reported concerning your daughter are false, for *your* sake," said Miss Sharpwell, as the sympathetic ladies rose to depart; but she added, in her most emphatic tone, "I tremble for the sakes of those who put those stories in circulation. Good-day, my friend."

CHAPTER VI.

"I tell you I love him dearly,
  And he loves me well I know;
It seems as if I could nearly
  Eat him up, I love him so."

"Well, sis, how do you like New Orleans?" asked Wayland Morris of his sister Winnie, as he entered her quiet little study-chamber one evening after the toil of the day was over.

"O, I like it well enough, Wayland," she answered; "that is, I like my boarding-place here with Mrs. Pulsifer, I like my dear, kind teacher, Aunt Debby, and I like my playmates."

"And is there anything you do not like, my sister?" asked Wayland, observing she hesitated.

"Yes, two things."

"What are they?"

"First, I don't like to have you work so hard to support me in idleness."

"In idleness, Winnie?"

"Yes, or what is just the same thing, I mean earning nothing to support myself. I could learn some trade, and thus obtain money sufficient for all my wants, and give you some, too, if you would but let me do it."

"My brave little sis," said Wayland, drawing her to his bosom, "have I not told you that when you have acquired an education, you can become a teacher, which will surely prove an occupation more congenial to your taste, and by it you can gain an ample competence for all immediate necessities?"

"But it will take a great deal of money to procure an education," said Winnie, looking doubtfully in her brother's face.

"Not a very great deal, my prudent little sis," laughed Wayland, "and I can easily furnish you with the sum needful."

"And, when I'm a teacher, will you let me repay all you have expended on me?"

"Yes, yes, if that will put your mind at rest."

"Ah, but I fear it will be beyond my power to repay *all* you are expending on your foolish little sis! You are growing thin and pale, brother, and you have none of the joyous spring and laughter with which you used to chase my pretty fawns away up there on the green shores of Tennessee."

"I am older and graver now, Winnie; besides, I often think of our dear mother, sleeping there in death's embrace, and of our being orphans in the wide world."

"O, it is very sad, brother!" said the young girl, bursting into tears.

"Do not weep so bitterly," said Wayland, endeavoring to soothe her grief; "you said there were two things you did not like. I have dispensed with one; now tell me the other."

"O, never mind that now!" said Winnie, quickly; "assist me in my Algebra lesson, there's a good brother."

"Yes, after you have told me what I have asked."

"Well, it is a foolish thing, you will say. You know Jack Camford?"

"Yes; do you?" inquired Wayland in surprise.

"He comes to our school this term," said Winnie, demurely.

"And he is the other thing you do not like, is he?"

"Why, no, brother; he is not a thing, is he?"

"Well, perhaps not; but what is it you do not like?"

"Why, I don't like to have the girls tease me, and say he comes to our school just to see me," said Winnie, averting her face.

Wayland's brow darkened at these words, and he was some time silent.

"Are you angry, brother?" asked Winnie at length.

"No, Winnie, not angry, but pained. My sister, this young Camford is not a fit person for you to associate with."

"Why not?" exclaimed Winnie.

Wayland gazed in her face, and felt it was time to speak. "Winnie, would you have for a friend the son of a man who robbed your father of his fortune and hurried him into the grave?"

She was silent. "Adieu now, sister," continued Wayland, "I will call and see you to-morrow evening," and with a tender kiss on the soft cheek, he left her in her first young, girlish love-sorrow. Bitterly she charged him with cold, unfeeling cruelty; for she intuitively perceived the drift of those few words. "But was her poor Jack to suffer for his father's errors? No; thrice no! and she longed to lay her head on his bosom and tell him all her sorrows, for he was not stern and cruel, like brother Wayland. No, he loved her dearly, as she loved him."

"Thunder and Mars! what's to pay now, I wonder?" exclaimed Esq. Camford, rushing pell-mell into the dining room, where his family were assembled at breakfast, and throwing his delicate wife into hysterics.

"O, Thisbe! run for the nerve-reviver," shrieked Mrs. Camford. "O, Adolphus! why will you not regard my tremulous nerves, and not affright me thus? What desperate thing has happened? O, Adolphus! you'll be the death of me."

"I'll be the death of that cursed young vagabond, John Camford," blurted forth the squire, in a tone of terrible rage.

"O, my son, my brilliant among my jewels! how has he incurred your displeasure?" faintly articulated Mrs. Camford.

"Why, I saw the graceless scamp tugging a girl through the French market this morning, filling her hands with bouquets and all sorts of fol-de-rols. There is where the money goes he wheedles out of me every week; but I'll fix the young rapscallion. Next thing, we shall have some creole girl, or mulatto wench introduced to the family as Mrs. Camford, junior."

The squire fairly foamed at the mouth, with anger. His fair consort was in frantic hysterics, beating the floor with her heels, and exclaiming,

"O, mercy, mercy! my son, my Daniel, Henry, Thomas, Lewis, John! my brilliant, among my jewels! O, spare him for the love of Heaven, my husband, my adored Adolphus!"

Thisbe was following her mistress and bobbing the nerve-reviver to her nose, but it failed to produce the usual effect. All the servants in attendance stood with their mouths agape, while the three jewel daughters proceeded quietly with their breakfast, and Alice sat among them, a silent spectator of the scene. And now, as if to cap the climax, in walked the culprit, Mr. Jack Camford, in *propria persona*, looking as unconcerned and innocent as if nothing had occurred to displace him in his father's good graces. At sight of her brilliant son, Mrs. Camford shrieked and fell prostrate on the floor, and Thisbe, in the moment of excitement, seized the senseless form and carried it from the room with as much ease as she would have borne a cotton-bale. No sooner had the door closed on his delicate spouse, than Esq. Camford bellowed forth, "Daniel Henry Thomas Lewis John Camford, you rascal, come and stand before your father!" The son instantly did as commanded. Doffing his "Kossuth," and passing one hand through the long locks of curling black hair, he swept it away from his clear, smooth brow, and stood confronting his wrathful parent with a calm, unembarrassed aspect. He was certainly a handsome

young fellow, and Winnie Morris was quite excusable for loving him a little in her girlish heart. The father's anger softened as he gazed on his fair-looking boy, and when he spoke, his voice had lost all its former harshness.

"Jack, my lad," he said, "why do you stand gazing about you thus? Come, and sit down to your breakfast."

"You bade me stand before you, father, therefore I did so," said the son, now approaching the table and assuming a seat beside his cousin Alice.

There were a few moments of silence, during which all were occupied with their meal. At length Esq. Camford inquired, casually enough, "Jack, what young lady was that I saw you with in the French market this morning?"

Jack, at the moment helping Alice to a snipe, answered carelessly, "Young lady? O, Miss Winnie Morris, sister of Wayland Morris, editor of our Literary Gazette."

Alice suddenly dropped her bird on the cloth, and Esq. Camford sprang from the table, and, seizing his hat, bolted from the apartment, overturning two servants in his way, and exclaiming at the top of his voice, "Thunder and Mars! Thunder and Mars!"

Jack burst into a hearty laugh as his father cleared the door, and said, "Was there ever a theatre could equal our house for enacting scenes? Why, Alice, where are you going?" he continued, observing her rise from the table; "stay a moment; will you be disengaged when I come in to dinner? I want a few moments' private conversation with you."

"I shall be at your service, cousin," she answered, closing the door behind her.

"What have you to say to Alice?" inquired Miss Celestina, the "belle and beauty," in a querulous tone; picking at a bunch of flowers that laid beside Josephine's plate.

"O, please don't spoil my flowers, sister!" said Miss Pheny; "they were sent to me this morning by a particular friend."

"Faugh! what particular friend have *you* got, I wonder?" sneered the beauty; "some foolish love affair afoot here, to rival Jack's, I suppose. Ha, ha! what silly things children are! But come, bubby, tell me what you want with Alice?"

"That's my business," returned the youth proudly.

"To talk about your sweetheart, no doubt, and solicit her sympathy in your love troubles. You'll find father won't have you toting about with this beggar girl, I can tell you!" said the fair Celestina, spitefully.

"She is not a beggar," retorted Jack with flashing eyes, "but a far more beautiful and accomplished lady than many who have had the best advantages of fashionable society."

"O, of course, she is all perfection in your eyes at present," returned the beauty in an aggravating tone, as she rose to retire; "but this day six months I wonder how she will appear to your fickle, capricious gaze?"

"If you were worth a retort, I'd make one," said Jack, with a glance of angry contempt on his sister, as he took his cap and left the apartment.

CHAPTER VII.

"Thy haunting influence, how it mocks
  My efforts to forget!
The stamp love only seals but once
  Upon my heart is set."

Winnie Morris was laying her pretty head on her kind teacher's shoulder, and pleading, O, so eloquently, with her sweet lips and eyes!

"Indeed, I want to go very much, dear Aunt Debby, and Jack will be so disappointed if you say no. He sent me to plead, because he said nobody could resist me. Will you not let me go this once, if I'll promise never to ask again?"

"The theatre is not a fit place for young girls," said the teacher, with a serious mien; "by going there they obtain false ideas of life."

"But I won't, Aunt Debby, I'm sure I won't, by going just once."

The good-natured teacher patted the soft cheek of her winsome pleader, and the gentle act seemed to convince the child that she was gaining her point.

"O, Debby, Debby!" she exclaimed, throwing her white arms round the good woman's neck; "you will let me go with Jack to-night, I know."

"For which do you most wish to go: to see the play, or to be with him?" asked Debby, still delaying the wished-for permission.

"O, to be with him!" answered Winnie; "and I could not be with him unless I went out somewhere, for brother Wayland is cross at Jack; only think of it—cross at my Jack! And he asks Mrs. Pulsifer whenever Jack comes to see me, and then scolds; or not exactly that,—but says I ought not to associate with a person he does not approve, and that Jack is wild and unsteady, and won't love me long; but he doesn't know him as well as I do, or he wouldn't say so, I'm sure;" and Winnie grew eloquent, and her cheeks flushed vermilion red, while she spoke of her girlish love. But Miss Deborah's face had assumed a less yielding expression during her fair pupil's recital.

"So it appears your brother is not pleased with young Mr. Camford," she remarked, as Winnie ceased; "under the circumstances, you must apply to him for permission to accompany Master Jack to the theatre."

"O, dear! I wish I had not said a word," sobbed Winnie. "'Tis no use to go to Wayland, for I know he would refuse my request; so I may as well make up my mind to pass the evening alone in my room. I'm more sorry for Jack, after all, than myself, he will be so sadly disappointed. Good-night, Aunt Debby," and with dejected aspect the young girl put on her little straw hat and left the school-room.

The evening stole on, and Jack Camford was beside his cousin Alice, in her quiet apartment.

"I don't see why Wayland Morris should hate me so inveterately, as to forbid his sister to receive any calls from me," remarked the youth, bitterly.

"How do you know he does so?" inquired Alice, without raising her eyes from the German worsted pattern on which she was occupied.

"Because Winnie told me so, to-night. I had invited her to attend the theatre, but it appears she dared not ask her brother's permission, for fear of a refusal," said Jack, in a troubled tone. "You are acquainted with Mr. Morris, Alice?"

"No," returned she, quickly.

"Why, he calls on you."

"He did call at the house once or twice, soon after my arrival here, I believe."

"Once or twice!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise; "why, he was here almost every day for several months, and we all thought you were declared lovers."

"Hush, Jack! how you are running on!" said Alice, with a flushed countenance.

"Well, don't tell me you are not acquainted with young Morris, then," returned Jack.

"I have not seen him, as you are aware, for the last six months," remarked Alice.

"But you *could* see him very easily."

"So could you."

"Ah, Alice! I thought you would do me so small a favor."

"As what?"

"See Mr. Morris, and ascertain why he opposes my addresses to his sister."

"Is he the only one who opposes you?"

"You allude to my family; but not one of them should control me, in this matter, if I could win her from her brother."

"You are very young, Jack; wait a few years, and your feelings will change."

The boy looked on his cousin as she uttered these words with so much apparent indifference, and exclaimed:

"O, Alice! you have never loved, or you could not talk thus to me," and hurriedly left the apartment.

Alice heard him rush down the hall stairs and into the street. "Poor Jack!" she sighed; "but what could I do for him? To place myself before Wayland Morris, and plead my cousin's suit with his sister, when probably the very cause of his objection to their acquaintance is that the lover is a relation of mine; and it appears that by some misapprehension I have as unwittingly as unfortunately incurred his

displeasure. What other reason can there be for the cessation of his visits, but that he does not desire to see me?"

Ay, what other indeed, Alice? If you would have Wayland's love, there could not be a stronger proof that 'tis yours, than this apparent neglect and forgetfulness. Love joys in mystery,

> "Shows most like hate e'en when 'tis most in love,
> And when you think 'tis countless miles away,
> Is lurking close at hand."

So, be not too sad, Ally, dear, when the brave steamboat bears you up the majestic Mississippi, and far onward over the beautiful Ohio, amid her wild, enchanting scenery, and the dashing railroad cars at length set you down on a quiet summer evening at your mother's rural threshold. Try hard to say, "I have forgotten Wayland Morris;" but your heart will rebel; and try harder to say, "I shall never behold his face again;" still "hope will tell a flattering tale;" and try hardest of all to exclaim, "I'll fly his presence forever." But yet, away down low in your beating bosom, a little voice will love to tantalize and whisper—"Will you, though?"

CHAPTER VIII.

> "Come, clear the stage and give us something new,
> For we are tired to death with these old scenes."

Night after night, high up in the sky, the stars shone wildly bright, but the heaven refused its grateful showers and the earth lay parched to a cinder beneath the blazing sunbeams. The mighty Mississippi shrunk within its banks to the size of a mere wayside rivulet, and the long lines of boats lay lazily along the levees. No exchange of produce or merchandise could be effected between the upper and lower regions of the great Mississippi valley, and the consequence was universal depression in trade and heavy failures. Esquire Camford went among the first in the general crash, and his fair consort's nerves went also. The nerve-reviver failed to produce the least soothing effect in this dreadful emergency, and she sank into a bed-ridden ghost of hysteria, with Thisbe for her constant attendant, to minister to her numerous wants, and feed her with lobsters' claws and Graham crackers, which constituted her sole food and nourishment.

As for the "belle and beauty," she, on a day, married Mr. Gilbert, in pearl-colored satin, and that gentleman chancing to overturn a sherry-cobbler on the fair bride's robe, the delicate creature went into a nervous paroxysm, which so alarmed and terrified the happy bridegroom, that, when he recovered his senses, he found himself on the far, blue ocean, with the adorable Celestina's marriage-portion, consisting of the snug sum of fifty thousand dollars, wrapped up in a blue netting-purse in his coat pocket. How the great bank-bills grinned at him, as if to charge him with the wanton robbery and desertion! He gazed around in a bewildered manner, and the first face that met his eye was that of his brother-in-law, Jack Camford, who advanced with a woeful smile distorting his fine features, and exclaimed,

"Upon my word, you're a lucky dog, Gilbert!"

"How so?" demanded the latter.

"To have married my sister the day before father failed, and thus secured a pretty fair sum of money; and now to have escaped a tedious wife and got safely off with it in your pocket," said Jack, with a theatrical flourish of manner.

"But what does all this mean? Why are you here, and where is this ship bound?"

"Well, I'm here—hum—I don't know why, save that life was intolerable at home after the smash-up, and Winnie Morris heard I was getting wild, and turned a cold shoulder on me, I fancied. As to this craft, that reels and tumbles about like a reef of drunkards, she is bound for Australia; so I suppose, in due time, you and I will be landed on the shores of the golden Ophir, if we don't get turned into Davy Jones' locker by some mishap."

"Australia!" exclaimed Gilbert, "what the deuce am I going there for; and how came I in this place?"

"All I know is, I found you here asleep when I came aboard, and here you have been asleep for the last three days, wearing off the effects of your wedding-feast, I suppose. I thought best not to disturb you, as at sea one may as well be sleeping as waking."

"But, Jack Camford! I cannot go to Australia," said Gilbert, still half confounded.

"How are you going to avoid it?" asked Jack, laughing.

"True! but what will my bride say? Here I hold her fortune in my hand."

"Exactly! Divide it with me, if you please, and we'll increase it four-fold e'er a year in the golden land."

"But I don't like the idea of going to Australia!" pursued Gilbert.

"Neither do I, very well," answered Jack; "but when folks can't do as they will, they must do as they can, I've heard say."

Thus we leave our Australian adventurers and return to the land from which they are so rapidly receding. We didn't know what else to do here in the eighth chapter, reader, unless we capped the climax, cleared the stage, and scattered the characters; for we were quite as tired of them as you were, and wanted to get them off our hands in some way.

A few people think "Effie Afton" can tell stories tolerably well. But she can't, reader! We speak candidly, for we know "a heap" more about her than you do. There may be those in the wide world who hug themselves in the belief that she can tell *little* fibs and *large* fibs pretty flippantly. Well, let them continue thus to believe, if they choose! We shall not pause to say ay, yes, or nay; and we also entertain a private opinion, now publicly expressed, that there are people within the limited circle of our acquaintance who can not only give utterance to *little* and *large* fibs, but make their whole lives and actions play the lie to their thoughts and feelings. But as to "Effie's" telling long magazine tales,—pshaw! she is the most unsystematic creature in the world. She just humps down in a big rocking-chair, with one sort of *foolscap* in her *hand*, and another sort on her *head*, with an old music-book to lay the sheets on, a lead-pencil for a pen, and thus equipped, writes chapter one, and dashes *in medias res* at once, without an idea as to how, where, or when the story thus commenced is to find its terminus or end. This is the way she does, reader; for we have seen her time and again. Well, she scratches on "like mad" till her old lead-pencil is "used up." Then she sharpens the point, and rushes on wilder than before. She don't eat much, and if any one calls her to dinner, never heeds them; but when she conceives herself arrived at a suitable stopping-place, drops her paper, runs to the pantry, snatches a piece of gingerbread, and back to her scribbling again, munching it as she writes.

This is precisely the way she brings her "stories" into existence; but, lest we write her out of favor too rapidly, we'll leave the subject, and back to our tale again, recommencing with a new chapter, which is—

CHAPTER IX.

"And there are haunts in that far land—
O, who shall dream or tell
Of all the shaded loveliness
She hides in grot and dell!"

O, often, often, far from this, have we watched the great red sun sinking behind the vast stretching prairie, while all the broad west seemed like a surging flood of gold beyond an ocean of green; and often have we beheld day's glorious orb looming above the soft blue waters of the placid bay, while the joyous birds soared up the sparkling dome of heaven, their little throats almost bursting with thrilling melody, and the balmy south wind came laden with the perfume of ten thousand ordorous flowers!

O, sweet land upon the tropic's glowing verge, what star-bright memories we have of thee! How deeply treasured in our heart of hearts are all thy joys and pleasures,—ay, and griefs and sorrows too! But as the spot where this long-crushed and drooping spirit heard those first, low, preluding strains, foretokenings that its long-enfeebled energies were wakening from their death-like slumber to breathe response to the thousand tones in sea and air that called so loudly on them to arouse once more to life and action, it will ever be most truly dear. And when again life's fetters clog with the ice and snow of those frigid lands, we'll long to fly again to those climes of song and sunny ray, and forget earth's cankering cares in the contemplation of Nature's luxuriant charms. But we grow abstract.

Come with us, reader, if you will, over the prairies of Texas, gorgeous with their many-colored flowers, dotted with the dark-green live-oaks, and watered by pellucid rivers. To that log-house, standing under the boughs of a wide-spreading pecan tree, let us wend our way.

There is a gray-headed man sitting in a deer-skin-bottomed chair, on the rude gallery, and gazing with weary eye on the lovely scenery around him. Two young ladies are standing near, their countenances wearing sullen expressions of discontent and sorrow.

"So this is Texas, father," remarked the elder of the two, at length. "I wonder how you ever expect to earn a living here, for my part."

"By tilling the soil, my child, and growing cotton and sugar; fine country for that. Land rich as mud and cheap as dirt. Why, I have purchased five hundred acres for a mere trifle. Zounds! I feel like amassing a new fortune here in a few years," said the old man, suddenly rousing from his stupor.

"Well, I'm perfectly disgusted," said the younger lady, "and wish I had run off to Australia with brother Jack and Celestina's faithless husband."

"I wish I was in that convent upon the Mississippi, where poor sister Celestina is now," sighed the elder.

"Pshaw, girls! you'll both marry wild Texan rangers before two years," said the old gentleman, who was no less a personage than Esq. Camford, formerly the wealthiest merchant in New Orleans, but now a poor Texan emigrant in his log-cabin on the Cibolo. Well, he was a better man now than when rolling in the luxury of ill-gotten wealth, for adversity never fails to teach useful lessons; and it had taught this world-hardened, conscience-seared man, that "honesty is the best policy."

A tremulous voice from within attracted the attention of the group on the gallery. "Mercy, mercy, Thisbe, take that viper away, and let me out of this bed! it is full of frightful serpents."

"Why, no 'taint neither, Missus," said poor Thisbe, struggling to lift her mistress from the pillows; "there beant a snake nowheres about, only a little striped 'izard, and I driv' him away."

The husband now entered.

"O, Adolphus!" exclaimed the nerve-stricken wife, "that you should have brought me to a death like this! to be shot by Indians, devoured by bears, and bitten by rattlesnakes!"

"Thunder and Mars! nobody's dead yet, and this is a fine, healthy, growing country," said the squire, in a loud, good-humored voice.

"Alas! what am I to eat?" continued the nervous lady, "I can have no claws and crackers in these wilds."

"Let Thisbe catch you a young alligator from the river; that will be something new for a relish."

"O, Adolphus! how can you mock at the horrors that surround us? My nerves, my nerves! you will never learn to regard them."

"No, probably not," returned the husband; "but let me tell you, Nabby, I don't believe nerves are of any available use out here in Texas. They'll do for effect in the fashionable saloons of a city; but what think a wild Camanche would say if he chanced some broiling-hot morning to catch you in dishabille, and you begged him to retreat and spare your nerves? Why, it would be all gibberish to him."

"O, Adolphus! how can you horrify me thus? And these lovely jewels to be devoured by hyenas and swallowed by crocodiles! O, my nerves! Thisbe, my nerve-reviver this moment!"

"There ain't a bit on't left, Missus; 'twas all in the trunk dat tumbled out o' the cart when we swum through dat ar river," said the poor servant, in a tone of anxious dismay.

"Heaven save me now!" exclaimed the panic-stricken lady. "Adolphus, you must go to New Orleans to-morrow and bring me some."

"Thunder and Mars! You forget we are eight hundred miles from there, and what do you suppose would become of you all before I got back? You would be mounted on pack-mules, carried off to the Indian frontier, and made squaws of."

"O, father, don't leave us, I entreat of you!" sobbed Susette, on hearing these words.

"Why did I not die ere I came to this?" groaned Mrs. Camford. "Why did I not die when my eldest jewel and brilliant son were torn from my embrace? Alas! for what awful fate am I reserved?"

"Come, Nabby, this would do on the boards of the St. Charles, but toads and lizards can't appreciate theatricals. Pheny, can't you manage to get up some sort of a dinner out of the corn-meal and sweet potatoes I bought of the old Mynheer this morning; and there's a few eggs and a ham in the larder too. I declare I relish this new life already;—it is a change, Pheny, isn't it?" asked the father, looking in his fair daughter's face.

"Yes," answered she, "and if it wasn't for the snakes and lizards, I wouldn't complain."

"Never mind them," returned the squire, bravely; "they shan't hurt you. We'll have a nice, cosey home here a year from to-day."

CHAPTER X.

"It was the calm, moonshiny hour,
And earth was hushed and sleeping;
The hour when faithful love is e'er
Its fondest vigils keeping."

Clear as amber fell the moonlight on the forms of Wayland and Winnie Morris, as arm in arm they roamed the calm, delightful shores of Lake Pontchartrain.

"Well, sister," said Wayland, "four weeks have passed since I last saw you, and how have you sped in your capacity of teacher?"

"O, bravely, Wayland! 'Tis so delightful to feel I am of some importance in the world, and that I'm laying up money to repay my brother, as far as I am able, for all he has done for me! You should see me in my little school-room, with my pupils round me. I fancy no queen e'er felt more pride and satisfaction in beholding her subjects kneeling before her, than I do with my infant class leaning their tiny arms on my lap and looking in my face as they repeat from my lips the evening prayer."

"I am pleased to find you so content and happy," said Wayland.

"O, I am indeed so, and indebted to you for all I enjoy!" returned Winnie.

"And what of Jack Camford, sis?" asked the brother, with a mischievous smile.

"O, I have not forgotten him yet, naughty Wayland!" answered she; "I dream of him most every night."

"Well, I would not seek to control your dreams, sis; but I fancy they'll occur less and less often, and by and by cease altogether."

"You think I never loved Jack," said Winnie.

"I think you had a girlish fancy for him. As to woman's holy, unchanging love, you have never yet experienced it, my little sister."

"When shall I, then? I'm sixteen, and a preceptress."

"Yes."

"But don't you think Jack loved me, Wayland?"

"I think he had a boy's fancy for you, which may deepen into love with time, or may be wholly dissipated from his bosom."

"But why did you object to him so strongly? You well-nigh broke my heart at one time. It was not like you to hate the son for the parent's crimes."

"No, it was not for the father's errors that I bade you shun the son; but because I discovered in him a frivolous, faulty character, that had no strength of purpose, or fixed principles of action; and I dreaded the influence such a person might exert over your youthful, pliant mind."

"Now, what if he should return some of these years, and lay his life, love and fortune at my feet?" suggested Winnie, archly.

"Should he return with the elements that make the man stamped on his face and conduct, I would never object to his addresses to my sister, if she favored them," said Wayland.

"How the poor Camfords have suffered!" remarked Winnie, after a pause.

"They have, indeed," returned Wayland; "all our wrongs have been expiated, and I raised not a finger to avenge them. My mother on her death-bed bade me remember 'Vengeance was the Lord's,' and, thanks to her name, I have done so."

"Where are the family?" inquired Winnie.

"Emigrated to Texas; and my brother editor, Mr. Lester, has purchased their former residence, and I am boarding there at present. He has extended to you a cordial invitation to pass your next vacation at his mansion."

"O, he is very kind! I shall be delighted to do so. Do you still like editing as well as formerly, brother?"

"Yes, it is an occupation suited to my tastes; and some of these years, when I have sufficient capital, I want to go home to old Tennessee, and erect a pretty rural cottage on the site of our former abode, and there pass away life in peace and quietude with you, dear sister, if such a prospect is pleasing to your mind. Or are you more ambitious?"

"No, brother; ambition is for men, not women," said Winnie.

"Yes, for men who love it," responded Wayland; "but my highest ambition is to be happy; and I look for happiness alone in rural quiet and seclusion. Do you accede to my project, sis?"

"With all my heart."

"Then see that you keep that heart free, and not, before I carry my plan into execution, have given it to the charge of some gallant knight, and left me desolate in my pretty cottage on the verdant shores of Tennessee."

"Ay, and see that you don't find some fairer flower to bloom in that cottage home, and rudely toss me from the window," exclaimed Winnie, with a merry laugh.

"No fear of that," said Wayland; "now I must leave you. Expect me in a week again."

And with an affectionate salute the brother and sister parted.

CHAPTER XI.

"Ay, there are memories that will not vanish,
Thoughts of the past we have no power to banish;
To show the heart how powerless mere will;
For we may suffer, and yet struggle still;
It is not at our choice that we forget—
That is a power no science teaches yet,
The heart may be a dark and closed-up tomb,
But memory stands a ghost amid the gloom."

Miss Jerusha Sharpwell and Mrs. Fleetfoot had dropped in to take tea with Mrs. Sykes on a pleasant September evening. The latter lady, as in duty bound, was highly pleased to see her dear friends, and forthwith ordered Hannah, her servant-girl, to make a batch of soda rolls, with a bit of shortening rubbed in, and just step over to Mrs. Frye's, and ask that good lady "if she would not be so very kind and obliging as to lend Mrs. Sykes a plateful of her nice, sweet doughnuts, as she had visitors come in unexpectedly, and was not quite prepared to entertain them as she could wish." Thus were the guests provided for.

"How happened it you were absent from the last sewing circle, sister Sykes?" inquired Miss Sharpwell. "We had an unusually interesting season. Several new names were added to our list, and sister Fleetfoot, here, entertained us with a most amusing account of Pamela Gaddie's marriage with Mr. Smith, the missionary to Bengal."

"Indeed! I regret I was denied the pleasure of listening to the recital; but company detained me from the circle."

"Ah! who was visiting you?" asked Mrs. Fleetfoot.

"The Churchills, from Cincinnati," answered Mrs. Sykes. "You know they are particular friends of my husband."

"Yes; is their son married yet?"

"No; and he called on Alice Orville every day while he was here."

"La, do tell me!" said Jerusha. "How long was he with you, Mrs. Sykes?"

"A day and a half," returned that lady. "He came up in the morning-train and returned next evening."

"Well," said Mrs. Fleetfoot, "they do say Alice Orville is engaged to Fred. Milder."

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Miss Jerusha. "I never heard a word about it before! Well, Mrs. Milder was always standing up for Mrs. Orville. I thought it meant something. Now I remember, Fred. was at the last sewing circle and walked home with Alice. I thought strange of it then, for it was hardly a dozen yards to her house, and some of us young ladies had to walk five times as far all alone. Who told you of the engagement?"

"La, I can't remember now!" said Mrs. Fleetfoot; "but I've heard of it ever so many times."

"Well, they'll make a pretty couple enough," observed Mrs. Sykes; "though I rather fancied Alice was engaged to somebody off south, 'cause she seems sort of downcast sometimes, and keeps so close since she got home."

"O, la, that's cause she's got wind of the story that was going about here before she came back! I wonder if there was any truth in it?" said Mrs. Fleetfoot.

"I don't know; I never put much confidence in flying stories," remarked Jerusha.

"Neither do I!" said Mrs. Sykes; "or take the trouble to repeat, if I chance to hear them."

"Nor I!" chimed in Mrs. Fleetfoot. "If there is anything I mortally abhor, it is a tattler and busybody."

"Our sentiments, exactly!" exclaimed the other two ladies in concert.

Hannah now entered and announced tea, and the trio of scrupulous, conscientious ladies repaired to the dining-room to luxuriate on short rolls and Mrs. Frye's neighborly doughnuts.

Mrs. Orville had a pleasant residence on the lake shore, and everything wore a brighter aspect in the eyes of the mother, since her beloved daughter had returned to enliven the old home by her sunshiny presence. But Alice had passed from the gay-hearted child to the thoughtful woman in the two years she had been away, and there was a mild, pensive light in her dark eye that spoke of a chastened spirit within. Still, she was usually cheerful, and always, even in her most melancholy hours, an agreeable companion. Beautiful in person, highly educated and accomplished, her conversation, whether tinged with sadness or enlivened by wit and humor, exercised a strange, fascinating power over her listeners.

Alice had left New Orleans with the expectation of having her cousin Josephine spend the ensuing winter with her at the north; but shortly after her arrival home a letter from her cousin informed her of their fallen fortunes, and proposed emigration to Texas. As Alice knew not to what part of that State to direct a reply, all further correspondence was broken off between the parties. From Wayland Morris she never heard, and knew naught concerning him, save by occasional articles from his pen in southern journals, which were noticed with commendation and applause. She tried hard to forget him; "for it is not right," she said, "to waste my life and health on one who never thinks of me. But why did he awaken a hope in my breast that he loved me, if that hope was to be withdrawn as soon as it became necessary to my happiness?"

"Alice, Alice!" exclaimed Mrs. Orville, as the fair girl stood in the recess of a vine-covered window, absorbed in thoughts like these, "Mr. Milder is coming through the gate; will you go out to receive him?"

Alice roused from her reverie, and saying "Yes, mother," very quietly, hastened through the hall to meet her visitor.

"Good-evening, Mr. Milder!" said she, with a graceful courtesy. "Come into the parlor. I have been laying the sin of ungallantry upon you for the last three days."

"It is the last charge I would have expected preferred against me by you, Miss Orville!" said he, smiling.

"What other would you sooner have expected?" she inquired, looping up the snowy muslin curtains to admit the parting sunbeams.

"One I would have dreaded far more to hear,—that of being too assiduous in my attendance," returned he, in a low tone.

Alice answered by changing the conversation, and, after an hour passed in pleasant chit-chat, Fred. proposed a stroll on the lake shore. Alice was soon ready, and they sallied forth. The weather was delightful, and that walk along Erie's sounding shores was fraught with a life-interest to one, and regretful sorrow to both.

"I am going to Texas, Alice!" said Milder, as they reäpproached the mansion of Mrs. Orville.

"O, that you might find my cousin Josephine there, who is so good and beautiful!" remarked Alice.

"Would I might, if it would afford you a moment's pleasure," he answered, in a dejected tone.

"If you do, pray give her my love, and entreat her to write and inform me of her welfare," said Alice, earnestly.

"I shall be highly gratified to execute your commission," he answered; "and now, good-by, Alice! May you be as happy as you deserve!"

"And may you, also, Fred.!" said Alice, with tears in her eyes. One lingering pressure of the hand, and he was gone.

"Noble heart!" exclaimed Alice; "why could I not love him? Alas! a tyrant grasp is on my soul, which, while it delights to hold me in its toils, and tantalize and torment, will not love me, or let me love another!"

"Alice!" said a voice within.

"Yes, mother, I'm coming," replied the daughter, entering the hall with a languid step, and proceeding to divest herself of shawl and bonnet.

"You have had a long stroll and look fatigued," remarked the fond parent, noticing her daughter's flushed cheeks and hurried respiration, as she flung herself into a large rocking-chair by the open window. Where is Fred.?"

"Gone home," said Alice.

"Why did he not come in and rest a while?"

"I forgot to invite him, I believe," returned Alice, briefly.

"And did you not ask him to call at any future time?"

"No, mother; he is going to Texas."

"Indeed! How long has he entertained that idea?" asked Mrs. Orville in a tone of astonishment.

"Not long, I fancy. I told him to find cousin Josephine and entreat her to write to me," said Alice, fanning her face with a great, flapping feather fan.

"I hope he may do so; and much do I wish your cousin might be here to pass the winter, for I fear you will be lonely without some companion of your own age," said Mrs. Orville, attentively regarding her daughter.

"O, never fear for me, mother!" returned Alice. "I assure you I have ample resources for enjoyment in my own breast. They only need occasion to be called forth and put in exercise."

"I hope it may prove thus," responded the tender mother. "Let us now retire to our pleasant chamber, and I will do myself the pleasure of listening to your rich voice, while you read a portion of Scripture, and sing a sacred hymn."

Thus mother and daughter retired; and while the old heart that had passed beyond the youth-life of love and passion, rested calmly in its tranquil sleep, the young heart by its side throbbed wildly, trembled, wept and sighed; tossing restlessly on its pillow, haunted by ill-omened dreams and ghastly phantom-shapes too hideous for reality. For there is no rest, or calm, or quiet, for the passion-haunted breast.

CHAPTER XII.

"'Twas one of love's wild freaks, I do suppose,
And who is there can reason upon those?
I'd like to see the one so bold."

The lively winter season was at its height in New Orleans, and all the vast city astir with life and gayety. In the former wealthy home of the Camfords, her wrought slippers resting on the polished grate in the elegant parlor, sat a prim maiden lady, arrayed in steel-colored satin. An embroidered muslin morning-cap was placed with an air of much precision over her glossy brown *imported* locks, and the pointed collar around her neck was secured by a plain bow of fawn-colored ribbon.

Suddenly the door opened, and a gentleman, of fine personal appearance, and elegantly attired, entered the apartment, with hat and gloves in hand.

"Where is Winnie?" was the hasty inquiry.

"I left her in her room half an hour ago," was the reply.

"It is quite time we should go;—the theatre will be filled to overflowing at Miss Julia's benefit," remarked the gentleman. "I wish you would go with us, sister."

"Theatres will do for girls and *fops*," said the lady; "*my* mind requires something solid and weighty to satisfy it."

"Then I suppose Col. Edmunds suits you exactly," observed the gentleman, laughing; "he is a real Sir John Falstaff in proportions."

"I'm in no mood for your frivolous jests. If you were in a rational temper I would like to ask you a question."

"Well, out with it. I'm as rational at thirty as I ever will be, probably."

"You were becoming quite a decent man before this fly-a-way girl came among us. Now I wish to know when she is going away?"

"Heavens! I don't know; not at present, I hope," said the gentleman, quickly.

"Well, either she or I will leave pretty soon," returned the lady, pursing up her lips with a stiff, determined expression; "she is such a self-willed, obstinate little thing, and turns the house all topsy-turvy, and makes such a racket and confusion, that I cannot and *will* not endure it longer. My mind requires quiet for contemplation."

"Why, she seems to me like a sunbeam; like a canary-bird in the house, sister; warming, and filling it with music."

"She seems to me more like a hurricane, or wild-cat," remarked the lady, spitefully.

The gentleman laughed, and, at this juncture, in bounded the subject of the discourse, arrayed in azure silk, a wreath of white flowers on her head, and a wrought fan swinging by a ribbon at her delicate wrist.

"Well, I've been waiting for you these ten minutes," said the gentleman, gazing with admiration on the lovely being before him; "let us go now, or I fear some impertinent person may intrude upon our reserved seats. The carriage is at the door."

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Lester," said Winnie.

"O, no apology, Miss Morris!" returned he, gayly; "gentlemen always expect to wait for ladies; it is their privilege."

"Miss Mary," said Winnie, advancing toward the prim lady by the grate, "I fear I have misplaced some of your toilet articles, for I could not find one half of mine. The chamber-maid had given them new places, and I took the liberty to apply to yours, but I'll put them all right in the morning."

"O, it is very well, of course," returned the lady, sharply; "plain enough who is mistress here."

Winnie stood irresolute, gazing with astonishment on Miss Mary's angry, flushed countenance, and at length turned her blue eyes toward the gentleman, who was attentively regarding her features.

"Come, Winnie," said he, opening the hall-door, "we shall be very late."

The young girl quickly followed his direction. "Is brother Wayland to be there?" she inquired, as the carriage rolled away.

"I urged his attendance, and he half promised to go," answered the gentleman; "but, if he fails, cannot you be contented with me alone for one brief evening?"

"O, yes, many!" returned Winnie. "I only wished he would go and not confine himself to business so closely."

"I wish he would relax his editorial labors, for his health demands it, I think," said Mr. Lester. "We must induce him to quit the chair of office, and take a trip up the river this spring."

"I wish he would leave that dull, tedious printing-office a few weeks," exclaimed Winnie. "He has long entertained a project of erecting a little cottage on the shore of Tennessee, where we used to live, for himself and me, and I think he has sufficient money now to carry his plan into effect; don't you, Mr. Lester?"

"Undoubtedly he has; but such a proceeding would not please me at all," answered the gentleman.

"Why not?" asked Winnie, turning her eyes quickly toward her companion.

He smiled to meet her startled glance, and said, "I will explain my reasons at some future time, Winnie. We are now at the theatre."

Mr. Lester handed the fair girl from the carriage, and they made their way through the crowd. Wayland met them on the steps, and accompanied them home after the play.

As Winnie passed the door of Miss Mary Lester's room to reach her own, she observed it standing wide open, and wondered to behold it thus, as Miss Mary was accustomed to bar and bolt it close, for fear of thieves and housebreakers. But, fatigued and sleepy, she passed on, and soon forgot her surprise after gaining the privacy of her own apartment. Early in the morning she was roused from slumber by a furious knocking on her door. She sprang up and demanded, "Who is there?"

"Me, Miss Winnie, only me—Aunt Eunice; and do you know what is become o' Missus Mary?" exclaimed an excited voice without; "her door is wide open this morning, and nobody slept in her bed last night."

Winnie was by this time fairly roused, and, opening her door, the poor servant-girl flounced into the room, the very picture of terror and affright.

"Has your master risen, and does he know of his sister's absence?" inquired Winnie.

"No, nobody is up but me, and Missus Mary always tells me to come right to her room first thing with a pitcher o' cool water; so I went this mornin', you see, and behold missus' door wide open and no missus thar! O, Miss Winnie, I 'spect satin has sperritted off soul and body, 'deed I does."

"O, no, Aunt Eunice, I think not!" said Winnie smiling; "but you had better go to your master and inform him what has occurred."

"'Deed I will, Miss," said the black woman, disappearing.

Winnie proceeded to dress, in a strange perplexity of fear and astonishment, while Aunt Eunice thumped long and loud on her master's door.

"Who's there?" at last exclaimed a voice within.

"Me, Aunt Eunice," said the woman frantically, "O, massa, massa, missus gone, and who's to pour the coffee for breakfast?"

"What are you raving about?" said the master, opening his door; "why are you disturbing me at this early hour?"

"Missus gone; sperritted off soul and body, I 'spect."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Lester, not in the least comprehending her words.

"O, just come up to her room and see for yourself."

"Why, what's to be seen there?" he asked.

"Nothin' at all, I tells ye. Missus clean gone. Her door wide open, and she never slept in her bed last night, massa," said the woman, gasping for breath, as she ceased speaking.

The unusual sounds aroused Wayland, who slept near, and flinging open his door he demanded what was the matter.

"O, Master Morris!" said aunt Eunice, turning her discourse upon him, "missus gone—clean gone."

"Come on, Morris," said Lester. "Eunice says her mistress is spirited away. Let's dive into the mystery and see what we can bring to light."

Wayland followed Lester up the hall stairs, wondering what this strange disturbance might import. They traversed the passage to Miss Mary's apartment, when, sure enough, as Eunice had affirmed, they found the door wide open, and, to appearance, no person had occupied the room the previous night. Lester's quick eye instantly marked, what the servant in her fright had failed to notice, the absence of two large trunks that used to stand beside the bed, and the *presence* of a small folded billet on the dressing-table. He advanced with a hasty step, broke the seal, and read.

"Ha, ha!" laughed he, as he run over the contents. "Eunice, go below and light the fires."

The woman hastened away.

"Romance at thirty-seven! elopement extraordinary, Wayland!" he continued. "Miss Mary Lester has become in due form Mrs. Col. Edmunds, and 'fled,' as she expresses it—(now where was the use in *flying*, for who would have objected to the marriage? But then 'twas romantic, of course)—to the wilds of Texas; there to enjoy the sweets of domestic felicity with her adored husband; to which fair land she hopes I'll some day come to visit her, when I have regained possession of my senses, and learnt the difference 'twixt canary-birds and wild-cats."

Wayland listened with amazement depicted on his features.

"Strange; all wonder, isn't it, Morris?" pursued Lester. "Let's go below and discuss the matter."

The gentlemen descended to the parlor, where Aunt Eunice soon presented herself, and, with rueful countenance, said:

"Please, massa, who is to pour the coffee this morning? Missus gone, you know."

"Well, Eunice, suppose you run up stairs, and ask Miss Winnie if she will not condescend to perform that office this morning, as we find ourselves so suddenly bereft of a housekeeper?" said Lester, in a mock-serious tone.

Winnie of course assented, and passed into the breakfast-room, where she found her brother and Lester already seated at the table.

"Good-morning, Miss Morris," said the latter. "A romance, such as we read of in old knights' tales, was enacted in our house last night, in consequence of which a forlorn bachelor has to ask of you the favor to preside at his desolate board this morning."

"I shall be pleased to serve you," returned Winnie, assuming the head of the table, and so prettily did she perform the duties of her new office, that Lester forgot his muffins and sandwiches, in admiration of his newly-installed housekeeper *pro tem*.

Miss Mary's elopement was a three days' wonder, and then the affair was as if it had never been; save that the servants could not sufficiently admire Miss Winnie, or sufficiently rejoice over Miss Mary's departure. "O," said Aunt Eunice, "don't I wish massa would marry you, Miss Winnie, and then the house would be like heaven—'deed it would!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"We've many things to say within the bounds
Of this good chapter, which is 'mong the last;
So be of better cheer; for we are well
Nigh done."

We will just step over to Texas this morning, dear reader, for well we know the mocking-birds are singing sweetly, and the wild geese rise from the placid bayous, and flap their broad, white wings over the bright green prairies, on their inland flight, and the gentle breezes stir the dark, luxuriant foliage of the wide, primeval forests, while all the air is redolent with the odors of the ocean of flowers that cover the whole sunny land with bloom and beauty.

It is something more than a year since we parted with Esq. Camford in his new emigrant home, and now we have another party of friends arriving in our young "Italy of America," even the romantic Miss Mary Lester, and her John Falstaff husband; and Fred. Milder, too, has had time to wear off the edge of his love disappointment on the ridgy hog-wallows of this fair south-western land. For we don't believe there's another so effectual antidote in the world for a fit of the blues or love dumps, as a long day's ride in a Texan stage-coach, with three pair of wild mustangs for horses, over these same hog-wallows; to say nothing of the way they despatch jaundice, dyspepsia, and all the host of bilious diseases. But don't you quite understand what hog-wallows are, reader? Well, Heaven help you then, when you go out south or west, and pitch into them for the first time! Invoke your patron saint to keep your soul and body together, and prevent your limbs from flying off at tangents.

We will tell you how we once heard a Kentuckian (and God bless the Kentucky boys in general, for they are a whole-souled race!) account for these anomalous things. We were pitching through a group of them, some dozen of us in a miserable wagon, when one "new comer" asked his neighbor, "What is the cause of these confounded *humps* in the roads?"

"They are hog-wallows," responded the one interrogated, in a pompous tone, as if proud to display his superior knowledge of the land into which both the speakers had but recently made their advent.

"Hog-wallows!" exclaimed the man, more in doubt than ever by his newly-acquired knowledge, "what makes so many of them then?"

"Why, you see when the great rains come on," commenced the "wise 'un," "the country gets all afloat, and when it begins to dry off a little, the wild hogs come by thousands, and roll and flop about in the mud, and that makes all these pitch-holes, which they call hog-wallows."

"Why don't they kill the hogs and eat 'em, and not have 'em rooting up the roads in this awful way?" asked greeny number one.

"Lord! they do kill and kill, I'm told," said greeny number two; "but Texas is such an almighty rich country that all sorts o' critters and things grow up spontaneously everywheres."

"Creation! but why don't they build fences alongside their roads then!"

"O, they never make fences in Texas; first you'd know a hurricane would come tearing along, and land them all in the Gulf of Mexico, quicker than you could say 'Old Kentuck.'"

"Stars and gaiters! what a dreadful dangerous country is this we have got into!" said number two, with a frightened aspect, as they dropped the subject and relapsed into silence, while it was evident, from their anxious visages, that their minds were harassed and disturbed, by visions of hog-wallows, hurricanes and spontaneous animals.

We have heard other and more philosophical hypotheses as to the origin of these uneven roads. Some suppose the country was once an inland sea, and these ridges were occasioned by the continuous action of the waves; others suppose the intense heat of the sun on the soft, clayey soil, caused it to crack and spread asunder, leaving the surface broken and ridgy. This latter is the more generally received opinion, we believe.

Here's half a chapter on hog-wallows, the unpoetical things! but as utilitarians maintain nothing is made but what subserves some purpose, we premise these humpy roads were made for the benefit of gouty men, dyspeptic women, and love-sick lads and lasses. Thus disposed of, "we resume the thread of our narrative," as novel-writers say. Our pen waxes wild and intractable, whenever we get safely over the stormy gulf, and stand on the shores of bonny, bright Texas; for we feel at home there, hog-wallows, musquitoes, Camanches and all. Let none dare gainsay Texas in our ears, for it is the banner state of all the immaculate thirty-one. Come on, reader, now we have had our say, straight up to the thriving plantation of Esq. Camford, and behold the wonders this wonderful land can produce upon the characters of nervous, delicately-constituted ladies. That buxom, blooming-matron in the loose gingham wrapper, and muslin morning-cap, who stands on the gallery of that new and tastefully-built cottage, all overshaded by the boughs of the majestic pecan trees, giving off orders to a brace of shiny-eyed mulatto wenches, who listen with reverential awe and attention, is none other than the hysterical, shaky-nerved Mrs. Camford, whom we beheld some two years ago bewailing the fate which had

brought her to this awful place, to be poisoned by snakes, mangled by bears, and murdered by Indians. Listen to her words:

"Thisbe, take the lunch I have placed in the market-basket down to the cotton-field boys, and ask your master to come to the house soon as convenient; some people from the States are come to visit us:—and you, Hagar, go to the garden and gather a quantity of vegetables for dinner. I will be in the kitchen to assist in their preparation."

The women bowed, and hastened away on their separate errands. Mrs. Camford now turned to enter the house, when Josephine, her cheeks blooming with health and happiness, came bounding to her mother's side. "O, mamma, the young gentleman, Mr. Milder, knows all about cousin Alice! he has come right from the place in which she resides. He says she sent a great deal of love to us all, and desired me to write to her. Perhaps, now we know she remembers us so kindly, you will let me go north some time, and pay my long-promised visit. Susette and her husband talk of travelling next season, you know."

All this was uttered in the most lively and animated tone conceivable, and Mrs. Camford smiled, and answered cheerfully, as mother and daughter reëntered the neat, airy parlor, where our heroine of romance, Miss Mary Lester, was sitting beside her portly, red-visaged husband, Col. Edmunds, who had, in early life, been a Texan ranger, and acquired so keen a relish for the wild, exciting scenes of a new country, that he would not give his hand (his heart we suppose he could not control) to the fair Mary, unless she would consent to forego the luxuries of fashionable life, and follow his fortunes through the perils and vicissitudes of an Indian frontier. She stood out to the last, hoping the stalwart colonel would yield to her eloquent pleadings, and consent to make his abode in New Orleans; for she conceived that brother Augustus, having arrived at the sober age of thirty, would never marry, and it would be the finest idea in the world for him to relinquish the splendid estate he had acquired by his own untiring exertions, to the hands of Col. Edmunds, while she, as the worthy colonel's most estimable consort, would condescend to assume the direction of the servants and household affairs, and Augustus could thus live wholly at his ease, without a worldly care to distract his breast. What an affectionate, self-sacrificing sister would she be, thus kindly to relieve her brother at her own expense! But, just as this plan began to ripen for execution, she was counter-plotted, or fancied herself to be, which led to the same denouement. Winnie Morris came to pass a vacation with her brother, Wayland, and the fore-doomed bachelor, Augustus Lester, most audaciously dared to fall in love with the cackling girl. So Miss Mary declared; and to remain in her brother's mansion, where she had hitherto exercised unlimited sway, under such a little minx of a mistress, was too much for human nature to endure; so, all on a sudden, she yielded in full to the majestic colonel's wishes, and "cut sticks" for Texas, flying, as many of us often do, from an imaginary evil, and leaving behind poor little Winnie, innocent and unsuspecting as a lamb, with the great coffee-urn in her trembling hand. How long the fair girl remained thus innocent and unsuspecting, we are yet to know.

"So you are from New Orleans, Col. Edmunds," remarked Mrs. Camford. "I do not recollect of ever having met you there; but to see any person from our former home, though personally strangers, affords us pleasure and gratification."

"I have only resided in New Orleans about six months, madam," returned Col. Edmunds; "the most of my life has been spent in camp and field."

"My husband is a soldier," said Mrs. Edmunds, "and we are now on our way to the Indian frontier."

"Indeed! and how do you think you will relish frontier life?" asked Mrs. Camford.

"O, I shall be contented anywhere with my husband!"

"Just married, madam, and desperately in love yet," said the colonel. "Always lived in the city, and thought it the greatest piece of audacity in the world when I informed her I was going to stop at the residence of a private gentleman with whom I was not in the least acquainted, to bait my mules and get dinner. Not a bit acquainted with the Texan elephant, you see, madam."

"Heaven save me, Samuel! do people in this country associate with elephants?" exclaimed the bride, with the prettiest display of horrified surprise.

"To be sure; I had one for a bed-fellow six or eight months when I first came out here," returned the husband, with perfect serenity.

"O, my soul, I hope I shall never see one!" said the young wife, nestling closer to her husband's side.

The colonel laughed heartily, and all joined in his merriment.

"You should not alarm new-comers by such bug-bear tales," remarked Mrs. Camford, at length. "This young gentleman, Mr. Milder, is just from the north."

"Indeed! well, he looks as if he might soon learn how to grapple with elephants and tigers both," said the colonel, glancing on the young man's countenance.

"Tigers!" exclaimed Mrs. Edmunds, taking fresh alarm; "do those ferocious creatures grow here too?"

"Yes, everything grows here, Mary, about five times as large as anywhere else," answered the bluff

colonel. "But what say, young man, to going up on the frontier with me, and seeing a bit of soldier life? You'd get to see the whole elephant there, teeth, trunk and all."

"Why will you keep talking about that dreadful monster?" said the young wife, who had brought a few nerves along with her. "You'll terrify me to death, Samuel."

"You must get used to the critters, Mary, and the quicker the better, is all I have to say," returned the husband, patting her cheek.

Esquire Camford now entered, dinner was served, and the conversation took a higher tone. Esquire C. spoke of the country, its fertility, rapid improvement, and exhaustless resources. Fred. Milder began to feel an interest in a land with prospects so brilliant, and accepted with pleasure Col. Edmunds' invitation to travel on westward in company with him. The travellers were persuaded to pass the night; and during the visit Mrs. Camford came to know that Mrs. Edmunds was a sister of the Mr. Lester who had purchased her former sumptuous residence from the hands of the creditors, at the time of their failure in New Orleans. Still the knowledge did not waken regretful feelings, or excite a pang of envy in her breast; for she had learned to regard a cottage with content as better than wealth and pomp with pride and misery to distract the spirit.

The morrow dawned beautifully. Round and red the sun arose beyond the far, green prairie, when the mules and carriages were brought to the door, and the little party of travellers recommenced their journey. Fred. Milder cast a lingering glance after the pretty Josephine, as she wished him a delightful tour up the country, and bade him not forget to call and give her an account of all his adventures on his return. He promised faithfully not to forget, and, with kind adieus, the party moved on their way.

Josephine sat down after her usual morning tasks were completed, and indited a long epistle to her cousin Alice; giving a general description of her Texan home; not failing to mention her mother's happy recovery from nerves, and Susette's marriage with a promising young planter; also the pleasant visit they had enjoyed from Mr. Milder; and ended by saying she hoped another season, when papa was a little richer, to make her long-contemplated visit to the north.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Youth, love and beauty, all were hers,
Why should she not be happy?"

Where would you like to go now, reader? We are desirous to take you by the path that will lead through this story by the shortest cut, and, as we dare not doubt but that will be the course of all others most grateful to your tastes and feelings, we'll clear Texas at a bound, for there'll blow a whistling "Norther" there soon, we apprehend, and that would tangle our hair worse than it is tangled now, and we have not had time to comb it since this story commenced. So, imagine "Effie," dear reader, with her brown locks wisped up in the most unbecoming manner possible, a calico morning-gown wrapped loosely about her, and not over clean, her fingers grimmed with pencil-dust, and her nose too, perhaps —for she has a fashion of rubbing that useful organ, for ideas, or something else, we know not what.

Just imagine this, reader, and if you don't throw down the story in actual disgust, you'll be more anxious to get through it than we are even.

Now away with episode, and here are we in the fair "Crescent City" again, at the palace-like residence of Augustus Lester, Esq. The lord of the mansion is at home, reclining on a silken sofa, which is drawn before one of the deep, bloom-shaded windows of the elegant drawing-room. He is in genial, after-dinner mood, and that fairy-looking being, sitting by his side on a low ottoman, is our former friend, Winnie Morris. But she bears another name now, for she has been three months a wife—Augustus Lester's girl-bride!

Were that affectionate sister's misgivings of her bachelor brother's intentions toward that wild-cat girl altogether chimerical, then? Present appearances would indicate them not to have been altogether groundless; but really, when the fair Mary fled so precipitately, the idea of making Winnie Morris his bride had never entered her brother's cranium. He had regarded her as a pretty child, and delighted in her sunshiny, buoyant spirit, and felt he would like to keep her near to cheer and enliven his mansion; but from the moment he saw her presiding with so much quiet dignity and grace at his table, on that eventful morning, he resolved to win her heart if possible. The task was by no means difficult, for an object to which we look up with gratitude and reverence, 'tis next to impossible not to love. She forgot, in her devotion to the lofty, high-souled man, her childish fancy for the frivolous-minded boy, and when Wayland, on her bridal morning, asked mischievously, "Where was Jack Camford vanished?" she replied, "In a gold mine beyond the seas, I suppose, brother; but why mention his name to make discord on this happy hour?"

"It is strange Wayland does not return," remarked Augustus, at length, rousing from a light doze, and drawing his young wife close to his side.

"I thought you were fast asleep, Auguste," said she; "and here I have been fanning you so attentively, to keep the mosquitoes away. Well, it is time for Wayland to come, isn't it? He has been absent more than two months. You know how he chided me for breaking the promise I made to be mistress of that pretty cottage he proposed to build up in Tennessee. Perhaps he is erecting it, and intends to dwell there in proud, regretful solitude."

"Or, perhaps he is in search of some fair lady to be its mistress, who may prove less recreant to her promise," suggested Lester.

"May be so," returned Winnie, laughing.

"I look for a letter from him every day," remarked the husband; "there was a mail-boat in when I came up to dinner. I'll call at the post-office this evening; very possibly one has arrived."

"I hope so," answered Winnie.

The bell now rang, and company was announced. Leaving the young couple to entertain their guests, we have stolen away in search of the absent Wayland, and bring him once more on the tapis, to give some account of his protracted wanderings, and learn what are his hopes and prospects for the future. By what devious track we shall be pleased to pursue the rover, our next chapter will reveal.

CHAPTER XV.

"O, Charity, what art thou? Mystic thing!"

Being rather benevolently inclined ourselves, we feel a desire to look in once more upon the "Ladies Literary Benevolent Combination for Foreign Aid," which is to-day congregated at the residence of Mrs. Rachel Stebbins, president of this humane and Christian body. She is sitting in majestic presence on her throne of office, with her gold-bowed spectacles astride her stately nose, and her devoted subjects clustering around her, their tongues and fingers nimble as ever in the good cause of universal philanthropy. Prominent in the ranks is Mrs. Sykes, while ever following her, like a shadow, is her bosom friend, Miss Jerusha Sharpwell. Mrs. Fleetfoot also appears in the rear; a sort of shadow of a shade, or refrain to the song. Little Miss Gaddie composes and sings alone now; her sister, Miss Pamela, having accompanied her missionary husband to the shores of benighted Bengal, to aid in his labors for the conversion of the heathen world.

"Well," said Miss Jerusha, as she sank down in a soft-cushioned chair beside Mrs. Sykes, with a pair of checked muslin night-caps in her hand; "what's the good word with you, sister, these suffocating days?"

"La! nothing, sister Jerusha, as I know of. My girl, Hannah, has gone off and left me, so I have to keep close at home and slave myself with hard work all the time, and have no opportunity to learn what's going on about town," answered Mrs. Sykes, in a doleful voice.

"Why, where has your girl, Hannah, gone?" asked Miss Jerusha, sympathetically; "I never heard a word about her leaving your service."

"She didn't leave me of her own free will;—catch Hannah to go away from this roof, unless she was bejuggled by other folks. But she'll repent her rashness when 'tis too late, I'm afeard," said Mrs. Sykes.

"Why, didn't you know Hannah Smith had gone to work for the widow Orville?" inquired Mrs. Fleetfoot, looking up from the blue yarn sock she was knitting, which was destined, no doubt, to convert some half-naked Burman boy from the errors of paganism. "La, I heard of it a fortnight ago!"

"You did,—did you, Mrs. Fleetfoot?" exclaimed Mrs. Sykes, in rather a hasty tone; for a mild-hearted Christian; "well, she hasn't been gone from me a week yet."

"Do tell! Well, I heard she thought of going, then, or something like it, I can't exactly remember what," drawled Mrs. Feetfoot, not a whit disconcerted by the contradiction her words had received.

"So Mrs. Orville coaxed Hannah away from you?" said Miss Jerusha.

"Yes, just as the summer's work was coming on, too; but she'll have to suffer for it," said Mrs. Sykes, with a fearfully resigned expression of countenance.

"Of course she will," returned Miss Sharpwell; "but what could Mrs. Orville want with a hired girl,—nobody but herself and Alice in the family? It seems a selfish, malicious desire to inconvenience you, her coaxing Hannah off."

"La!" put in Mrs. Fleetwood, "didn't you know Mrs. Orville had got a whole houseful of company from the south? I knew it a month ago."

"She hasn't got anybody in the world but two cousins of Alice's, and a husband of one of them, and they haven't been there a week, till to-morrow evening," said Mrs. Sykes.

"O, is that all? Well, I heard something about it, I couldn't exactly recollect what it was," again drawled Mrs. Fleetfoot, closing the toe of her yarn sock, and holding it up to admire the proportions; no doubt breathing a silent prayer that it might be useful in saving some "soul from death."

"Well, Mrs. Fleetfoot," observed Mrs. Sykes, "did you know that Fred. Milder had come home from Texas to marry Alice Orville?"

"La, yes!" responded that Christian lady; "that's an old story, everybody knows."

"Why, I never heard of it before," said Miss Jerusha, pinning a little blue bow on the top of the muslin cap, to make it look *tasty*, as she observed.

"Neither did I," answered Mrs. Sykes, casting, as we thought, but it could not be, however, a glance of malicious triumph on Mrs. Fleetfoot; "but he travelled home in company with Mrs. Orville's visitors, and I often see him walking on the lake-shore with the young, unmarried lady, Miss Josephine, I believe, is her name; and I just thought in my own mind that would be a match."

"Very likely," said Miss Jerusha.

"Well, I remember now, 'twas that strange lady I heard he was engaged to, and not Miss Alice," remarked Fleetfoot, with perfect equanimity; "and Alice, they say, has got a beau off south, and that's what makes her so mopish at times."

"Perhaps it is as sister Fleetfoot says," observed Jerusha; "for Alice is certainly changed from what she used to be. She never attends our circle now, and seldom goes to church. I wonder how she does pass her time?"

"'Tis more than I can tell," answered Mrs. Sykes; "there was always something mysterious about those Orvilles, to me. But I shall be obliged to go home, sister Jerusha, to attend to my work, as I've no servant," continued the wronged lady, rising, and depositing her work in the treasurer's box.

"I'm sorry you must go, sister Sykes," said Jerusha; "but be of good cheer, and I'll drop in and see you in the course of the week."

"Pray, do, sister Sharpwell; I need all the aid and sympathy of Christian hearts to sustain my soul," said Mrs. Sykes, with a ruefully pious countenance, as she took her departure.

The meeting progressed. Fast flew the nimble fingers of the devoted laborers in the good cause; and could the poor heathen have known what mighty exertions this band of benevolent, self-denying females, who basked in the noontide glory of the sun of righteousness, were making for their liberation from the thrall of pagan darkness and superstition, we doubt not that they would have prostrated themselves by millions before the shrine of their great idol, Juggernaut, and devoutly invoked him to pardon and forgive the poor, deluded victims of a false religion, and bring them all under his sublime sway and holy dominion.

At length, Miss Gaddie was called on to sing the parting hymn. The lady president delivered herself of a most eloquent and oratorical harangue, during which the benevolent rose to a tremendous pitch, which nothing could calm off but the call to supper.

This well-furnished meal dispensed, the "Ladies' Literary Benevolent Combination for Foreign Aid" adjourned to the next Wednesday, at the house of Mrs. Dorothy Sykes, Highflyer Street; which Christian lady was aghast with terror and dismay, when she learned this batch of benevolence was assigned over to her for its next meeting.

"O, mercy!" she feelingly exclaimed; "and I've no girl to assist me, and my house will be turned topsy-turvy, new parlor carpet ruined,—and, besides, they'll eat us out of house and home, and Mr. Sykes is *so* close-fisted!"

"But I hope 'twill be a rainy day," she added, by way of consolation.

Truly, benevolence does cost a great deal!

CHAPTER XVI.

"My task is done; my song hath ceased; my theme
  Has died into an echo. It is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
  The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
My midnight lamp,—and what is writ, is writ;
  Would it were worthier, but I am not now

That which I have been, and my visions flit
Less palpably before me—and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt, is fluttering, faint and low."

The cousins, Alice Orville and Josephine Camford, sat together in a vine-clad arbor on the shore of Lake Erie.

"I cannot express the joy I feel at beholding you again, dear Pheny; learning of your welfare, and finding you so happy in the contemplation of the future," said Alice.

"None can tell what the future may bring," answered Josephine. "All is vague and uncertain. I never believe anything is to be mine till I really possess it."

"And so you won't believe Fred. Milder is yours till the nuptial knot is tied?" said Alice, smiling.

"No, not fully,—not without a shadow of doubt," returned Josephine, laughing in turn.

"But, Alice, when are you going to get married?"

"Never!" was the quick response.

"Nonsense! Where's that pale, intellectual young man, who used to call so frequently on you when you first arrived in New Orleans?"

"I have never seen or heard from him since I returned home," answered Alice, averting her face.

"That's nothing to the purpose, cous. I see you have not forgotten him."

"O, no!"

"And never will?"

"I can't say that."

"I can, though. Come, let's return to the house. I suspect Fred. is waiting for me to take my promised stroll on the lake shore. How do you like sister Susette's husband, Alice?"

"I think him a very accomplished gentleman," replied Alice, as they walked toward the house.

"So I think," said Josephine. "His superior could hardly be found in any of our large cities. Did you know poor Celestina had heard from her faithless husband? He pleads for forgiveness and promises to return if she will receive him. It appears he and brother Jack have amassed a large fortune in Australia."

"Indeed! I am rejoiced to hear so good tidings of the adventurers. Is Celestina still in the convent to which she retired?"

"She is; but proposes to leave it and accompany us to Texas on our return to that country. Whether she will receive her husband I cannot say, but will hazard an opinion that, should she one day behold him at her feet imploring pardon, love would overpower all remembrance of former wrongs. But there's Fred.," added the joyous-hearted girl. "I must away to meet him."

"Where?" asked Alice, gazing on all sides.

"There, walking down that avenue of poplars!" returned Josephine. "I saw him some moments since,"—love is so quick-sighted when its object is at hand, and so abstracted when it is at a distance,—and Josephine hurried away to meet her lover, leaving Alice to stroll onward by herself. Presently, Hannah, the servant-girl that Mrs. Sykes, the benevolent lady, averred had been "bejuggled" from her by Mrs. Orville, came through the garden at full speed, exclaiming, "Miss Alice, there be a gentleman in the parlor waitin' to see ye!"

On hearing this message, Alice accelerated her steps to reach the house, and retired to her room a few moments to adjust her dress before entering the presence of her visitor.

Reader! that truant-knight, for whom we went in search so long ago, is found at last.

Far down "*la belle riviere*" floated the fairy white steamboat on its winding-way to Louisville, while the joy-groups danced and sung by the clear moonlight over the airy decks.

And now once more adown the proud-rolling Mississippi, we see that "floating-palace," the Eclipse, cutting her way through the foamy waters. How, all day long, the verdure-clad shores smile up to the clear, cerulean heaven that arches above! And how the moonbeams pour their silvery light down on the sleeping earth! and all the while, by night and day, the boat sweeps proudly onward.

Among the hundreds of passengers that roam the decks and guards, we recognize two familiar faces;

and our eyes love to linger on them, for they are redolent with happiness. One of them is that of the dreamy, abstracted girl we noticed years ago, leaning over the balustrades of this same queenly boat as she approached New Orleans. But she was alone then. Now; a manly form is bending over her, and whispering words we cannot hear; nor do we need to hear them to know they carry joy to the listening ear, for her dark eye glows with happiness, as she looks confidingly in the face of the speaker, and utters something which brings the same joy-light over his fine, intellectual features.

Now you do not wish us to tell you, reader, that Wayland Morris and Alice Orville are man and wife; and that they, in company with Fred. Milder and wife, and Susette and husband, are bound for New Orleans, to surprise Winnie Lester in her regal home. Your intuition has revealed all this to you e'er now, and you have pictured in your minds how blank with amazement young Mrs. Lester's pretty face will be when she beholds this "family-group" in her elegant drawing-room, all eager to welcome and be welcomed, and overflowing with exuberant life and gladness, as people ordinarily are when they get safely off one of those beautiful, but treacherous western steam-palaces.

All this your vivid imaginations will easily portray in far more glowing and picturesque colors than our poor pencil can paint. So we leave you to conjure up all the bright visions you choose with which to deck the futures of our young debutants in the great drama of wedded life. And some of you young writers, who thirst for fame's thorny laurels, may touch your inspired pens to paper, and give us a sequel to this hasty, ill-finished tale, a true production of our "fast" age.

In conclusion, let us say, that years after these events transpired, as the "Eclipse" passed up and down the Mississippi, on her trips to and from New Orleans, the jocular clerk was wont to call the attention of his passengers to a beautiful English cottage, surrounded by vines and shrubbery, which stood on the Tennessee shore, and exclaim, "The dwellers in that cottage learned their first lesson of love on the guards of the Eclipse."

COME TO ME WHEN I'M DYING.

A SONG.

Come to me when I'm dying;
  Gaze on my wasted form,
Tired with so long defying
  Life's ever-rushing storm.
Come, come when I am dying,
  And stand beside my bed,
Ere yet my soul is flying,
  And I am cold and dead.

Bend low and lower o'er me,
  For I've a word to say
Though death is just before me,
  Ere I can go away.
Now that my soul is hovering
  Upon the verge of day,
For thee I'll lift the covering
  That veils its quivering ray.

O, ne'er had I thus spoken
  In health's bright, rosy glow!
But death my pride hath broken,
  And brought my spirit low.
Though now this last revealing
  Quickens life's curdling springs,
And a half-timid feeling
  Faint flushes o'er me flings.

Bend lower yet above me,
  For I would have thee know
How passing well I love thee,
  And joy to tell thee so.
This love, so purely welling
  Up in this heart of mine,
O, hath it e'er found dwelling
  Within thy spirit's shrine?

I've prayed my God, in meekness,
To give me some control
Over this earthly weakness
That so enthralled my soul;
And now my soul rejoices
While sweetly-thrilling strains,
From low, harmonious voices,
Soothe all my dying pains.

They sing of the Eternal,
Whose throne is far above,
Where zephyrs softly vernal
Float over bowers of love;
Of hopes and joys, earth-blighted,
Blooming 'neath cloudless skies,
Of hearts and souls united
In love that never dies.

'Tis there, 'tis there I'll meet thee
When life's brief day is o'er;
O, with what joy to greet thee
On that eternal shore!
Farewell! for death is chilling
My pulses swift and fast;
And yet in God I'm willing
This hour should be my last.

Sometimes, when day declineth,
And all the gorgeous west
In gold and purple shineth,
Go to my place of rest;
And if thy voice in weeping,
Is borne upon the air,
Think not of me as sleeping;
All cold and silent there:—

But turn, with glances tender,
Toward a shining star,
Whose rays with chastened splendor
Fall on thee from afar.
And know the blissful dwelling
Where I am waiting thee,
When Jordan fiercely swelling
Shall set thy spirit free.

ELLEN.

Sweet star, of seraph brightness,
That for a transient day
Shed o'er our souls such lightness,
And then withdrew the ray!
O, with immortal lustre
Thou 'rt sparkling brightly now
Amid the gems that cluster
Around Jehovah's brow!

Yet many hearts are keeping
Lone vigils o'er thy grave,
Where all the hopes are sleeping
Which thy young promise gave.
The sleep which knows no waking
Hath closed thy sweet blue eyes,
And while our hearts are breaking
We glance toward the skies.

Ah! there a hope is given
That bids us dry the tear;
That bright star in the heaven,

With beams so wondrous clear;—
'Tis Ellen's "distant Aidenn,"
Far in the realms above,
And those clear rays are laden
With her pure spirit's love.

I'M TIRED OF LIFE.

I'm tired, I'm tired of life, brother!
Of all that meets my eye;
And my weary spirit fain would pass
To worlds beyond the sky.
For there is naught on earth, brother,
For which I'd wish to live;
Not all the glittering gauds of wealth
One hour of peace can give.

I'm weary,—sick at heart, brother,
Of heartless pomp and show!
And ever comes some cloud to dim
The little joy I know.
This world is not the world, brother,
It seemed in days agone,
When I viewed it through the rainbow mists
Of childhood's rosy dawn.

I would not pain your heart, brother—
I know you love me well;
And that love is laid upon my soul,
E'en as a holy spell.
But I'm weary of this world, brother,
This world of sin and care;
And my spirit fluttereth to be free,
To mount the upper air!

I know not of the world, brother,
To which I wish to go;
And perhaps my soul may there awake
To know a deeper woe!
They say the pure of earth, brother,
Find there undying bliss;
While all the wicked ones are cast
Into a dark abyss!

I look upon the stars, brother,
That gem the vault of blue;
And when they tell me "God is love,"
I feel it must be true;
For I see on all around, brother,
The impress of a hand
That blendeth and uniteth all
In one harmonious band.

I am that which I am, brother,
As the Creator made;
To *Him*, all-holy and all-pure,
No fault can e'er be laid.
He knows my weakness well, brother,
And I can trust his love
To bear me safe through Jordan's stream
To brighter worlds above.

LINES TO A FRIEND,

ON REMOVING FROM HER NATIVE VILLAGE.

The golden rays of sunset fall on a snow-clad hill,
As standing by my window I gaze there long and still.
I see a roof and a chimney, and some tall elms standing near,
While the winds that sway their branches bring voices to my ear.

They tell of a darkened hearth-stone, that once shone bright and gay,
And of old familiar faces that have sadly passed away;
How a stranger on the threshold with careless aspect stands,
And gazes on the acres that have passed into his hands.

I shudder, as these voices, so fraught with mournful woe,
Steal on my spirit's hearing, in cadence sad and low,
And think I will not hear them—but, ah! who can control
The gloomy thoughts that enter and brood upon the soul?

So, turning from my window, while darkness deepens round,
And the wailing winds sweep onward with yet more piteous sound,
I feel within my bosom far wilder whirlwinds start,
And sweep the cloudy heaven that bends above my heart.

I have no power to quell them; so let them rage and roar,
The sooner will their raging and fury all be o'er;
I've seen Atlantic's billows 'neath tempests fiercely swell,
But O, the calm succeeding, I have no words to tell!

I think of you, and wonder if you are happy now;
Floats there no shade of sorrow at times across your brow?
When daily tasks are ended, and thought is free to roam,
Doth it not bear you swiftly back to that dear old home?

And then, with wizard fingers, doth Memory open fast
A thrilling panorama of all the changeful past!
Where blending light and shadow skip airy o'er the scene,
Painting in vivid contrast what is and what has been.

And say, does not your mother remember yet with tears
The spot where calm and peaceful have lapsed so many years?
O, would some kindly spirit might give us all to know
How much a tender parent will for a child forego!

We prized your worth while with us; but now you're gone from sight,
We feel "how blessings brighten while they are taking flight."
O, don't forget the homestead upon the pleasant hill;
Nor yet the love-lit home you have in all our memories still!

Come, often come to visit the haunts your childhood knew!
We pledge you earnest welcome, unbought, unfeigned and true.
And when before your vision new hopes and pleasure rise,
Turn sometimes with a sunny thought toward your native skies!

HO FOR CALIFORNIA!

Rouse ye, Yankees, from your dreaming!
  See that vessel, strong and bold,
On her banner proudly streaming,
  California for gold!
See a crowd around her gather,
  Eager all to push from land!
They will have all sorts o' weather
  Ere they reach the golden strand.
    Rouse to action,
    Fag and faction;

Ho, for mines of wealth untold!
Rally! Rally!
All for Cali-
Fornia in search of gold!
Away, amid the rush and racket,
Ho for the California packet!

Wake ye! O'er the surging ocean,
Loud above each coral cave,
Comes a sound of wild commotion
From the lands beyond the wave.
Riches, riches, greater—rarer,
Than Golconda's far-famed mines;
Ho for California's shores!
Where the gold so brightly shines.
O'er the ocean
All's commotion;
Ho for mines of wealth untold!
Countless treasure
Waits on pleasure;
Ho for California's gold!
Let us go the rush and racket,
On the Californian packet.

Hear the echo wildly ringing
Through our country far and wide!
Thousands leaving home and springing
Into the resistless tide.
Now our nation's roused from sleeping,
All alert and wide awake.
O, there's no such thing as keeping
Folks asleep when gold's the stake!
Old Oregon
We'll look not on;
Ho, for mines of wealth untold!
We'll take our way,
Without delay,
In search of gold—of glittering gold!
Here we go, amid the racket,
On the Californian packet!

Yankees! all who have the fever,
Go the rush without delay!
Take a spade and don your beaver;
Tell your friends you must away!
You will get a sight o' money;
Reap perhaps a hundred-fold!
O, it would be precious funny
To sit in a hall of gold!
Let's be going,
Gales are blowing,
Ho, all hands for digging gold!
Romance throwing
Colors glowing
Round these mines of wealth untold!
Ho, we go amid the racket,
On the Californian packet!

N. P. ROGERS.

Rogers, will not future story
Tell thy glorious fame?
And in hues of living glory
Robe thy spotless name?

There was more than mortal seeming
In thy wondrous eye,—
Like a silv'ry star-ray gleaming

Through a liquid *sky*.

Of that angel spirit telling,
Noble, clear and bright,
In thy "inner temple" dwelling,
Veiled from mortal sight!

Of that spirit meek and lowly,
Yet so bold and free,
In its all-absorbing, holy,
Love of Liberty.

Thou didst leave us, gentle brother,
In thy manhood's pride;
And we vainly seek another
Heart so true and tried!

Thou art dwelling with the angels
In the spirit land!
Chanting low and sweet evangels,
'Mid a seraph band.

But when Freedom's champions rally
'Gainst the despot's sway,
Then they mourn the friend and ally
That has passed away.

And when Liberty's bright banner
Waves o'er land and sea,
And is heard the loud hosanna
Of the ransomed free,—

On its silken folds, in letters
Traced with diamond bright,
Shall thy name, the foe of fetters,
Blaze in hues of light!

LINES.

I hied me to the ocean-side;
Its waves rolled bright and high;
Upon its waters, spreading wide,
I gazed with beaming eye.
At last, at last, I said, is found
A charm to banish pain,—
Here, where the sprightly billows bound
Athwart the heaving main.

The pebbly beach I wandered o'er
At morn and evening's hour,
Or listening to the breakers' roar,
Or wondering at their power.
Beneath their din I madly sought,
With ev'ry nerve bestirred,
To drown for aye the demon, thought,—
But, ah! he *would be heard*.

He found a voice my ear to reach,
To pierce my aching breast,
In every wave that swept the beach
With proud, defiant crest.
And when the moon, with silver light,
Smiled o'er the waters blue,
It seemed to say "There's nothing bright
O'er all this earth for you."

Scarce half a moon have I been here,
Beside the sounding sea,
In hope its echoings in my ear

Might drown out memory;
Or might instil some vital life
Into this feeble frame,
Long spent and wasted by the strife
Wide-wrought against my name.

In vain, in vain!—nor sea, nor shore,
Nor any mortal thing,
Can to my cheek health's bloom restore,
Or clear my life's well-spring.
And yet there is a sea whose waves
Will roll above us all,—
Within its vasty depths are graves
Beyond all mortal call.

With what an awful note of dirge
This shoreless ocean rolls—
Bearing on its tremendous surge
The wealth of human souls!
——The Ocean of Eternity,—
O, let its billows sweep
O'er one that longeth to be free,
And sleep the dreamless sleep!

HENRY CLAY.

Wail, winds of summer, as ye sweep
The arching skies;
O, let your echoes swell with deep,
Woe-piercing cries!

Old ocean, with a heavy surge,
Cold, black and drear,
Roll thou the solemn note of dirge
On Europe's ear!

Sweet stars, that calmly, purely bright,
Look down below,
O, pity with your eyes of light
A Nation's woe!

Thou source of day, that rollest on
Though tempests frown,
Thou mind'st us of another sun
That has gone down!

Gone down,—no more may mortal eye
Its face behold!
Gone down,—yet leaving on the sky
A tinge of gold!

Ah, yes! Columbia, pause to hear
The note of dread;
'Twill smite like iron on the ear;—
Our Clay is dead!

Our Clay; the patriot, statesman, sage,
The Nation's pride,
With giant minds of every age
Identified!

That form of manliness and strength
In Senate hall,
Is lying at a fearful length
Beneath the pall!

That voice of eloquence no more
Suspends the breath;
Its matchless power to charm is o'er—

'Tis hushed in death!

Thrice noble spirit! can we bow,
And kiss the rod?
With resignation yield thee now
Back to thy God?

And where, where shall we turn to find
Now thou 'rt at rest,
A soul so lofty, just and kind,
As warmed thy breast?

We bear thee, with a flood of tears,
Unto thy tomb;
There thou must sleep till rolling years
Have met their doom!

But thy bright fame and memory
Shall send a chime
From circling ages down to the
Remotest time!

O, may thy mantle fall on some
Of this our day,
And shed upon the years to come
A happy ray!

THE SOUL'S DESTINY.

In the liquid vault of ether hung the starry gems of light,
Blazing with unwonted splendor on the ebon brow of night;
Far across the arching concave like a train of silver lay,
Nebulous, and white, and dreamy, heaven's star-wrought Milky Way.

I was gazing, gazing upward, all my senses captive fraught,
From the earnest contemplation of celestial glories caught,
When the thought arose within me, as the ages onward roll
What may be th' eternal portion of the vast, th' immortal soul?

When the crimson tide of Nature ceases from its ruddy flow,
And these decaying bodies mouldering are so cold and low,
And the loathsome grave-worm feeding on the still and pulseless heart,
Where may be the immortal spirit, what may be its deathless part?

Deep and far within the ether stretched my eyes their anxious gaze,
While the swelling thoughts within me grew a wild and wildered maze,
Then came floating on the distance, softly to my listening ears,
Low, thrilling harmonies of worlds whirling in their bright spheres.

From the sparkling orb of Venus, sweetest star that gems the blue,
Soon a form of seraph beauty burst upon my raptured view;
Wavy robes were floating round her, and her richly-clustering hair
Lay like golden-wreathed moonbeams round her forehead young and fair.

Then a company of seraphs gathered round this form so bright,
And unfurled their snowy pinions in those realms of crystal light,
Sweeping swiftly onward, onward with their music-breathing wings,
Till they passed the distant orbit where the mighty Neptune swings.

Then from stormy, wild Orion, to the dragon's fiery roll,
And the sturdy Ursa Major tramping round the Boreal pole,
On to stately Argo Navis rearing diamond spars on high,
Starry bands of seraph wanderers clove the azure of the sky.

Lofty awe and adoration all my throbbing bosom filled,
Every pulse and nerve in nature with ecstatic wonder thrilled.
O, were these bright, shining millions disembodied human souls,
That casting off earth's fettering bonds had gained immortal goals!

On each face there beamed a brightness mortal words can ne'er rehearse,
Seemed it the concentred glory of the boundless universe.
O, 'twas light, 'twas love, 'twas wisdom, science, knowledge, all combined,
'Twas the ultimate perfection of the God-like human mind!

One by one the constellations sank below the horizon's rim,
And with grief I found my starry vision growing earthly dim;
While all the thrilling harmonies, that filled the air around,
Died off in far, sweet echoings, within the dark profound.

Bowing then with lowly seeming on the damp and dewy sod,
All my soul in adoration floated up to Nature's God,
While the struggling thoughts within me found voice in earnest prayer;
"Almighty Father, let my soul one day those glories share!"

LINES TO A MARRIED FRIEND.

There are flowers that never wither,
  There are skies that never fade,
There are trees that cast forever
  Cooling bowers of leafy shade.
There are silver wavelets flowing,
  With a lulling sound of rest,
Where the west wind softly blowing
  Fans the far lands of the blest.

Thitherward our steps are tending,
  Oft through dim, oppressive fears,
More of grief than pleasure blending
  In the darkening woof of years.
Often would our footsteps weary
  Sink upon the winding way,
But that, when all looks most dreary,
  O'er us beams a cheering ray.

Thus the Father who hath made us
  Tenants of this world of care,
Knoweth how to kindly aid us,
  With the burdens we must bear.
Knoweth how to cause the spirit
  Hopefully to raise its eyes
Toward the home it doth inherit
  Far beyond the azure skies.

There's a voice that whispers lowly,
  Down within this heart of mine,
Where emotions the most holy
  Ever make their sacred shrine;
And it tells a thrilling story
  Of the Great Redeemer's love,
And the all-bewildering glory
  Of the better land above.

O, this life, with all its sorrows,
  Hasteth onward to a close!
In a few more brief to-morrows
  Will have ended all our woes.
Then o'er death the part immortal
  Shall sublimely rise and soar
O'er the star-resplendent portal,
  There to dwell for evermore.

May we meet, no more to sever,
  Where the weary are at rest,
Far beyond dark Jordan's river,
  In the Canaan of the blest.
Guard the treasures God hath given
  To thy tenderest nurturing care,

And upon the fields of heaven
Thou shalt see them blooming fair.

NEW ENGLAND SABBATH BELLS.

Methinks I hear those tuneful chimes,
Borne on the breath of morn,
Proclaiming to the silent world
Another Sabbath born.
With solemn sound they echo through
The stilly summer air,
Winning the heart of wayward man
Unto the house of prayer!

New England's sweet church-going bells,
Their memory's very dear;
And oft in dreams we seem to hear
Them ringing loud and clear.
Again we see the village-spire
Pointing toward the skies;
And hear our reverend pastor tell
Of life that never dies!

We see him moving down the aisle,
In light subdued and dim;
The while the organ's swelling notes
Chant forth the grateful hymn.
The forms of those our childhood knew,
By meadow, grove and hill,
Are gathering round with kindly looks,
As if they loved us still!

In careless hours of gladsome youth,
'Twas our thrice-blessed lot,
To dwell upon New England's shores,
Where God is not forgot.
Where temples to his name are raised,
And where, on bended knee,
The Christian sends to heavenly courts
The worship of the free!

New England's Sabbath chimes!—we love
Upon those words to dwell;
They fall upon our spirits with
A sweetly-soothing spell,
Bringing to mind those brighter days
When hope beamed on our way,
And life seemed to our souls but one
Pure and unclouded day!

New England's Sabbath bells!—when last
We heard their merry chime,
The air was rife with pleasant sounds;
For 'twas the glad spring-time!
The robin to those tuneful peals
Poured forth a thrilling strain;
O, 'tis our dearest hope to hear
Those Sabbath bells again!

For now we're many a weary mile
From that New England home;
In lands where laughing summer lies,
Our wandering footsteps roam.
But yet those sweetly-chiming bells
Those heavenward-pointing spires,
Awaken e'er the brightest glow
From memory's vestal-fires.

MY HEART.

List I to the hurried beatings
Of my heart;
How its quickened, loud repeatings
Make me start!

Often do I hear it throbbing
Fast and wild;
As I've heard it, after sobbing,
When a child.

Why so wild, so swift and heated,
Little heart?
Is there something in thee seated,
Baffling art?

Pain with all thy throbs is blended—
Pain so dread!
Oftentimes life seems suspended
By a thread!

Then thou'lt grow so still—like ocean
In its rest;—
Till I scarce can feel a motion
In my breast.

Think'st thy house is dark and dreary,
Veiled in night?
Art thou pining, sad and weary,
For the light?

Wouldst be free from the dominions
That control;
Spreading all thy golden pinions
Toward the goal?

Gladly, gladly, would I free thee
From Earth's thrall!
With what bliss and joy to see thee
Rise o'er all!

But 'tis not for me to aid thee
In thy flight;
For the Holy One who made thee,
Doeth right.

When his own good time arriveth,
Then will He,
From the load with which thou strivest,
Set thee free.

OUR HELEN.

Our Helen is a "perfect love"
Of a blue-eyed baby;
When she's grown she'll be a belle,
And a "Venus," may be.

Such a cunning little mouth,

Lips as red as cherry,
And she smiles on all around
In a way so merry.

Laughs, and crows, and claps her hands,
Springs, and hops, and dances,
As if her little brain overflowed
With lively, tripping fancies.

Then she'll arch her pretty neck,
And toss her head so queenly,
And, when she's weary, fall asleep
And slumber so serenely.

She has a cunning kind of way
Of looking sly and witty,
As if to say, in baby words,
"I know I'm very pretty."

She bites her "mammy," scratches "nurse,"
And makes droll mouths at "pappy;"
We can but love the roguish thing,
She looks so bright and happy.

The dinner-table seems to be
The crown of all her wishes,
For there the gypsy's sure to have
A hand in all the dishes.

But why should we essay to sing
Her thousand sprightly graces?
She has the merriest of ways,
The prettiest of faces.

We know she'll grow a peerless one,
With skin all white and pearly;
And laughing eyes, and auburn locks,
All silky, soft and curly.

Her baby laugh and sportive glee,
Her spirit's airy lightness,
Surround the pleasant prairie home
With hues of magic brightness.

MY BONNET OF BLUE.

My bonnet of blue, my bonnet of blue,
Its gossamer fineness I'll sing to you;
For a delicate fabric in sooth it was,
All trimmed and finified off with gauze.
My bonnet of blue, my bonnet of blue,
How well I remember thy azure hue!

To church I wore it, one pleasant day,
Bedecked in ribbons of fanciful ray;
And all the while I sat on my seat
I thought of naught save my bonnet so neat.
My bonnet of blue, my bonnet of blue,
Broke not my heart when I bade thee adieu?

When service was over, my steps I bent
Towards home, a-nodding my head as I went
But, alas for my bonnet! there came a wind
And blew it away, for the strings were not pinned.
My bonnet of blue, my bonnet of blue,
What shifting scenes have been thine to pass through!

I raised my eyes to the calm, blue sky,
There sailed my bonnet serene and high!

O, what a feeling of hopeless woe
Stole over me then, no heart may know!
My bonnet of blue, my bonnet of blue,
As clear as the sky was thy azure hue!

'Twas vain to mourn for my bonnet, and yet
It taught me a lesson I shall not forget;
'Twas, never to make you an idol of clay,
For when you best love them they'll fly away.
My bonnet of blue, my bonnet of blue,
I loved thee well, but thou wert untrue!

DARK-BROWED MARTHA.

When the frost-king clothed the forests
  In a flood of gorgeous dyes,
Death called little dark-browed Martha
  To her mansion in the skies.
'Twas a calm October Sabbath
  When the bell with solemn sound
Knelled her to her quiet slumbers
  Low down in the darksome ground.

Far away, where sun and summer
  Reign in glory all the year,
Was the land she left behind her,
  To her simple heart so dear.
There a mother and a brother,
  Meeting oft at close of day,
Spoke in tender, tearful whispers
  Of the loved one far away.

"I am thinking," said the mother,
  "How much Martha'll get to know,
And how smart and bright 'twill make her,
  Travellin' round the country so.
'Spect she'll be a mighty lady,
  Shinin' jewels in her ears;
But I hope she won't forget us,—
  Dat is what dis poor heart fears."

"'Deed she won't," then spoke the brother,
  "Martha'll love us just as well
As before she parted from us,—
  Trust me, mammy, I can tell."
Then he passed a hand in silence
  O'er his damp and swarthy brow,
Brushed a tear from off the eyelid,—
  "O that she were with us now!"

"Pshaw! don't cry, Lem," said the mother,
  "There's no need of that at all;
Massa said he'd bring her to us
  When the nuts began to fall.
The pecans will soon be rattling
  From the tall plantation trees,
She'll be here to help us pick them,
  Brisk and merry as you please."

Thus they talked, while she they waited
  From the earth had passed away;
Walked no more in pleasant places,
  Saw no more the light of day;
Knew no more of toilsome labor,
  Spiteful threats or angry blows;
For the Heavenly One had called her
  Early from a life of woes.

Folded we the tiny fingers
   On the cold, unmoving breast;
Robed her in a decent garment,
   For her long and dreamless rest;
And when o'er the tranquil Sabbath
   Evening's rays began to fall,
Followed her with heavy footsteps
   To the home that waits us all.

As we paused beside the churchyard,
   Where the tall green maples rise,
Strangers came and viewed the sleeper,
   With sad wonder in their eyes;
While my thoughts flew to that mother,
   And that brother far away:
How they'd weep and wail, if conscious
   This was Martha's burial day!

When the coffin had been lowered
   Carefully into the ground,
And the heavy sods fell on it
   With a cold and hollow sound,
Thought I, as we hastened homewards,
   By the day's expiring light,
Martha never slept so sweetly
   As she'll sleep this Sabbath night.

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